

The Man

Madam Butterfly

Colour Backdrop: Pink soft lights, rose water smell and perfumed soap, faint tinge of antiseptic on hand woven Asiatic carpets with Pandas eating bamboo shoots and tigers amongst the bamboo.

She was old and no one knew her age and she was still a young beautiful woman for she could afford genetic implants. One day she would die when an assassin killed her which seemed the only way to die during this age.

She had many enemies because her women over the centuries had found out so many secrets and the secrets were locked up in a safe behind a floral papered wall.

And as Madam Butterfly Chou sat on her embroidered blue tuft cushioned large arm rest that resembled a throne but was not, she was listening to what had happened to her favourite dancer she had contracted out to Aelfric Europe.

Her girls were like daughters.

ALL TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY THREE.

YOU HAD TO ORDER THEM IN ADVANCE.

EVEN FROM GALAXIES A BILLION LIGHT YEARS AWAY.

Such was their reputation at providing a good service.

Now the dancer was home on a float stretcher a mess.

A gash went from her pubic area to her chin revealing an empty hole for everything inside was gone.

Her brain too.

The eyes also in case last images of life were peeled off the back of her retina and her killer revealed.

Even her voice box in case a medic retrieved the last sounds made from the muscle patterns left.

Madam Butterfly Chou was used to revolting sights but this.....this was beyond reasoning. Whoever had sliced the girl up was a madman that should be destroyed before he put her out of business.

Posidonus and Aelfric must die, it would cost but no girls would work for her if she did not let all know her girls were not to be killed.

She spent a lot of cash cosmetically on them, that's why they were the best looking girls out and in demand.

Now she flicked on her vocal note pad and listened:

The harpist said the dancer had been given to that banana Posidonus now on Vegas Hotel and Aelfric and Augustus and Po Wei were all heading there, the whole dam corrupt head of the empire. This must be why she had been kept alive by her gods and ancestors,

### **SHE WAS INDEED BLESSED?**

So opened a lacquered pearl inlaid drawer and took out a pink life insurance policy on the girl and sent it off. All her girls were covered, that was one of her house rules. When the note pad finished she played a hologram of The Man Volume One and dreamed of a future world when his laws would protect working girls from monsters like Posidonus and Aelfric.

And was helped to dream as she puffed a joint in a foot long ivory hash holder that was shaped like a crane standing on one leg looking for fish to eat.

She dreamed of her ancestors and they told her it was time to act.

She would go to Vegas Hotel as well.

She had contacts there and didn't care if Aelfric wanted to be ABSOLUTE or Posidonius desire to be a doctor or Augustus wanted his hands on Vegas profits or Po Wei wanting to be emperor.

She needed her spies to work against the heads of the empire.

And all she knew was to be given to Prince Vespa, (his clone as she didn't know the original had been killed remember, as said it was really hard to kill people unless you got the original, all the clones, any tissue samples, the robot cyborgs and threw them all in a bath, the Aelfric way, all gone, not even a strand of hair to clone from) who she knew would give them to the Man.

The rotten heads would pay for what had been done to her girl.

## REVENGE

Was the only protection a working girl had in universes where flesh was a bought commodity?

"Goodbye girl," she said as she watched droids take the float stretcher away to her own fertiliser incinerator; everyone these days had their gardens, it was a safe way to eat what with the pollution and assassins parading as market vendors? And the girl's ashes would be scattered over a young purple rose in her memory; she would be



*Illustration 19: Prince Vespa*

watered and loved and kept clear of aphids, her spirit would be pleased so Madam Butterfly Chou reasoned.)

In an envelope was twenty thousand imperial dollars, from Aelfric to have the girl's memory vanish. "Crap them," Madam Chou, "the money will pay a lot of wagging mouths to spread what was done, FEAR breeds hate and then needs a burning faggot to incite rebellions. Her girls she remembered them all, so did her paying customers.

AND ALL SHE HAD DONE WAS HELP AUGUSTUS LIVE UP TO HIS  
NAME

CRUCIFIER.

Don Llatchur the Strong hadn't got the message from Madam Butterfly Chou that she was coming or he might have left what he was doing.

Her message would take a week from New Jupiter on a quasar fax. She would be another month herself on one of those fast ships using the new quasar reactors that were a thousand times faster than the old nuclear turbines.

And although the ship rotated like a bullet through space inside the hull thanks to a vacuum people moved at normal speed. The faster the ship went; a metaphysical dimension was opened up to allow this; one dimension at hyper speed and the other at normal speed without weightlessness.

But right now Llatchur was getting over his dislike for Posidonus as quick as money was sent from Aelfric it ended up in his hands.

But the joke of sending his delinquent staff to Posidonus was wearing off.

But the mess Posidonus paid him to clean up was making him ill.

But he was supposed to be a tough guy, not a pimp for a madman.

But what Posidonus did make him feel that if there was a hell, he was going there; was his clone insurance up to date? Would his associates allow him cloned? Would he end up in a bath? Such a FEAR made him visit Posidonus in the Blue Room.

"Posidonus let me in?" He demanded on the other side.

A long silence before the door slid open.

NAVY

There stood Posidonus in a green surgeons outfit with red stuff splattered on it.

Llatchur felt ill, he was sure that was a fingered hand sticking out of a pocket. The result was he pushed roughly by Posidonus and if Llatchur had realised Aelfric had plans for the mad man he would not have to wait till the money ran out? BLUE

“I am busy,” Posidonus annoyed, he was the Great Posidonus, no one pushed him as if he was one of Aelfric’s TRASHY humans. WALLS

But Alexander Llatchur walked on into a blue bedroom and saw a teenage boy kept awake by drugs viewing a ceiling mirror that was meant for viewing other stuff, now viewing what was left of him.

A replacement for droid 34A kept the victim alive.

“Enough of this crap,” Llatchur and started to undo the boy and when freed the lad couldn’t stand up; he had no legs below the knees.

The boy had been more valuable alive, he could be rented out often, now he was finished, a clone would replace him, he was for the fertiliser bins.

There was one thing paying to beat up a hooker, even another to snuff someone out for a night, the someone could be brought back if not too badly damaged; but this Jack the Ripper stuff had to end, Llatchur and Vegas was getting a worse name than it deserved!

Death wasn’t ABSOLUTE unless ordered upon you like last week he ordered one of his swindling men to let a female client blow his brains out or he did be thrown in an acid bath.

The bath cheated the clone artists of cells to work on and when the woman played Russian roulette with fatal consequences the swindler still went to the bath:

## NO ONE CHEATED LLATCHUR.

Sometimes a twisted form of love came into the contract to snuff someone, like the hooker who agreed not to be cloned as long as the client paid for her baby's new life on New Saturn 12. It was a lot of money and went into where it should go, one of Llatchur's accounts. He never knew when he might need to start up some place again?

And the baby had grown up fast on hormonal development drugs and was working for Llatchur right now in one of the rooms.

Of course Llatchur had to keep his word sometimes or all the suicidals wouldn't enter into contracts with him and he wouldn't be more rich would he? Just how much money did someone need?

But what Posidonius was doing was a drain on the resources. Some of his girls he liked the look of had ended up here.

"You're a sick mad man Posidonius," as Llatchur shook his head over the boy lying at his feet.

Posidonius was mad and that's why he stuck his scalpel in Llatchur's neck.

When finally Llatchur stopped moving on top of the boy survival thinking came to Posidonius; he had just killed the boss of Vegas out of ego and vanity.

FEAR makes one lie and after locking and clearing up he went to the small imperial garrison outside Vegas Dome and told them Llatchur was sending his retinue this way to kill them and keep Augustus's share of the profits for himself.

He was Posidonus, they wanted to believe him and then a message arrived from Aelfric Europe:

“Posidonus will act in my name till I arrive,” it was pure chance it arrived when it did.

Posidonus was elated, his ego knew no bounds and the troops attacked and without Latchur to command Vegas Hotel fell to him.

And the mad man declared himself governor; indeed so brutal was he that even his own men began to tempt themselves to be rid of him and he found Nesta in the Eight Legged Octopus and brought her back; he didn't like his toys addicts; so he actually did something good in his life.

And another ship was coming from New Jupiter and aboard it vengeance,

#### MADAM BUTTERFLY CHOU.

Pretty red head Mab Joyful Heart had been visiting Po Wei a lot these days to help the man over the absence of his original son Po Shen. And encouraged him to divulge his dreams that he would be an emperor one day. She had heard it all before, men talked a lot to impress a girl in bed.

Now unknown to Po Wei, Mab believed in the Man, equality for all, human, alien, robot and machine. And that is how Madam Butterfly Chou found out all the rotten imperial heads were heading to Vegas Hotel.

And Po Wei never suspected anything, he was too impressive a lover to think he might be a stool pigeon.....*let's throw him some bird food.*



Madam Chou smiled, she was watching the robot Prince Vespa dress, and she was smiling because she was genuinely fond of the cyborg.

In return he put a hand on her shoulder; he knew his secret was out. She was a woman and knew men well and knew a cyborg. He had feelings and desires and was a friend of The Man and a caring entity.

And he had told her the original had been

killed by Po Wei and Aelfric Europe.

And she was glad he had spoken.

For like Mab Joyful Heart she read The Man often and now her desire for vengeance was doubled for she wanted Prince Vespa the original avenged; a personal client of hers and benefactor.

Madam Butterfly Chou was not dominated by evil men such as Aelfric Europe, Posidonus, Augustus or Po Wei and for what it was worth she knew there were good men about; one had silver wings and Vespa had been one and his cyborg was another.

“Why Aelfric gave Posidonus such powers we can only wonder?” Tintagel.