

BOOK ONE

From the best-stealing author of A GIRL'S GUIDE TO CRIME



SAMPLE

SCRAPBOY

*and our adventures in crime...*

by GC

# Scrapboy

Sample Chapter One

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### ***Note from Seven:***

*Can't write too much. We're all keeping low right now hiding in different cities. It was Glee who found all of GC's writing and gave it to me for safe keeping. That's the first thing you'll read —Glee's introduction. It's been a month since I got a message from GC asking me to release what I have because she doesn't have an encrypted line right now. I'm putting this up on her site. Try out a few pages. It's a sample of the whole book. I would like thank GC for making me look cool and not so autistic in the big battle at the end... Maybe I wasn't supposed to tell you about that. This is bad. Forget I told you about something happening at the end of the book... I really shouldn't interact with the public. I'm more of a numbers kind of person than a word person.*

# Introduction to Scrapboy

I should probably begin by telling you who I am and why you should believe any of this. Even if you think I'm a crazy liar I don't care that much for myself; I might be in hiding when you read this—or dead. But it would be tragic if the whole gang is disappeared and everything we did and saw was lost. Even more than that, GC was my best friend and I'm doing this for her. She's what this story's about, and hopefully she'll read this when she turns up again. As for *him*, it's anybody's guess.

Here's what you need to know: I'm Glee, and I'm the person who found my best friend's writing—actually a few pads of paper and then tons of files on her flash pad. Anyway, GC—she's the main person in this story—is missing. Gone. Yeah, I know you're thinking, “Hey, these are just some punk teens, but we're also streeters, which basically means we didn't grow up in an apartment or a house with holidays and get-togethers, all that family stuff. We were both in and out of foster homes or in shelters and then living on the streets in between. We started out broke, but were shown how to beg and steal. Once we got good at it we decided to strike out on our own. That's how we ended up in the city of Wiji, but you'll hear all that in GC's journal.

That's all I have to say for now. The next thing you're going to read is the first chapter of the not-cleaned-up-enough journal written by my fifteen-year-old, genius beggar best friend, blitzkrieg fast pickpocket and double amputee, GC. She'd be pissed if I mentioned that last thing first.

# Part One: Home

*July 8, 2031*

Hey. This is my first entry so I'm sure it will get better as I get the hang of it. I'm GC, and this will be a random record of me and what's going on. So, let's start with this minute.

I'm on a high-speed train streaking across farmland at 10:35 at night headed home from home. Confused? Don't be. I live in Rijau, a former luxury apartment complex in Wiji, a coastal factory city that's the place to be if you're in a gang. So that's the home I *picked*. Real home where I grew up is the city of NuTaiqin. I just left there to take the train back to Wiji after three weeks in the ol' hometown to find Mom—if she was alive and if I still recognized her. I haven't seen her since I was five. But after three weeks of rooting around the places I half remember and asking the streeters what became of her—nothing. Only one homeless person said she remembered Mom, and this is a woman who thinks she's an empress from the sixth century and is blind in one eye. Result: no Mom.

As mentioned, I grew up in NuTaiqin (NTQ), a manufacturing city insulated by pollution that makes the night air glow around the neon signs like it's about to burst into flames. Mainly, the city makes plastic things like crappy toys, parts of appliances, and knockoffs of whatever product is popular anywhere in the world. NTQ is the pop rivet capital of Asia, I'm told. We did have a broken-down convention center where streeters like me scored on businessmen who travel to NTQ for events like the Semi-Conductor Manufacturing Show or the Injection Molding Festival, but it burned to the ground. What I mostly remember is the chemical smell of the city and how it stung my eyes. I was out of there by

the time I was seven. But, hey, I'm only fifteen. So that was middle age for me—assuming a very short lifespan going forward. Hold on, need to move...

I'm back. Had to move to another car (have a stolen train token). Where was I? Oh, yeah, need to talk a bit more about my mom and how I lost two of my limbs.

I was born poor. I did the baby thing for a while not knowing most of the city considered me an eyesore or a social problem, and then I was a kid moving with my mom who had some mental problems and couldn't work. No big surprise, but school was hit and a lot of miss. Sometimes we lived outside on a mattress under a trailer in a parking lot or in a bright orange tent we had that was sort of a home. I loved that tent. During the day I worked. I'd be on the sidewalk cute as could be begging near the clothing markets or outside the international corporate headquarters where people from other countries like us better than we like ourselves. So, are we street trash? Absolutely. You have to start somewhere.

I didn't know I was nothing for the longest while, though, 'cause I was daydreaming most of the time when I was little. But when I was five, things changed fast. Mom got hooked on painkillers from a spinal injury she got after falling off a scooter, not that she didn't have problems before that. It just kept getting worse, and her new boyfriend (number three or four), Jun, for some reason thought he was whatever those guys are that make companies from nothing. Oh yeah, an entrepreneur. In his mind, he was going places.

The person I am today is 'cause of Jun. He moved into the tent one spring, and I moved to the mattress outside. Then we relocated to an abandoned building with empty apartments and holes in the wall. I got my own room, and I thought we were rich even though we lit candles at



night for light and stored drinking and washing water in big jugs that we left on the roof to capture rain.

I was fine with that, but Entrepreneur Jun got into a deal with a local Triad guy to recruit kids to beg, pretty much a time honored criminal enterprise all over the world. I was four and crips are always better beggars, especially with tourists and extra especially with women tourists. One look at an eye patch on a kid or a stump hanging off a six-year-old is money in the bank. So, one-night Jun decided to upgrade the product (me) by mangling my leg and loaning me out to a Triad for a percentage of what I snagged begging. Made sense in a way, but Jun wasn't living with my drug-ruined Mom in a falling down building because he was Mr. Success. The plan was to give me a limp, but Jun was a botcher not an entrepreneur (am I using that word, right?). He downed a bottle of Baijiu, and then he was ready. He got me drunk, but not drunk enough. Teetering around the room talking to himself he found a chair leg or broom handle or something and just went after me. I barely remember the first hit. I guess I passed out.

After that, it's just a jumble of what I remember, but I know these neighbors found me and gave me homemade medicine. I got infected and had a fever and, well, Mom took off. Actually, Jun took off first, and Mom caved cause she always needed a guy, any guy, but I was delirious at the time. That's what the hospital told me, but I don't know, I always wonder why she left. Who wants to believe their mom abandoned them when they were super sick?

So, then I was alone going into a coma in the abandoned building. And if you need some good news right about now, I've got this: a neighbor, probably out of guilt about just leaving me there, called Social Services and they found me hiding in a closet, which I don't remember at all. By then my arm and leg were purple with these little dark lines

reaching out across my skin like roots. That's sepsis, and it's bad. That I remember.

Anyway, the doctors took a lot of me away—half an arm and half a leg. Later they gave me really cut-rate artificial limbs. And still later they sent me to a cut-rate foster home. Ever since, I've had to find ways to keep the mechanical arm and leg going. Something's always wearing out or falling off—did I mention cut-rate? I have a couple of tools I carry in case something breaks down, which is like every week now. Someday, I'll have a stainless or carbon fiber prosth that looks like a real arm and leg even up close. For now, I just have to keep what I have going a bit longer. When you're at the bottom, you have to do everything yourself.

It took a year to get used to half an arm and half a leg. I was sent to a couple of different schools while at foster, and then I was at some family's house at a time when I was going through my silent phase when I'd decided not to talk to anyone for days at a time. So, the family sent me back to the foster home after a couple of weeks. They really wanted a pet, I guess. That's when I met Glee who'd just arrived, and they put us in the same dorm. She's a year older than me, and we had both logged a few years on the street and had a lot in common. Sitting up through the night in a garlic smelling dormitory talking about the future we realized we were way more comfortable living on our own on the streets than in the soul killing foster homes they'd shoved us into. I think I was eleven and Glee was twelve. She gave me the name GC after I told her the breathing machine I had in the hospital was a GC 2000x respirator. Can't tell you my real name cause, well, I'm staying off the grid and besides, that person no longer exists. Anyway, all the time we were in foster we dreamed about getting away—there was no way we'd last until graduation. Escape was all we talked about. But we had no plan and no one to help us. That turned out to be the plan.

The next year, the foster home took us on a special summer trip out to the rural areas in the north. Glee and I snuck away at the bus station after pretending to go buy snacks. We scammed money and tickets and got to Kowloon, six hours by train to the south, and hid out for five weeks. We hooked up with a gang of kids older than us, and they showed us the best abandoned buildings and condemned toxic sites where we could stay without security guards or the local mostly corrupt police chasing us away. We were planning to stay in Kowloon, but Social Services got lucky and tracked us down. Actually, it was my own fault for getting recorded by a security camera at a mall. We were sent back to yet another foster home. Lesson learned.

Back at foster, I was able to keep in touch with this kid in Los 51, that's the gang we hung out with in Kowloon. I kept trying to get him to get us into Los 51, but he wasn't interested in helping. Then one day he told me why. He was leaving the gang and Kowloon. He was going to Rijau.

Rijau is a mecca for the homeless and gangs, probably half the streeters in Asia have heard of it. Condemned and abandoned, this was a super-rich resort on the waterfront in the city of Wiji a long time ago. Today's Rijau could only exist in Wiji. No other city would have tolerated a safe area for six gangs of teens into petty crime and basic street survival, but Wiji isn't your average city.

Hold that thought. Something happening now...

As I'm typing this, a woman at the far end of the car is coming toward me. This is the woman who is the owner of the ticket I cadged getting on the train. I'd noticed on the platform that she was a very talky, distracted person. I'd followed her shoes, because it's good to have your head down, making it hard for potential witnesses to see your face. She had a big expensive coat that was flapping around, and as soon as she

pushed past a big family making a goodbye scene on the platform, I moved in. She got jostled by the family, and I slid in and out so fast I never got to see her face. But more importantly, she didn't see mine. I got a better look at the photo on her identity card, which I pulled out of her wallet. How good am I at this? Well, a minute after I got her wallet I put it back in her coat—minus her ticket.

She'd have trouble identifying me because I'm wearing long pants and my puppet limbs aren't the big giveaway they usually are—fifteen-year-old amputees attract attention. Wait. She's coming down the aisle. I lean away pretending to sneeze and stay down wiping my nose on my sleeve. Also, a good technique to get witnesses to look away. Just gross them out.

And then the woman stops. Three feet from me. Has she made me? There are plenty of seats besides the ones near me. Why is she stopping? "Evaporate, go away," I'm chanting to myself. She's looking into the adjacent car. She looks at the seats near me. Ah, they're not clean. That's what's bothering her. I'm doing mad chanting right now, and she looks into the next car again, and I'm praying they have seats fit for a queen. It works. She exits into the next car and parks herself by the window. Blood rushes to my head. This, more or less, is the rush. The moment when you've gotten away with a slam. The moment when you're home free.

We're a little off track, so back to the news of the day. What was I talking about? Oh, yeah. Rijau and Wiji. I'm going to cheat here with what I got off the Web. Found this about Wiji on AiWiki.com.

*Wiji is a manufacturing city on the Yellow Sea with a population of 1.4 million. Traditionally a center for manufacturing in apparel, light industry, and metallurgy the city became an assembly center for consumer electronics*

*during the early 2000s. The Korean Kai Chen Reactor accident twenty-three years ago leaked millions of gallons of radioactive waste that ocean currents spread along coastlines up to 1500 miles away throughout Southeast Asia. Wiji's two-mile waterfront was especially hard hit due to the shape of Wiji harbor trapping toxic materials along a section of luxury waterfront homes and residential complexes for the ultra-wealthy. The Kai Chen accident came at the beginning of the great Asian recession resulting in the closure of 60% of Wiji's largest factories over a decade. Employment rose to 47%.*

*Between 2019 and 2030, the city's population fell by 34%, from the nation's 44<sup>th</sup> largest city to 67<sup>th</sup>, indicating a serious and long-running decline in economic strength. Crime levels soared while two major initiatives to open casinos, a new stadium, and park revitalization project failed to offset the city's reputation as a center of corruption and crime. The stadium never broke ground and the park project is being investigated for over \$16M in missing funds. Of the various projects only the Wiji Casino district opened in 2011 providing a small boost to the city.*

So beautifully put. Now let me explain more clearly how the city works today. Just noticed out the window the golden meteors of factory lights shooting past in the night. That means I'll be rolling into Wiji in under an hour. Plenty of time to lay out the gang scene for you.

Now that you get that Wiji is a broken city but paradise for crime, I'll let you in on a little secret AiWiki left out. What you need to know is that when half the working businesses collapsed and the smart managers and anyone with good skills left Wiji, the only way to make money was crime. The mayor got that. Yeah, the business council or whatever they're called keep trying to fix the place up like it's a real city and not the haven for criminals that the mayor engineered with the Triads, but

of course this was all top-secret. Triads are the Asian mafia. Usually they control gambling, loans, sex, drugs, and all kinds of digital and electronic slams. There's two of them, North and South, with the city divided up between them. The Northern Triad is by the far most powerful. In Wiji, the Northern Triad specializes in hacking for international clients, but they also run loans and counterfeiting. They have a deal with the casinos to manage illegal gambling for the high rollers. The Southern Triad is low end and manages street gambling and loan operations. For the most part, the Triads avoid conflicts with each other. That's good business.

How do I know all this? Because below the Triads you have the gangs. Street kids and runaways. We run little scams, like I said, sidewalk card games, begging, pilfering. We're under the supervision of the Southern Triad, but since we live in Rijau, isolated from the rest of the city on the pollution soaked waterfront that everyone avoids, we don't interact much with the Triads. They're as afraid of the waterfront and getting some kind of cancer as everyone else. Except us. We don't care. Gang members don't have much to lose.

Okay, I'm burnt. I've been up for, like, 21 hours. But I know you want to know about Rijau so I'll keep going to wrap this up. You owe me. Ha! The place I call home was built in 1987. Rijau Luxury Hotel and Apartments. It was around 70 acres with 19 acres of gardens and a fake river running through it with little pools, fountains, and garden stuff. The rich Rijauians had their own private park like kings from some royalty run country. The place looked kind of like a huge cross between a palace and a starship. There were two sets of three towers, six in all with a five-story arch where you entered that had stores in the base and offices for management on the higher floors. In the glory days, Rijau was the place to be for richies with about 90 apartments in all.

Train's slowing down. Passing under the lights of Wiji station.  
Home. More to come...

For more about SCRAPBOY and GC, visit [www.scrapboy.net](http://www.scrapboy.net)

There you will find GC's blog, movies and artwork along with a few other surprises. Free, I might add. It's a safe-haven for the adventurous, the thrill- seekers and the rebellious. It's all about *you*...

Okay, maybe not all. How about 84% about you? That seems fair. Fair to me. Ha!

See you there in the shadows...



## About the Author

GC

GC was born in Asia and was raised on the streets where she learned to be an ass-kicking pickpocket and slammer. Then she found a gang and Rijau which is all in the Scrapboy novel. Lately, after the battle for her home and the arrival of her unlikely companion Scrapboy, GC has been on the run moving from city to city while sending updates to her scrapboy.net site. GC is a career criminal, but is hoping to pursue other dreams provided she survives the Triads and interested parties dead set on recovering \$140million in hidden Triad funds and exacting revenge because that's what they do. GC likes spicy dumplings, songs about secrets and air without chunks of stuff in it.