

# Reinvention by Victoria P

**Summary:** One last stop for Logan and Rogue before they leave New York behind

**Categories:** **AU** **Characters:** None

**Genres:** Drama

**Tags:** None

**Warnings:** None

**Challenges:**

**Series:** Off the Corner

**Chapters:** 1 **Completed:** No **Word count:** 1832 **Read:** 1865

**Published:** 12/29/2001 **Updated:** 12/29/2001

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### **Author's Notes:**

Thanks to Jen, Pete, Dot, and Meg. And to Colleen and Laura, who took the beta challenge. \*g\* Also, to F. Scott Fitzgerald and Stephen Erickson. Ideas stolen wholesale from *The Great Gatsby* and *The Sea Came in at Midnight*, respectively. Dedicated to Gables, since she asked one night on AIM what would happen when Logan met Chyna, though I wasn't planning this at all.

Logan pulled the Maxima into a parking spot on St. Nicholas.

"There's a 'No Parking' sign--" Rogue began, but his sly grin stopped her. He pulled a small Policemen's Benevolent Association shield out of his pocket and stuck it in the windshield. She'd been in New York long enough to know it meant he could park almost anywhere with impunity. "Oh."

"Yeah."

"You don't have to come with me," she said.

"I know, but I don't want to take any chances that that prick Nellie is looking for you."

She smiled. "I think you put the fear of God into him, Logan." He didn't answer, just wrapped an arm around her shoulders and pulled her close to his side as they walked west toward Audubon Avenue.

He didn't like the looks of the neighborhood, but she seemed comfortable among the large old apartment buildings, the smell of frying plantains wafting out of slightly open windows. It was a warm day for the middle of January, in the high fifties, and people were taking advantage, sitting on stoops as the late afternoon sun slanted off the high-rises to the south.

Marie pulled him toward one of the buildings lining 171st Street and he climbed the steps warily behind her.

Pressing the bell, she said, "Chyna, it's Rogue."

The door buzzed, and she led him up four flights of stairs, to a door that had been left ajar.

He took in the apartment -- small work-in kitchen, fairly large living room space, a short corridor with a door on each side and a bathroom at the end. Hardwood floors and high ceilings. Prewar, nice, but given the neighborhood, affordable to two or three girls in Rogue's line of work. Former line of work.

A small blonde girl with skinny legs and obviously artificial breasts was piling CDs into a bag. She smelled of roses and sex, the corruption of her world staining her in ways she'd never be able to wash off. Logan was thankful he was taking Marie away from it before she was irrevocably tainted, as well.

The blonde looked up at their entrance, and Logan recognized the flare of interest and contempt in her eyes.

"You're not supposed to bring the johns here, Rogue," she said, though all of them had

broken that rule more than once.

"He's not a john, Chyna," Rogue answered sharply. "He's Logan."

Chyna continued as though she hadn't spoken. She laid a small, perfectly manicured hand on the zipped duffel on the couch.

"This bag is all clothes and shoes. I figured, Nellie ain't gonna miss 'em, and they don't fit me or Nerissa. The CDs and books you wanted are all in here," she patted the bag she'd just finished packing, "as well as your walkman." Next, she indicated a large, square object, "This is that damn ugly poster you insisted on buying and framing. I don't know why you're bothering, though. You're just gonna be right back here when **Logan** ditches you for some other pretty young thing next month." Her sneer when she said his name was worthy of the man himself.

"That's not going to happen, Chyna," Rogue asserted, but Logan could smell her nervousness. It was making him edgy. He didn't say anything, just hefted the two bags and walked out, pausing in the stairwell to listen to how the conversation turned now that they believed he was out of earshot.

"So what's his deal?"

There was a long pause, and he could tell Marie was trying to think of an answer that wouldn't give anything away and still be the truth. He wouldn't admit it if asked, but he was holding his breath while she chose her words.

"He's going to take care of me." He exhaled in relief. That was the bare-bones truth, though he wanted to do so much more than that for her.

Chyna snorted. "So, what? Your cut's going to be twenty percent instead of ten? Be serious, Rogue. You're just trading one pimp for another, and don't think otherwise."

"He's **not** a pimp, okay? He's not a john. He's not just 'some guy.' He's Logan, and he's helping me."

"He's helping you and you're fucking him for it. How is he not a pimp?"

"It's not like that!"

He didn't want to hear anymore, because he knew, on some level, that Chyna was right. Despite all Rogue's reassurances, and everything they'd said to each other in the car, he couldn't shake the thought that, in the end, he would only wind up hurting her.

When he came back into the apartment, Chyna was alone in the living room.

He felt a moment of panic. Marie hadn't passed him on the stairs, but there was always the fire escape.

"She's in the bathroom," Chyna told him. He wondered if his expression had slipped -- that would be twice in one day he'd let his emotions show, and in his line of work, he couldn't afford to even **have** feelings, let alone wear them on his sleeve. He found grim amusement in the thought, but was snapped back to the situation at hand when Chyna said, her voice honeyed with insinuation, "You think Rogue is good? I taught her everything she knows. I could make you twice the money she would. And I'm not scarred or gimpy."

"Neither is she," he said, still more amused than angry at her false assumptions. "And I'm not a pimp." He told himself forcefully that he wasn't.

"Right. You're just taking in a poor, lost soul like Rogue to help her out." Her sarcasm was palpable.

He had an urge to tell her it wasn't like that -- that he really and truly l-- even in his mind he shied away from the "L" word. He cared, more than he ever had about anything, about Marie. But that wasn't something he was going to share with this chippy.

He shrugged. He'd never felt the need to explain himself, and he wasn't going to start now. He heard the toilet flush and the door open.

"Chyna," Rogue warned, walking over to stand between them.

"What? I'm supposed to believe that some whacked-out mutie john is playing Richard Gere to your Julia Roberts? He's gonna make his hooker into a society lady? Please."

"Not exactly," Rogue said. She glanced at Logan and he could see his own amusement in the situation reflected in those deep brown eyes.

"Then what the hell does he want with you?" She truly seemed puzzled, and Logan wanted out of there before she convinced Rogue that he really was no better than a pimp. After the argument in the car, he was still a little anxious about her ditching him before they'd even been on the road a day.

"I just want her," he said. "That's all you need to know."

"For what? Maid service? Baby sitter? Dog-walker? Some sort of voodoo spell? I don't think she'll work as a virgin sacrifice."

"None of your goddamn business."

"And you don't want anything in return?" Chyna challenged.

"Nothing she doesn't want to give me."

"Hello! Standing right here," Rogue interrupted, waving a gloved hand, as they continued to argue about her.

Logan and Chyna ignored her, facing off in some sort of odd pissing contest.

"That's the biggest piece of bullshit I've ever heard!" The words burst from Chyna's cupid's bow lips, dripping with contempt and disbelief. "Everybody wants **something**, chief. That's how the world works.

"And don't try to feed me some crap about how you just want her to be happy and that's enough for you, 'cause we both know it's not true."

"You don't know jack or shit," Marie snarled before he had a chance to say anything. She pushed her hair back and turned her face to Chyna. "Look," she commanded. "He healed me."

Chyna looked a little less disgusted and a little more scared at seeing smooth, flawless skin where the day before there had been a series of long, angry scars.

Logan smelled the fear as her eyes darted between them, trying to work out what exactly they had going on.

"Okay, if you're into some freaky cult shit, then I can't help you," she said finally.

They ignored her. Logan picked up the poster and carried it out the door.

"Goodbye, Chyna White," Rogue said as she followed him.

"And good riddance," Logan muttered, secretly relieved. He liked New York, but he'd never been so happy to see the back of it as he would be today.

They were halfway down the stairs when Chyna leaned over the banister and called out, "Rogue, hon, just don't drink the Kool-Aid!"

Logan caught Rogue's eye, and she burst into gales of laughter. She had to sit down on the steps because her knees were weak from laughing so hard. Logan laughed with her, and was amazed at how good it felt. He couldn't remember ever laughing so hard, or being in such perfect harmony with another person, before.

Rogue pulled herself up off the step after a few minutes, and avoided his gaze, her lips still twitching. He knew if their eyes met, she'd lose it again, and while he loved listening to her laughter, he wanted to get back on the road. This little side trip had already cost them an hour and it was going to be full dark soon. He wanted to get at least four or five hours of driving done before they stopped for the night, and they hadn't even eaten dinner yet.

When they reached the car, he put the poster on the floor in the back seat, then opened the door for her. He'd never had much use for manners -- not when he wasn't playing a part on a job -- but Marie seemed to bring them out in him instinctively. She leaned over and unlocked his door as he walked around, which, for some reason, made him want to preen.

He slid in behind the wheel and started the car. Checking the rearview mirror, he finally got a look at the poster he'd just lugged down four flights of stairs and one long city block.

Eyes and lips on a dark blue sky -- a face above a spray of color, one green tear trickling down. He felt a jolt of recognition.

Lips quirked in a half-grin, he quoted, "'Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter -- tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . . And one fine morning--

""So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.'"

He glanced over at Marie, who wore the smile that never failed to make his chest ache.

Taking that most American of stories as both guide and caution, they headed out into the night, intent on reinventing themselves together.

End

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