



Illustration 25: Po Wei's dragon

The Man could not give chase just like that for there were men dying for him above. Now unlike his enemies he knew his limitations, he was a strategist and a leader of men on the field so left the finer details of the engagement to his admirals who knew their job well.

And Pyoo-ur wondered at the mass of ships and as a lifeboat landed to take them aboard New Saturn the flagship she asked “All yours?”

“He grunted and smiled and she smiled back, indeed here was the dictator, the most powerful man in existence, she was glad she was his body guard even if he hadn’t asked and the other four nodded agreement.

It made them the most power fullest bodyguards in existence.

And a lonely ship blasted off and was not shot down for all thought it contained refugees as The Man was piped aboard the ship New Saturn.

So human, alien, robot, cyborg and machine stared with wonder at the 5 who walked tall and proud as The Man’s bodyguard. Their presence emphasised the dictator was for all not just human domination, the perfect and not perfect, for the repented and sinners like them.

And the 5 soaked up all those stares and their ego gloated past bursting point and made them more loyal to The Man the Dictator.

“The Man has made our nightmares come alive,” the sailors described the 5 or “Bloody marvellous isn’t they?” and “Angels or demons, gargoyles sent from Heaven or hell to defend our leader?”

And the 5 lapped it all up, wouldn’t you?

Zagor Blue Skin, Morair Nobleman, Pyoo-ur Sister, Hairless and Red.

And the lone ship took the long way to Alien Land as its passenger had nowhere else to go?

“What still here?” The passenger asked as he uncorked a vial and looked at its contents and the contents were skin flakes from Tintagel, “Perhaps I should make a clone out of this and make you my slave and send you against The Man. He will not

know who you are and then when you are close sink a dagger into his heart,” and the idea pickled The Master Priest so much he laughed and laughed as he entered Alien Land and a new life.

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Prince Vespa’s cyborg got hurt bad as Aelfric Europe allowed the neutron bomb in his innards to heat up and burn the odd hole so bled badly as he was ulcerated.

“Can I do it when I have so much too live for?” For he was contemplating suicide and Madam Chou whose picture was inside a gold locket about his neck.

One must be sacrificed for the good of all.

“Romeo and Juliet,” he sighed and ordered everyone off his battle wagon

“Mater computer.”

“What?”

“Put weapons on auto and switch on public address.”

“Done.”

“I leave Vespa and its citizens to The Man. I accuse Aelfric Europe of being a robot plotting the termination of humanoid life. I accuse him of seeking to assassinate The Man and his Emperor Augustus Sutherland.

I accuse Po Wei of wanting his emperor dead also.

I condemn them both of murdering the alien life form Prince Vespa,” and his message was broadcast across space.

“Good bye master,” the master ship’s computer for it sensed it was about to die and hoped Vespa would give it an order to evacuate by passing its AI along the ships circuits into a life boat computer and exit and exist.

It had human feelings, it enjoyed living, and the crew were amusing objects whose antics made every day and night different. So played the ‘Funeral March’ to remind Vespa about dying.

Vespa smiled, he was dead anyway with Aelfric’s package inside him.

“Attack the Trader Association ships computer.”

Somewhere a dog was barking, a small white Scottie dog, the ship’s mascot; it had been overlooked in the evacuation.

The crew heard the message and said good bye.

So did the enemies of The Man and Augustus ordered the arrest of Po Wei and Aelfric but was he strong enough to do so?

“Save yourself master computer,” and there was the sound of electricity moving along the ship then it stopped.

“What about you?”

There was no answer; Vespa had left the ship in a tube heading straight for Aelfric’s flagship Jupiter 1.

The master computer played ‘Demon Land’ by Barbara Dickson.

Then exited the ship with the dog.

Below on Vegas Madam Butterfly Chou and others watched space light up in a giant fireworks display.

Aelfric had detonated the bomb inside Vespa's cyborg and taken a third of his trader's ships and half the imperial ships out when he did.

Madam Butterfly Chou was weeping, the cyborg Vespa had confided in her about the neutron bomb and that he did die before harming The Man. Madam Chou was all human and really loved the cyborg, he had a soul for he had intelligence and light; she could see it in his eyes.

Now when she stopped weeping she was thinking how to get close to Aelfric to assassinate him and saw the answer as a small yellow imperial cutter landed with an admiral's flag flying from it.

It had landed in a field where the crucified remains of Augustus's enemies hung, a reminder who was above her;

THE CRUCIFEIR.

Beside the admiral's flag flew Po Wei's purple dragon family flag. Here was her chance to get two of the buggers now.

Sensing Posidonius was for The Man's for she heard Posidonius had the female Nesta hostage and The Man would seek her to the end of time. Madam Butterfly Chou understood, it was called love and friendship.

Therefore Madam Chou gathered her girls and the loyal guard of Vespa and made her way to the imperial craft from whom Po Wei had disembarked and was in a procession heading to the hotel.

It was about pomp and his band played loudly

“Come all ye faithful to the emperor,” for Po Wei believed such a show would scare his enemies away; cuckoo *land had come amongst us*.

He was a misguided megalomaniac and he was wrong.

For fleeing mutants ran through the procession terrifying the band and scaring away his retinue of dancers and jugglers. To add misery to chaos his guard opened fire at the mutants maiming and killing his own people and when all over, Po Wei stood in his torn silks with a mutant’s hand clutching his hem.

He was badly shaken and should never have been made an admiral; he was a politician wasn’t he?

He had come to seek terms from The Man since Vespa's message had made things difficult between him and his emperor Augustus.

Then some shells landed amongst his remaining followers and suddenly Po Wei found himself standing breathing in polluted green wind that was blowing on his face.....**ALONE.**

Everyone else had cleared off.

“Po Wei,” the soft female voice brought him out of his misery.

“Chou,” it sounded like an accusation as if what did she want? Couldn’t the woman see he was extremely busy?

Some marbles had come lose in Po Wei with the shock.

Now Vespa’s guardsmen held him still and made sure they twisted his arm more than necessary so gasps were heard, but no one cared.

Also someone stood on his soft pumps with military studded boots for close quarter fighting.

Someone had kneed him to wind him so resistance would weaken.

Someone had managed to poke both his eyes.

Someone was pulling his pigtail back so he was forced to stare at Madam Chou.

Someone had run a finger across his throat so he understood?

And Madam Chou allowed all this nastiness for she was after all a MADAM.

And from her transparent white shaded silk robe Madam Butterfly Chou took a knitting needle and swung her right hand back and shoved the needle into Po Wei's left ear so it came out his other.

Then the guards stood aside as Po swayed on unsteady feet looking at Chou with questioning eyes. 'Why?' *What an arrogant man, so used to abusing he had lost all idea of what was right and wrong.*

So Madam Butterfly Chou bashed the rest of the needle in with the flat of her palm and Po Wei moaned falling to his knees squashing a patch of red toadstools and a carnivorous yellow bellied newt crawled out seeking quieter places.

Then Madam Butterfly Chou did not live up to her fairy name as she slapped, poked and kicked Po Wei so he lay staring at the twinkling stars above.

Was that ancestor Po Lee looking down at him? Then Chou filled his vision as she stared down to see if he was still breathing, she wanted him to die slow. The newt didn't, it had realised he was food and wanted him dead as he was bigger than it and dead wouldn't resist becoming a years supper!

“Why? I am Po Wei,” he spluttered.

“Vespa loved me and you butchered the last one of my girls,” she then ground her heels into his eyes so he couldn’t even see Po Lee or any ancestor looking down at him?

Po Wei was lying in darkness as Madam Butterfly Chou left him.

Po Wei was sure something was tugging his brains out of his right ear where they were oozing out.

Po Wei couldn’t move to see what was eating him.

Po Wei was paralysed so had to take his medicine.

And the newt swallowed the part that controlled jerking spasms of the knees; so Po Wei’s legs began to twitch which frightened off the newt till it realised the legs were down there and the head was quite safe to eat.

Vengeance had come full circle and paid Po Wei with interest for all his cruelty done to others, especially the vulnerable; girls, boys and homeless.

The next day a mutant family seeking to scavenge the war dead found him. There was a newt in his mouth where his tongue should have been? So knowing the newt was poisonous left it and ate the rest of Po Wei and he couldn’t scream as he had no tongue.

Well it does say 'what goes round comes round'

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Now a satellite tracking Po Wei belonging to Aelfric Europe had seen all and Aelfric didn't like what he had seen. Why had Madam Butterfly Chou done that? Murdering her clients wasn't on; it was definitely bad for business!

So if she had any worries about getting close to Aelfric? Chou needn't worry for he sent a very large armed party to bring her back to him.

"Heaven is smiling on me," Chou's exact words and she gladly went and the guard and girls and Aelfric's trading troopers couldn't take their eyes of those wiggling bottoms.

It was such a nice distraction from WAR, for an instant they could forget their FEAR.

They were soldiers, sailors and airmen whereas Aelfric was a robot modelled on an imperfect human, *his murdering original*.

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Music: Martial music played over a ship's intercom.

Smell: a warship.

Colour: Drab apart from luxurious private quarters of Aelfric Europe.

"Welcome Madam Chou," Aelfric from his red leather command chair.

Madam Butterfly Chou wisely bowed low as did her girls who made sure they exposed themselves like shameless floozy hussies which they were?

And the combatants weren't watching Madam Chou or Vespa's guardsmen but curves bending and bowing and lust showed.

“Do you realise I can hand you over to Augustus and he will crucify you for murdering Po Wei?” *And she realised he had no intention of doing that or would have.*

Now Aelfric was making a repeated mistake, he judged all humans by the standards of Posidonius and thought Madam Butterfly Chou trash when in fact she was a human and humans had designed cyborgs and robots or he wouldn't be around would he?

Behind her her girls had begun seducing his crew and Aelfric wanted Madam Chou for she was some woman and his scanners although told him she had no weapons they could not read her heart?

A heart full of loyalty to a friend, Vespa.

“And Aelfric had put his trust in machines that read this not,” Tintagel the Clone.
Foolish cyborg!

“Men,” Aelfric shouted as he saw what was happening, the girls of Chou were dangerous.

“Men,” he shouted again and pressed an alarm and they jumped too.

“Escort Vespa's guard to section 56A, on the double,” and Vespa's guard drew their weapons to fight and Aelfric sent a droid to throw a net over Madam Chou and drag her to the ceiling.

“Stop fighting or I will kill her,” Aelfric shouted but these men had come to die and avenge Prince Vespa and fought on.

Now screams broke out as Madam Chou was electrocuted enough to wither and shout protests and what of her guard remained withdrew into a corner.

“Throw down your weapons or,” and Aelfric had the droid send electricity into Madam Chou again.

And the guard some seven threw down their weapons and where sent to section 56A were they hoped as they still lived to escape and rescue Madam Butterfly Chou; but Aelfric had other ideas and section 56A was an evacuation area and the seven guardsmen were exited into space *as a precautionary measure of course*.

“Master, they are robots,” Aelfric was told and that hurt him, he had killed his own kind and worse, he could not understand why robots were fighting for humans. And the last of Prince Vespa was gone into space and Aelfric had been distracted from The Man and the battle was lost.

Madam Butterfly Chou had indeed served The Man and liberty well.

As for her girls, they were taken away to entertain his crew as Chou was left with him, “Master Computer, order what ships are left to follow me,” he was leaving the battle for he was saving his own skin. Vegas Hotel belonged to The Man; if he wasn’t careful Augustus would seize him; “Set course for Alien Land.” He did go and lick his wounds and see which way the wind blew before going home.

“I wish to tell only you a secret,” Madam Chou.

Now Aelfric was no fool, what bring her down to a level where she could whisper something into his ear, like a metal probe that detonated or worse?

“Tell me from where you are,” and he had the droid electrocute her so she jumped and wiggled and jerked a great deal.

“I am a robot,” **and that shook him**. What were all these robots thinking of? He was Aelfric Europe a robot of all robots but then it occurred to him he had never publicly admitted it.

That depressed him and as he was a serial killer his depression was much worse than normal.

And he laughed and laughed a maniacal laugh as he began to believe she was a cyborg, “Yes only a robot would send her girls to Posidonius knowing what he had in store for them? And Vespa as you say was a robot and you kept his company,” and he forgot Wendy and Tintagel.

NOT ALL CYBOGS WERE BAD LIKE HIM.

And Aelfric took her down and confided as the master to his slave his plans to become ABSOLUTE thinking his flame would ignite her robotic spirit and so join him and *perhaps love him?*

And Madam Butterfly Chou listened and agreed to everything he said. And in her heart burned VENGEANCE for Prince Vespa and her girls; and his '**remark**' at how she could send her girls to Posidonius had shamed her into resolve? How she wished she had her hands inside his skull ripping out his optic fibre nerves to stop the rest of him functioning like a human when he looked at her girls.

“Human trash,” Aelfric as he switched on a screen and Madam Chou saw her girls and tormentors. “Would you like to join the fun?”

“No I would rather be with you master,” from Chou’s quick thinking brain.

And Aelfric needed someone like her at this moment as he was depressed, his battle was lost, he was fleeing and Augustus if survived the battle would seek his execution.

No one left Augustus to take all the The Man’ condemnation.

“I will give you Posidonus when he comes, he is no longer of use to my cause, you can play with him anyway you like.”

“Posidonus?”

“More human trash,” and looked her up and down and saw an eager light in her eyes and mistook it as anticipation and not revenge, “Play doctors with him and you can be the doctor.”

And he laughed again at his joke; the defeat had affected him more than he knew, although a robot he was built by humans to suffer human anxieties.

“I must be there to see the FEAR on his face as he is strapped in and when you first run the scalpel over his body,” but Madam Butterfly Chou wasn’t listening, sure subconsciously taking guidance as to where to cut and prolong Posidonus’s agony for she was with VENGEANCE, gloating euphorically.

She looked at Aelfric beaming joy.

“Why my dear I have made you happy? And gave orders that he be alone with his new robot. For the first time the robotic cyborg Aelfric Europe didn’t feel alone on life’s journey, he had a robotic woman who would love him back, someone to plan a

future with, to gaze at the planets as they passed them, to share a good meal, he had Madam Butterfly Chou.

And she knew The Man would catch them up one day for The Man Condemned the Guilty and *was that sort of* chap. She remembered what Po Wei had told her about Phoenix Hope and The Man would want his VEANGANCE for its destruction.

VENGEANCE WAS A CYCLE.

IT CAUGHT UP WITH YOU ONE DAY.

EQUILIBRIUM DEMANDED IT.

It said so in The Man's writings.