

THE MARK

By

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EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

The wet ground reflects neon signs of motels, hash cafes, and brothels. Parked hov-cars line the empty street. In the distance stand giant glass towers beside the Seattle Space Needle.

KIDDO VOLK, 26, has Korean features with Caucasian skin and grey eyes. She has one hand stuffed in a pea coat with jeans, jackboots, gloves, and a schoolboy cap.

Smoke curls out her mouth from an E-cig. She talks on a phone of black plastic with ENZO.

ENZO (V.O.)

I narrowed down a list of donors from the site. I think you'll like 'em.

KIDDO

Nice. Do any of them look crazy, 'cause that shit's genetic.

ENZO (V.O.)

I think you'd be a better judge than me. I'll look back and pick the one that seems the most sane.

KIDDO

Can we meet any of these guys? It'd be easier face to face.

ENZO (V.O.)

I'll look it up. Hopefully it doesn't cost extra.

KIDDO

Shouldn't be a problem. After tonight, if the job goes well, we'll be set for rent and our soon-to-be family.

ENZO (V.O.)

Be safe out there. Can't have a baby without the female element.

KIDDO

I'm always safe. You don't have to worry.

ENZO (V.O.)

But I want too.

She smiles and pauses.

ENZO (V.O.)
...You still there?

KIDDO
Sorry, yeah, I'm here.

She glances up at the buildings and her smile goes straight.

KIDDO (CONT'D)
I gotta go. I'll be home in a
couple hours.

ENZO
Don't strain your arms too hard...

Kiddo looks at her hand. Between the glove and coat sleeve
she has a wrist of white plastic.

ENZO (CONT'D)
...The Model Fs can't handle
strenuous activity or the joints
will seize up.

KIDDO
Probably should've went for the Ds.
But I'm not doing anything rough.
Just a smash and grab.

ENZO
I hope not too much smashing or
I'll have to fix 'em again.

Kiddo chuckles.

KIDDO
Yeah... Well, I'll see you tonight,
babe.

ENZO (V.O.)
Okay. Love you.

KIDDO
Love you too.

She pockets her phone and stops before an old apartment.
Kiddo takes a notebook from her pocket. She glances at the
street number and climbs the stoop.

The glass directory beside the door lists names in blue
light.

She pockets the book and pulls out a hack-tool of wires, a motor, dial, and metal prongs on a magnet from her coat. Kiddo places it on the electric lock and twists the dial.

It TICKS. She watches the street before the tool DINGS and pockets it on her way inside.

INT. APARTMENT LOBBY - NIGHT

The interior looks old fashion, an imitation of the 1940's.

Kiddo takes off her cap, revealing her pink under-cut hair underneath. She stuffs it into her pants waist and ascends a stairwell.

INT. APARTMENT STAIRS - NIGHT

She pulls a cigarette case from her coat. One side holds a row of E-cigs and the other a stack of lock-picks. Kiddo puts away her cig and takes two picks.

INT. 5TH FLOOR HALL - NIGHT

Kiddo walks slow, eyes on the room numbers. One room over she freezes.

A lone door remains open.

Kiddo pockets the picks and pulls her razor. A 6" blade POPS out in sections. She holds it backwards and hugs the wall, her steps silent. Kiddo pushes the door open and looks in.

The apartment has a bed and bathroom in the open.

At a table before the single window sits JAPANESE SYNTH, 21. He has featureless skin and plastic hair. He slumps in the chair with a hole in his head, eyes open and jaw slack.

White blood drips down his face.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Kiddo moves in a combat stance.

She looks behind the door, under the bed, the closet, and closes the door. Kiddo relaxes, pockets the razor, and walks to Synth.

She pulls out his wallet and pockets his ID. Kiddo takes out her phone, swipes through the screens, and puts it to her ear. Someone picks up.

TAK (V.O.)
Moshi Moshi?

KIDDO
It's me.

TAK (V.O.)
Pinkerton! Job done?

KIDDO
Not by me.

TAK (V.O.)
How do you mean?

KIDDO
I'm looking at the Mark. He's got a hole in his head.

TAK (V.O.)
...Uh? Shit, this is bad. Did you see who did it?

KIDDO
The door was open when I got here. Nobody else around.

TAK (V.O.)
Oh, man. Can you still download the data?

KIDDO
Tak, he was shot in the head. I don't think there's anything left of his cyber brain.

TAK (V.O.)
Well, try anyway. We need that intel.

KIDDO
Okay. Hold on.

Kiddo pushes Synth onto the table, pulls a black cable from her coat, and plugs one end into the phone and the other into a socket in Synth's neck.

INSERT - KIDDO'S PHONE

A hologram screen comes on and flashes:

"LOADING"

Then it flashes in red:

"SOURCE INCOMPATIBLE".

BACK TO SCENE

Kiddo grimaces and yanks the cable out of Synth.

KIDDO (CONT'D)

Fuck!

She puts the phone to her ear.

KIDDO (CONT'D)

We're Barney. Maybe I could --

Kiddo's head cocks up at the sound of SIRENS. Out the window red and blue lights rotate against the alley wall.

TAK (V.O.)

What's going on, Pink.

KIDDO

Pigs. I'm putting you on hold.

Kiddo pockets her phone and cable. She jerks her head to the door, her eyes wide at the sound of heavy FOOTSTEPS.

She shoves the table, opens the window, and takes off her gloves, her prosthetic hands like pale doll parts. From her finger tips POP small blades and Kiddo climbs out.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Dumpsters and garbage bags sit below the building. Kiddo holds the window sill and drags the blades through the masonry on her way down.

Five feet from the ground she hops off the wall and lands on the ground. She makes a brisk run for the opposite side of the alley.

The blades retract and Kiddo puts on her gloves and cap. She pulls out her phone just as she comes out of the alley

KIDDO

I'm out.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

She rounds the corner and heads up the street. Kiddo's pace increases.

TAK (V.O.)
Cool. Did they see you?

KIDDO
I don't think so.

TAK (V.O.)
Keep it that way and get your ass
back here.

KIDDO
Alright... Is Cici awake?

TAK (V.O.)
Yeah, he's here.

KIDDO
Good. I got a feeling he might know
something about this.

Kiddo hangs up.

EXT. CLUB - NIGHT

A vertical sign that reads: "LE SPEAK" in blue stands above an awning over a basement. On the sidewalk to the right stands LARGE BOUNCER in a zoot suit.

HUMANS and SYNTHS make up the line in attire from the 1920's and some in modern dress of ripped jeans, yoga pants, and leather.

Kiddo comes in parallel to the line. Bouncer lets her in and she descends the steps.

INT. CLUB ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Mechanical doors covered in wood paneling open down the middle at Kiddo's approach.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Live JAZZ plays from a corner stage and a bar stands to the left. Six MUSICIANS play, both Human and Synth, dressed in tuxedos. PATRONS crowd the entirety of the space.

Kiddo pushes through, eying the Patrons in modern dress and reaches the back wall.

Beside a door leans TAK STERLING, 25, Japanese American in a cobalt three piece suit, his left eye a blue prosthesis.

TAK
You made it!

KIDDO
He in?

TAK
You bet. Were you followed?

KIDDO
Not a chance. And what's with all the scrubs outta dress?

TAK
More covers.

KIDDO
At the cost of making this joint look like any other.

Tak opens the door and follows her in.

INT. CLUB OFFICE - NIGHT

Photos cover the walls, with a Persian rug on the floor, and a wooden desk pushed to the back. Behind the desk stands a large chair with a small one in front.

CICERO, 71, bald and cross-eyed, sits in the large chair in a dark olive pinstripe suit. He stands and smiles when Kiddo and Tak come inside.

CICERO
I'm so glad you're safe, Pink. When Takashi told me what happened, I called Mitty and had 'im wipe the cop servers. They don't know nothing.

Kiddo sits and Tak stands behind Cicero against the wall. Cicero sits down, back straight.

CICERO (CONT'D)
Now, tell me how it went down. Did you nab the data?

She pauses, her posture tense, and fists opening and closing.

KIDDO

I owe you a lot, boss. You gave me citizenship, new arms, this job, and I met Enzo in the process.

Her grip increases tighter and tighter.

KIDDO (CONT'D)

I try to control myself, but when you do some comic book shit like this, I don't give a damn how sore I get.

Cicero's eyebrow goes up.

KIDDO (CONT'D)

The Mark, that snitch for the Daté...

She pulls the ID and tosses it onto the desk.

KIDDO (CONT'D)

...I found him with a hole in his head just before the pigs marched in.

Cicero examines the card.

CICERO

Kiddo, the guy was a stoolie. He could have been working all kinds of angles and made all sorts of enemies.

KIDDO

That's usually how it goes, but do you know what I think?

CICERO

...I got an idea.

KIDDO

I think you pegged me for the Fall Guy.

She draws her razor.

KIDDO (CONT'D)

You clipped the Mark to get me pinched so the Shogun wouldn't come after you, knowing his man's killer was in a cube. You tried to fuck me

--

The blade comes out. Tak flinches and steps to the side, away from Cicero.

KIDDO (CONT'D)
-- And without my permission.

Cicero sighs and interlocks his fingers on the desk.

CICERO
I assume you have enough sense to listen if I still have my head. So, let me ask you this: why would I sell you out after all my hard work?

Kiddo's eyes narrow.

CICERO (CONT'D)
You know what I saw when you came off my boat? A hardboiled, Russo-Asian bitch with just two legs and the sand of ronin.

He points at her.

CICERO (CONT'D)
I saw something great in you and that's why I spent the dough to get you better. You're as much an investment as a prodigy, Kiddo. I'm proud of what I've done and how you've turned out.

Tak looks from one to the other, sweat on his brow.

CICERO (CONT'D)
With all that in mind, do you honestly think I'd sell you out to the fuckin' Yakuza for a few city blocks?

Kiddo remains silent, her eyes watering. The blade retracts and she exhales a long held breath, wiping her eyes.

KIDDO
I... I didn't know what I was thinking. I saw the guy, then the cops, and jumped to conclusions. I snapped too soon.

Cicero smiles.

CICERO
It's just your nature, Pink, my
favorite part.

Kiddo takes out an E-cig for a liberal drag.

KIDDO
I should use my brain more.

CICERO
Well let's use it now, eh?

Cicero leans back.

CICERO (CONT'D)
The only people who knew the
details about this job were me and
you.

He looks back to Tak.

CICERO (CONT'D)
Takashi, you didn't know anything
until this morning, right?

Tak unbuttons his suit jacket.

TAK
Yes, sir.

KIDDO
Couldn't've been the Daté. They
don't throw away people like
rubbers. It's suicide or exile. On
top of that...

She takes the cig out her mouth to rub her eyes.

KIDDO (CONT'D)
...They don't use guns --

THUMP.

Kiddo jumps out her chair, dropping the cig.

Cicero hits the desk with a hole behind his ear. Tak stands
behind with a suppressed pistol. Kiddo stares at Cicero and
then Tak. He sighs.

TAK
Wow. I really fucked up on this
one.

He holsters the pistol in his jacket.

TAK (CONT'D)
Maybe it'll turn out better in the
long-run.

Kiddo keeps her eyes on him.

KIDDO
Wha... What did you do?

Tak puts his hands up toward her.

TAK
Before you try to kill me, I want
you to know I never had anything
against you, Pink. Bottom-line, I
had to kill 'im for the good of the
gang. We get to stay alive and keep
doing what we want.

He relaxes and straightens his suit. Kiddo does not break her
stare. Tak gets antsy, too nervous to stare back.

TAK (CONT'D)
I set you up, to set him up.
Thought you'd be pissed enough to
kill him on sight. Also, don't
worry about the pigs. I had Mitty
send those guys just to make noise.

KIDDO
...What the fuck were you thinking?

Tak walks to Cicero and lays him on the floor.

TAK
Clearer than this schnook. You
think a couple miles of Seattle is
worth a war, the lives of our
friends, your boyfriend, and the
kids you guys wanna have?

He takes out a handkerchief and wipes the blood off the desk.

TAK (CONT'D)
I didn't think so either... I
called the Shogun and made a deal
under the condition Cici dies.

Kiddo fists ball so tight the seams of her gloves RIP open.
Her finger joints WHINE from overuse.

TAK (CONT'D)

All and all, everything worked out. I had to kill the Mark, but the ends justify the means. We get to keep our territory in exchange for ten percent. Tomorrow we're meeting the Shogun to set it all in stone.

Tak sits in the chair, Cicero beside him.

TAK (CONT'D)

So how 'bout it, Kiddo? Wanna be my second in command?

She leaps over the desk. Tak falls with Kiddo on top, her blade to his neck, his arms pinned by her legs. Tears stream from her eyes.

KIDDO

It's a pretty sweet deal, but I want a reason. I wanna reason why I shouldn't slice you open!

Tak remains frozen to the floor.

TAK

Y-your job, the money, your life, your man? Wanna lose that? I'm keeping us safe and the Daté from turning this town into Vancouver.

KIDDO

You think I care about a thick wallet? You think I give a shit if I'm alive? Know what really matters in my book?

He shakes his head and Kiddo moves closer.

KIDDO (CONT'D)

A body-count.

Tak talks slow.

TAK

I know you've been saving up for a whole year to make that trip to the fertilization clinic in San Fran. You think a turf war or being dead will helped you get there? Hmm?

Kiddo's breath quickens.

TAK (V.O.)

I know you wanna kill me, but you need to understand that clipping Cici saved everyone --

KIDDO

-- Know what honor means? It's not sneaking around your friends making shit deals. It's challenging your enemy in bloodshed. The Daté have none if they use stoolies like you. What makes you think they're worth what you've destroyed?

TAK

You don't have to see them or me, even! I can text you jobs and send a courier with cash. You get your family and everybody wins. This samurai shit won't get you none of that.

Kiddo's fists shake.

TAK (CONT'D)

You... you wanna roll for tonight?
I can add it to what Cici owes you?

She pushes Tak's head down and raises the blade.

Kiddo stops, razor-arm locked back, when her phone VIBRATES. She pockets the razor and pulls the phone.

INSERT - KIDDO'S PHONE

The screen reads:

NEW MESSAGE FROM ENZO.

She presses the tile and reads the message:

Keepin bed warm. Found donor u might like ;)

BACK TO SCENE

Kiddo stares at the message. She wipes her cheeks and smiles.

INSERT - KIDDO'S PHONE

She selects: REPLY and types:

Omw. Love you <3

BACK TO SCENE

With the message sent, a silence falls. Kiddo gets off Tak and walks to the front, her back to the desk.

Tak stands and corrects the chair. He lays a roll of red dollar bills on the desk. Kiddo snatches it without making eye contact. Tak opens his mouth to speak then flinches.

KIDDO

Put him where he belongs.

Tak sits Cicero in the chair and makes him look presentable. Kiddo turns, stares at the body, then looks at Tak.

KIDDO (CONT'D)

If I see you in his chair again,
I'm taking your head.

She opens the door and walks out, the knob left with an indentation of her fist.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Kiddo rushes past BUMS and DRUNKEN HIPSTERS in her walk, her gloves torn apart.

She slows and stops before a store window of mannequins in a winter setting. She puts her back to the glass, her breath fast and eyes red.

She reaches for the cigarette case. It falls from her fingers, the joints too stiff for movement. Kiddo struggles to pick up the case and opens it.

She takes a long drag and squats. Her breath calms into a normal rhythm. She pulls the roll and stares at Benjamin Franklin's holographic face.

Kiddo pockets the money and stands. She tosses her shredded gloves into a garbage can and goes on her way, hands in her coat.