

ANY COLOR, AS LONG AS IT'S BLACK

Written by

Justin Best

Justin Best
917.363.0721
justinmbest@gmail.com
bxbstudios.com
#1948858

EXT. STREET - DUSK.

Rain POURS down. An obnoxiously loud electronic punk/glam version of "Kool Thing" by Sonic Youth floods our ear drums.

A HOODED FIGURE walks through filthy streets past the junkies and bums, the red burning circle of a cigarette the only light from under a dirty hoodie.

WALKER (V.O.)

Nobody gets to choose where they're born. And a lotta people, they don't get to choose where they die.

A human-shaped figure nearby. Large pieces of skin are missing exposing metal - a spine, a cheekbone, a hand. A mob of people prepare to destroy what's left of this robot.

WALKER (V.O.)

Some people will tell you that what happens in between, we don't got a lotta choice about that either. When you're down here, it's hard to argue with that.

The Hood turns the corner, steps in a puddle, keeps walking. A street corner preacher holds up a book and sermonizes, unheard.

WALKER (V.O.)

I heard about this thing called apophenia. It's when you see patterns in things that aren't really there. Like numbers in a card game or Jesus in your toast.

The Hood carelessly tosses some cash to the preacher. Nearby bums descend on the man. The Hood keeps walking.

WALKER (V.O.)

You know in your heart of hearts that God don't give a shit about your breakfast. That none of this means nothing. But you don't want to believe that. So you look for a little piece of hope wherever you can.

The Hood stops in front of a rundown building with a line of rough looking kids outside. He joins the line. This is the UC ROCK CLUB.

WALKER (V.O.)

You start to connect things that aren't there. And when you start doing that, you miss the things that are.

INT. ROCK CLUB ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The hooded figure walks in the club's front door. Calling it a shithole is an insult to shitholes everywhere, but it's full of scantily clad women and tough-looking guys.

STEVE, a surly looking bouncer wearing sunglasses (inside, at night) stands near DEMION MORTEM, just the type of long-haired, slimy creep who would own a place like this.

MORTEM

All right, all right, all right you filthy, scumsucking shits. It's 40 cold hard. No credit. No scanners. And absolutely no fuckin' toasters! 40. Cold as my ex, hard as my dick. Pay up, pay up! C'mon! Let's go.

The kids walk past Mortem handing him cash, as they are scanned, like a barcode. A buzzer goes off as one particularly HANDSOME KID walks through, handing Mortem the cash.

MORTEM (CONT'D)

What the fuck is this?

HANDSOME KID

Huh? It's cash old man. Just like you asked for.

MORTEM

Nonono. First of all, I'm 97. I'm not old. Second of all, your - whaddyacallit?- bios are all fucked up.

HANDSOME KID

Maybe its your shithole reader that's fucked then.

MORTEM

Huh, you know what? Maybe it is. Let's find out.

Steve grabs the kid while MORTEM produces a huge knife and stabs it right through the kid's hand. Blood pours out, but the kid doesn't scream. No one else seems to notice.

MORTEM (CONT'D)

You goddamn socket fucker! I knew it. Steve, get this fuckin' plug-in out of my sight.

HANDSOME KID

Fuck you, you old skin bag. The only reason you're even still alive is because I built the tech that props your old ass up. You can't even get out of this shithole. You're --

Steve the bouncer grabs the kid and throws him out of the club. Mortem stuffs the kid's cash into his pocket.

The hooded figure makes his way up to the front, walks through the scanner.

DEMION MORTEM

You'd better be flesh and blood only, my friend.

HOOD

As bloody as anyone else in here.

MORTEM counts the cash, two twenties on top and four hundred dollar bills - cold, hard cash- underneath.

DEMION MORTEM

Oh, Glorious. This'll do.

He smiles and motions for STEVE to let The Hood through, before pocketing the cash and turning back to the kids in line.

DEMION MORTEM (CONT'D)

Alright, alright. C'mon ya shits.

INT. UC ROCK CLUB STAGE AREA - NIGHT

Bikers. Rockers. Groupies. It's shoulder-to-shoulder. Claustrophobic. The hooded man attracts no attention as he makes his way through the crowd.

On stage, is J.J. FOXX, a flamboyant, gender-fluid rock diva. She stands, a rockstar of the future in leather, lace, gas, and light. Her skin glows and pulsates.

JJ is what's called, in local slang, a SWITCH - a relatively new subculture, she is genetically modified to change her gender, almost at will.

Her band is playing the music that we've heard so far. The hooded figure watches her from the crowd.

JJ

Thanks for coming out tonight,
fuckers! That's it for us!

J.J. wraps up her set and heads to the dressing room.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

J.J. enters her dressing room and collapses into a chair. She grabs a glass and a clear bottle and starts to down shots without even thinking. A reflection catches her eye.

JJ

Hey buddy, ain't no one allowed
back here but the band.

Camera focuses on the entry way to the dressing room where The Hood stands, outlined in the doorway. He gives a polite golf clap.

HOOD

Great show tonight, JJ. I think I
might just have become a fan.

J.J. sizes him up, and, despite her warning, allows him to stay. She takes another shot and pulls a razor out of a bag, making a small incision in her arm.

She relaxes and we zoom in to see thousands of tiny robots flooding her system.

JJ

You *might* have become a fan? Well
let me tell you, there ain't no
middle ground with JJ, honey.
Either you is or you ain't.

The Hood steps forward, closes the door behind him.

HOOD

Well, in that case, I... is.

Another step forward.

HOOD (CONT'D)

What is that huh? Splurge? Sweet?
Slice? What do you think? You dig
it?

JJ gives him a hard look.

JJ

I dig it.

HOOD

Yeah? You like how those little fuckin' machines just get down inside of you huh? I love that shit. Of course, I'd suck the last drops out of vodka enema, so who the hell am I to talk?

JJ turns. We swirl into her eyes as she scans The Hood sitting near her.

Inside her head, we meet JJ's ARCHETYPE, JYNNY. Similar in dress and appearance, Jynny is JJ's personal, advanced 'Siri'. She knows anything and everything about JJ.

She stands to the side of JJ's vision and communicates directly with JJ. A white transparent "M" sits in the lower right corner.

JYNNY

Yo, JJ, this guy is seriously ghost. I've searched everywhere. He's got no bios. No profiles. I know you won't listen, but I'm telling you - this guy -or whatever he is- needs to go.

The Hood is speaking, but we can't hear him due to Jynny.

JYNNY (CONT'D)

Plus, I'm required to tell you that your blood pressure is currently 159/92. This is due to the temporary effects of the nano-based pharmaceuticals you recently injected, combined with the apprehension you're feeling due to the unknown fuck-ed-ness of this thing over here. Again, I know right where this is gonna go, but I am programmed to inform you that you should immediately head to the nearest hospital --

JJ blinks and cuts her off.

JJ

What the fuck are you? I got no bios on you. You an Art or something?

HOOD

Me? Nothing artificial about me.
I'm as real as anything else in
this world.

J.J. sits up, annoyed.

HOOD (CONT'D)

I'm just a fan of music. And you.
And drugs. You know, if you're
looking to get really sloppy, then
I've got some SVA right here. It'll
get you higher than --

JJ

Look, all I'm *looking* to do is get
my money and get the fuck out of
this shithole. So, if you're not
here to pay me, then what are you
here for?

The hood stands up.

HOOD

Oh JJ, I'm not here to pay you.

He pulls out a knife and walks towards JJ.

HOOD (CONT'D)

I'm here to kill you.

EXT. MOVING - STREET SIDEWALK - NIGHT

A young, happy couple walk hand-in-hand down the sidewalk.

WALKER (V.O.)

A lotta people wanna see miracles
in their cereal or on their TV.

The man is a YOUNG KINION JAMES WALKER (28), African-
American, strong, smiling, clean-shaven. He wears a suit.

His beautiful fiancée, ANGELA (26), wears an evening dress
and a decent sized rock on her hand.

They're both happily tipsy.

WALKER (V.O.)(CONT'D)

And they're so busy lookin', they
don't realize all the miracles that
are happening right in front of
their face.

ANGELA

You know, Mr. Walker, we could really do something here. You cleaning up the streets. Me in the courtroom.

YOUNG WALKER

You think so huh? You think we could make a difference.

ANGELA

I know so.

Close up as YOUNG WALKER brings ANGELA in close. They laugh, smile, and are about to kiss. Until ANGELA's eyes roll back in her head and she starts convulsing. ANGELA'S face starts to spin and becomes fuzzy.

Another dark figure appears in the background, like a shadow. Everything disintegrates into darkness.

WALKER (V.O.)

Until it's too late.

INT. WALKER'S OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

Darkness. Rain thuds hard against unseen windows. LYRICA, Walker's archetype, female, Hispanic, appears on the screen. She looks hard, gritty, fit.

The screen is fuzzy, but gradually becomes more clear. A transparent "M" is in the lower right corner. A ticker scrolls across the bottom of the screen -

"Mega-Corps meet to discuss Martian independence. Raymond Montgomery says more research is needed."

"Vandi VanZeel to perform two nights at Montgomery Gardens. Tickets sold out."

"Industry experts claim that latest Montgomery announcement will include whole brain emulation."

"Study claims physical movement still offers health benefits."

LYRICA

Wake up, Walker. It's 10:37 am on a Monday morning. Your pulse is of course high. Your blood pressure sucks and your system is full of more chemicals than a pharmacy.

(MORE)

LYRICA (CONT'D)

As a creation of Montgomery
Advanced Intelligence Laboratories,
I am required to tell you that all
of this can be easily fixed with
the latest and most modestly priced
modifications from Montgomery
Personal Nanotronics --

WALKER

Jesus, Lyr. What the hell are you
doing waking me up at this hour?

Cut to today's KINION JAMES WALKER (38), grizzled, head down
on the desk. He may have seen better days, but he's still fit
and intense. He rubs his eyes.

Lyrica appears next to him as a type of hologram.

LYRICA

And Genenetics. Well, good morning
to you too, sunshine. You've got a
visitor. Thought you might want to
see her, since you know, you
haven't had a client in I don't
know how long. That's just an
expression, Walker. I of course do
know how long, but I don't think
you want to know.

WALKER

Well, get her story and let me get
back to sleep.

LYRICA

No can do buckaroo. She's here. In
the building.

He lifts his head up.

WALKER

Here? Physically?

LYRICA

Yeah, big brain. Right here in the
actual flesh and blood.

WALKER

Shit.

Walker fumbles around for a cigarette and pours himself a
drink from a bottle in the drawer. He continues to search
through the desk - a pistol, some pictures, papers.

WALKER (CONT'D)

Who the hell actually physically shows up? Why didn't she just send her arch like a normal person?

LYRICA

Maybe she just couldn't resist your charming personality.

Finally, he finds what he's looking for - a cigarette case. He reaches in and pulls out a razor blade, making a small incision across the back of his forearm.

WALKER

What the hell happened last night?

LYRICA

If you want a buddy Walker, get a dog. You have programmed me to not make any record of your gallivanting. This includes updates to social or recording for your own

--

WALKER

Yeah, yeah, ok. It's probably better I don't know.

LYRICA

Although I have no record of last night, I am fairly confident in saying it's better you don't know.

WALKER

Well, give me the bios on our visitor.

LYRICA

Sending you all info and social sites.

Lyrica speaks as the information scrolls across Walker's vision, along with a picture of ERIKA MONTGOMERY (28), thin, powerful, and dressed to kill.

LYRICA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Erika Montgomery. Identifies as female. Age: 28. Occupation: CEO of the Montgomery Mega-Corps. Good work if you can get it. Currently resides here in our fair city in the beautiful Montgomery Islands. I don't think I need to tell you that her bank roll is huge.

(MORE)

LYRICA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Metrics are normal. All-in-all, I'd say there's a high probability she is lost.

WALKER
Now, Lyr, you don't know that.

LYRICA
You are correct, Walker. I do not know it. Actually, I highly suspect she is here -for some reason- intentionally. People like her don't tend to get lost. The question is "why is she here?".

Walker's office is a one room hole in the wall with a desk and chair for visitors. Walker walks across the room. He wears a pair of jeans and a dirty black t-shirt.

He opens the door to reveal Erika. Tall, strong, female, she is dressed finely in boots, dress, gloves, and fur.

ERIKA
Detective Walker, I presume?

WALKER
You already know it is.

Walker takes a drink and walks away from the door. He's beaten down, but he keeps himself straight. Erika takes off her gloves and takes a step in.

ERIKA
May I come in?

WALKER
You're a Montgomery. You can do whatever you want.

Walker sits at his desk. Erika walks in and takes a seat on the wooden chair across from him.

ERIKA
I see that my arch was right. You are as charming as ever.

WALKER
And handsome too.

Erika reaches into her purse and pulls a cigarette out of fine silver cigarette case. She waits for Walker, but he makes no attempt, so she lights up herself.

WALKER (CONT'D)

Since when do Montgomery's light up? I thought you all just patched it in...

ERIKA

Like you, Detective, I prefer the real thing.

WALKER

Looks like you and me got a lot in common.

ERIKA

Practically twins.

WALKER

So what brings Erika Montgomery all the way down here? In person?

Erika leans back, highlighted by the shadows.

ERIKA

I need your help, Mr. Walker. Isn't that why people usually come here?

WALKER

People don't usually come here, Ms. Montgomery. I didn't know Montgomery's ever needed help.

ERIKA

That's because you don't know the Montgomerys, Mr. Walker. A friend of mine was murdered last night. I want you to find out who did it.

Walker is skeptical.

WALKER

Then get one of your private army to do it.

ERIKA

True, I could do that, but I believe you may be better suited for the job.

Walker takes another drink and fidgets nervously, trying to not show how badly he needs another hit. Erika notices.

ERIKA (CONT'D)

Yes, Mr. Walker, if anyone knows you, they know you as a loser.

(MORE)

ERIKA (CONT'D)

A drunk, slice whore, switch chaser. And you are all of those things. But you're also a man with a certain kind of code. And that's hard to find around here.

Walker looks at her. Erika takes a long drag on her cigarette. The burning of the cigarette combines with the smoke and surroundings to start to form Angela's face.

ERIKA (CONT'D)

And I will pay you. Enough for you to get high as a kite and never come down if that's what you want.

Walker looks away before returning to face Erika. The shapes have returned to normal.

WALKER

I don't take those kind of cases anymore. I do mostly small time stuff now.

ERIKA

I'll pay you. Up front. With as many zeroes as it takes to keep you motivated.

Walker looks her in the eye, hesitates, before finally speaking.

WALKER

What's the deal?

We're back behind Walker's eyes as he downloads all of the information about JJ and her murder.

ERIKA

Her name was Jmi Jhenna Fox, one X, but, if you know her, then you know her as JJ Foxx, with two X's because it's more dangerous, I guess. She's a singer or she was. She was found stabbed several times last night at the UC night club.

We're back in the room with Erika and Walker.

WALKER

The UC? She a Switch?

ERIKA

Of sorts, although she generally only shifts for the stage.

(MORE)

ERIKA (CONT'D)
I preferred her female, and that's
how she preferred herself.

WALKER
You preferred her female?

Erika says nothing, looks at Walker coolly.

WALKER (CONT'D)
A lot of switchers getting offed
recently. What's so special about
this one?

ERIKA
That is not the business I'm paying
you to figure out. Besides, with
all your various proclivities, I
thought you might have a soft spot
for this case.

Walker shrugs, takes a drink.

ERIKA (CONT'D)
The meatbags that pass as the local
authorities are there now. I've
managed to keep them somewhat at
bay. I'll provide you a ride so you
can get there before they screw it
up too royally.

INT. CAR MOVING - MORNING

Walker sits inside the backseat of a self-driving, luxury
car. He stares out the window, watching as a gangs of kids
fight, junkies get high, couples make out.

WALKER (V.O)
Human beings are deletion
creatures. We can't handle all the
data we get -- not even with all
the mods and jacks and drugs. So we
filter out everything except what
we think is important. Look for red
and you'll see red everywhere. You
won't remember anything else.

Lyrica appears in Walker's vision.

LYRICA
Call from your girl, Walker.

Lyrica disappears and ANTHEA (26) appears on the screen. An Asian Switch rock diva, she's upbeat, flirtatious, and dressed like Mad Max got stuck in a Poison video in 2048.

ANTHEA
Hello, lover.

Walker's tone changes.

WALKER
Hello yourself.

ANTHEA
Whatcha doing?

WALKER
Working.

ANTHEA
Oh! That's different.

WALKER
Ha.Ha. You?

ANTHEA
Rehearsing. Nikki's on us like
crazy to get it together for this
show.

WALKER
Who knows? This could be the one.

ANTHEA
Maybe.

NIKKI (O.S.)
Anthea! Let's go!

ANTHEA
Hey, I gotta get back to it. You
gonna swing by later? I got a whole
new box of cuts. We'll try it out.

WALKER
Sounds like a plan.

ANTHEA
Ok. G.G. Can't wait to see you!

She blows him a kiss and then disappears.

CAR (O.S.)
Mr. Walker?

Walker looks up front. A display flashes red as the car speaks.

CAR (CONT'D)
This is your stop sir.

WALKER
Thanks, scrap metal.

CAR
Of course, sir.

Walker exits the car, closing the door behind him.

CAR (CONT'D)
Fucker.

INT. ROCK CLUB - JJ'S DRESSING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Camera pans to show the dressing room, now a crime scene.

Mirror broken. Lights smashed. J.J. lies nearby, stabbed and mangled. A few cop-like figures walk around, not really doing anything.

WALKER (V.O.)
Whoever did this probably didn't think anybody would miss a dead switch, especially not anybody named Montgomery. The girl probably didn't have anybody to start with and down here, you're lucky to have that.

MACINTOSH, a fat, disgusting excuse for a cop stands in the corner, laughing and running the show. Another oversized rat of a cop, SMITH, and Mortem, laugh along.

WALKER enters the room. He's dressed similarly to what we saw earlier - dirty jeans, T-shirt, and a leather jacket over his shoulders.

MACINTOSH
Well, look who it is. Little too late if you're here to check on your girlfriend.

SMITH
Hehe, yeah. Hey, Walker, what you got against real girls, anyway?

WALKER scans the crime scene, paying no attention to any of them.