

The Killer Instinct is Alive and Well, and Living in Chicago

By

J. E. Clarke

Copyright
2015
Janetgoodman@yahoo.com

FADE IN ON:

INT. MURPHY'S BAR - NIGHT

Neon lights flicker overhead; brass fixtures too dull to reflect. The floor's mottled with beer - and numerous suspicious stains.

KIRK (30s) hunches on his bar stool - good looking, but disheveled. He clutches a whiskey in his hand. His jacket collar hides stubble on his chin. And apathy in his eye.

A fat BARTENDER washes glasses.

Except for a PROSTITUTE at a far table, Kirk's the only customer in sight.

Kirk lights a cigarette. The Bartender shoots him a look: stop that.

Kirk flips the guy the finger. Gestures for a refill.

The Bartender looks annoyed, but complies.

Kirk sucks down smoke, and holds it in his lungs.

The Bartender tops off his glass. Then turns and cranks a radio: to an oldies station: BLUES and JAZZ.

Kirk bobs his head and listens. Then exhales - in the bar-keep's face. The greasy man COUGHS. Turns away.

Kirk focuses on his drink. From the pleasure on his face, the booze is clearly his best friend.

KIRK (V.O.)

Mandy. Sweet Mandy. The perfect girl of my dreams. And the love of my pathetic, broken life.

He takes a gulp of whiskey. Grimaces. The silky liquid burns his throat.

KIRK (V.O.)

You can't know where I disappeared. You probably called the police. Worried clear out of your mind.

Kirk removes a note-pad from his jacket and fumbles for a pen. The one he finds: nearly out of ink. He shakes it - scribbles away.

KIRK (V.O.)

I shoulda called you. I didn't. Cause you wouldn't have believed me. No way. God knows the fight that'd bring. So I decided to write a note instead. If you're reading this, you found it fine. I hid it in your apartment myself. An area I knew you'd clean.

The Bartender slides a bar-tab across the counter.

Kirk reads it with dismay.

He scrambles in his pocket, pulls out wadded bills.

Wire sculpting tools tumble out as well - fall and CLINK to the floor.

Kirk ignores them and counts the money with care. Based on his face, it's tragically short. But Bartender takes it anyway.

Kirk shrugs. Turns to his notes.

KIRK (V.O.)

I know you think this is betrayal. You've stuck with *me* through thick and thin. Back when business was booming, I was slinging latex every day. A whirlwind of activity: tons of indie slashers on my plate. But then, the 3d guys became the rage. Leaving me with nothing but a broken Mix Master in my studio. Dirty plasticine stuck to the tiles.

He gestures for another drink.

The Bartender shakes his head: no freebies, guy.

Kirk shrugs, concentrates on the jazz.

KIRK (V.O.)

Don't think I don't love you. But a life of poverty, with a has-been FX artist? That's what I'm saving you from.

The pen runs lower on ink. Kirk shakes it - writes again.

The entrance bell CHIMES. The Bartender's head swivels towards the noise - the joy of a better customer on his face.

A SHADOWY MAN stands silhouetted at the door. A thin form, in a London Fog trench. Topped by a gray felt fedora. 50s style.

The Stranger strolls to the bar and sits down next to Kirk. The wide brimmed hat hides his face.

The Bartender heads towards him. But the Stranger waves him away.

Instead, the man reaches out a pale, long fingered hand - slides Kirk's notebook his way.

He tears out a blank page. Steals Kirk's pen.

Kirk glares at the intruder. Snatches his notebook away.

He squints at the man's face: sees only shadows and silver eyes. Kirk recoils - suddenly afraid.

The Stranger finishes writing.

He nudges the page over to Kirk's whiskey. Kirk's face lights up as he reads:

INSERT ON THE NOTE: We have a gig for you. Lifetime work. All expenses will be paid.

Puddles of booze soak through the paper and the words.

Kirk opens his mouth to speak - his words are slurred.

KIRK

Lifetime work? You know I'm a makeup artist, right? Creature features. Prosthetics. Squibs. What are you mistaking me for... a hitman?

The mysterious Stranger shakes his head.

He picks up the soggy note. Adds extra words to the page.

INSERT ON THE NOTE: We need to discuss contract terms. Meet me in the bathroom.

The Stranger gets up quickly, walks towards the John. His trench coat SWISHES as he disappears.

Kirk locks eyes with the Bartender. The question between them, utterly clear. 'Should I follow? Is it wise?'

Kirk stands up. Saunters towards the bathroom as well.

The Bartender rolls his eyes. It's clearly not his business. He turns his back on the sight.

Kirk reaches the bathroom. Jazz and GIGGLES from the prostitute violate on his ears.

He puts a hand on the bathroom door. Hesitates.

KIRK (V.O.)

My plans have been in motion for awhile.
I was gonna go someplace far away.
Detroit, maybe. Or Cleveland. I've got a
cousin that has a couch he can spare. As
long as I leave Chicago in the dust, any
place would be okay. Then HE arrived. And
everything in my world changed.

Kirk steels his nerves - walks inside.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Broken tile. Stained urinals. Even funkier than the bar.

The Stranger waits in the middle of the room; face still hidden by the hat.

His unsettling eyes glint at Kirk.

Kirk enters. The bathroom door closes. CREAAAAAK.

The Stranger slides off his trench coat, and drapes it over one arm - revealing a bare, grayish chest.

Kirk throws on the brakes. Stops on a dime.

KIRK

Hey, man. This ain't no gay thing. Right?

The Stranger shakes his head "no."

GARBLED SOUNDS squeak from his mouth - like a cassette tape on fast forward.

Kirk backs away.

The Stranger holds up a hand: wait.

The man spots a roll of tissue paper on the sink. He turns it to a dry side, then rapidly starts to write.

INSERT ON TOILET ROLL: Please don't be frightened. I mean no harm. We need our privacy.

The Stranger digs into his trench, and pulls out a glowing cube.

He gestures to Kirk to hold out his hand. Kirk does so - hypnotized. Sparks from the cube reflect in his eyes.

KIRK

Wow. That's some mad-ass tech.

(V.O.)

Mandy, I swear I thought he was just a weirdo. Until the guy took off his hat.

Long, thin fingers reach up and remove the fedora.

Revealing - the strangest face:

Silver eyes. Not much nose. The Stranger's mouth opens to speak; mandibles twitch at four corners.

MORE GARBLED NOISES come out. They're not even close to English. Or anything human. At all.

Kirk jumps back. Then his gut instincts kick in. He steps forward - squints at the Stranger's face.

KIRK

Wow. Superb effects, man. You can do animatronics like this, what the fuck you need *me* for?

The Stranger deposits the cube into Kirk's hand.

Electricity CRACKLES over his skin. A flood of IMAGES invade Kirk's mind.

BEGIN MONTAGE

A symbolic march of decades. Centuries. Spaceflight and evolution, as well. A blending of humans with bio-tech. Resulting in hairless versions of... the Stranger.

END MONTAGE

A spasm ripples through Kirk's body. He holds onto the cube for dear life.

KIRK

Holy shit. You're... real?

He reaches out towards the Stranger's face. Childlike wonder in his eyes.

KIRK

This is better than I ever designed!

The Stranger steps forward. Gray flesh meets human fingers - briefly. Kirk flinches, doesn't shy away.

Those long fingers penetrate the cube. The Stranger peers into Kirk's conflicted face.

The cube interprets the creature's next words:

THE STRANGER

You see? We are different. Future. Past.
We have changed. So we need you.

KIRK

(gasps)
You need me? What for?

THE STRANGER

For Entertainment. Pleasure.

KIRK

I thought you said this wasn't gay.

The cube flickers again. More images invade Kirk's mind.

INSERT:

A space-aged theater plays a movie in hologram form. A CROWD OF HUMANOID watch closely - rapture on their unnaturally smooth faces.

A HUMANOID CHILD reaches for the picture. Its hand passes through the image. The vision's composed of pure light - so no contact is made.

THE STRANGER (O.S.)

We want you to come to us. Make things we can see. And really feel.

Kirk tears his eyes from the sight. He looks around the bathroom - takes in reality. Not quite comprehending.

KIRK

Why me? You have technology.

A sad expression fills the Stranger's face.

THE STRANGER

But we have lost the art. Creativity. We need you. Like the artist Rembrandt. You are a sculptor. Painter. A perfect craftsman... in the physical domain.

KIRK
 (whispers)
 You picked me over Stan Winston? Savini
 and Bottin? Talk about getting flattered.
 Wow.

THE STRANGER
 You are what they called in your day "low
 profile". A man who won't be missed. Or
 cause ripples in the time stream.

Kirk's face falls. The insult clear.

KIRK
 You want me to - join you in the future?
 A "lifetime"? Forever?

THE STRANGER
 Yes. We will give you everything you
 desire. And you will make us... happy.

The Stranger takes back the cube and shrugs the trench
 coat on again. It turns to Kirk and spits out words, each
 one as GARBLED as before.

So the Stranger pulls out the cube again. Presses it
 against Kirk's palm.

THE STRANGER
 You agree?

KIRK
 It's all so sudden. I don't know!

THE STRANGER
 Think it over. Sign this. Here.

The Stranger pockets the cube. He pulls out a rolled up
 electronic tablet, and hands it to Kirk to sign. Kirk
 gapes at the gadget - impressed.

KIRK
 Wow. Apple sees this, Jobs'll turn over
 in his grave and shit himself!

The Stranger puts the fedora on, hides its face. He
 guides Kirk out of the bathroom, into -

INT. MURPHY'S BAR - NIGHT

Kirk hunches at the counter - revises his note to Mandy.
 The Stranger sits close by. Patient. Waiting.

The Bartender squints suspiciously at the men.

BARTENDER

You guys were in the John a long time.

KIRK

Nothing to concern yourself about,
friend.

BARTENDER

Yeah. I ain't your girlfriend.

The Bartender winks at the still-present prostitute. He edges far away from Kirk... and the silent Stranger.

Kirk keeps writing, the roll-up tablet in his lap.

KIRK (V.O.)

So Mandy - that's what happened. Really. They gave me an offer I can't refuse. I keep them entertained, and they let me earn my keep. I won't be a parasite, like I am with you. So don't be worried when I disappear. Maybe I'll come back some day. If so, I'll have so many stories to tell. But even if I don't, please know this. I may be living in the future. But I'll always think of you.

Kirk pockets the note, signs the tablet in his lap. He passes it to the Stranger - the gesture hidden by the bar. The Bartender raises an eyebrow in distaste.

BARTENDER

Hey, chump-sticks. Watch what you do with the hands. This here is a public place!

The Stranger stands up and tosses money on the counter. He rests a hand on Kirk's shoulder, and leads him towards the exit.

KIRK

Fine, it's a deal. But you gotta let me go to Mandy's first. I wanna put this note somewhere.

Lilting JAZZ follows their footsteps. The Stranger opens the entrance door. Kirk peers into his face. Smiles.

KIRK

This is going to be the start of a beautiful friendship.

He waves goodbye to the Bartender, and steps bravely into the night.

EXT. ALLEYWAY

Kirk and the Stranger walk down a stony corridor. A TIME PORTAL appears - glowing a brilliant blue-white. The two approach it... slowly.

KIRK (V.O.)

Mandy, I hope you understand. I'll see you again. Sometime.

The portal FLASHES. They disappear. Smoke and fog obscure the trail.

CREDITS: Dedicated to the geniuses of the FX world. Dick Smith. Rick Baker. Rob Bottin. Tom Savini and Stan Winston. Before the days of 3d - true artists before their time.

FINAL FADE OUT: