

THE STARKE DEFENSE

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FADE IN:

EXT. RYERSON HOTEL - NIGHT

The sprawling metropolis of Vancouver sleeps in darkness.

Every square foot of a skyscraper roof is covered with party lights. Men and women talk and dance around glowing swimming pools. Waiters move through the chaos like ghosts, unseen and unheard.

Four waiters break off from the party at random, and head to the back of the roof. They look reserved, chiselled and rough. When they reach the supply shed, they pull masks over their heads, slip repelling harnesses over their shoulders, and drop twenty feet over the edge to a balcony.

The LEADER lowers infra-red goggles over his eyes and scans the hotel room. Seeing that no one is home, he nods to his LOCKSMITH to break in.

INT. HOTEL ROOM 1

With a CRUNCH, the door opens, and the men begin their work, moving from room to room, taking whatever is handy - money, jewelry, credit cards, documents in safes. They are professionals who work without the need for speech.

EXT. HOTEL - SAME

Returning to the balcony, they gather up their ropes and swing with practiced ease to the next balcony. The lead thief scans the interior. The Locksmith reaches for the door, but finds it already open a crack. He pushes it open silently, and they steal in.

INT. HOTEL ROOM 2

The Leader, Locksmith and BAGMEN 1 and 2 split up, and begin their search for riches.

The Leader begins in the study. Bagman 1 and 2 search through the closet for anything not tied down.

The Locksmith enters the bedroom. From the doorway, he takes one look around the room. A slash of moonlight reveals a slim wallet on the night-table. The man crosses the room silently and reaches for his find. As soon as he picks up the wallet, a large ham-fisted arm shoots from the darkness like a harpoon.

Powerful fingers close around the man's neck and begins to squeeze. Surprised, his face turns blue. Still holding the wallet, he suddenly reaches for his gun. Just as he draws the silenced weapon, a muted CRACK sounds and the Locksmith's head goes limp. The wallet and gun fall to the bed.

CORNELIUS STARKE leans into the sliver of moonlight, slowly waking, he turns on a table lamp. He is a large, muscular, bald man, without a scrap of hair on his body, aside from his brows. Starke looks surprised at the intruder, and drops the corpse to the ground.

THE BAGMAN

sees the light turn off, and shakes his head.

BAGMAN 1(WHISPERING)
What the fuck, man! No lights!

He motions to the leader that something is up.

STARKE

bounds out of bed, wearing only his boxers, with the silent skill of a black panther. Moving to the doorway, Cornelius listens to the sounds and observes three more men coming right towards him. Starke coils himself as they near.

Bagman 1 pops into the doorway sweeping the room with his silenced pistol. Starke moves with blinding speed, as the Bagman turns, Starke grabs the man's gun hand while delivering a devastating blow to the Bagman's neck. A loud SNAP signals the thief's demise, and he falls to the ground. Quickly Starke steps away from the door, and into the shadows.

THE LEADER

and Bagman 2 stare in shock at their fallen companion.

The Leader and Bagman 2 move into the room wearing infrared goggles. Starke flicks the light switch, blinding them.

It all happens in an instant. Starke hammers them with precise, calculated blows designed to kill with one hit. Starke's heavily muscled body flexes, and after a brief second, it is over.

Starke verifies they are all dead, and sits on the bed. He picks up the phone and dials.

STARKE

It's Starke. I have laundry that needs cleaning. Four. Yes I said four.

Starke Hangs up the phone and looks over at the four dead men on the floor of his bedroom. Each one with a broken neck, their heads turned aside in unnatural directions.

STARKE (CONT'D)

Shit. Not again.

CUT TO:

OPENING TITLES.

FADE IN:

EXT. RYERSON HOTEL - DAY

Cornelius Starke steps out into the street, scans the surroundings and heads uptown. He walks with a confident, but economical gait, wearing a quality, but understated grey suit, without a tie.

EXT. CITY STREET

Starke comes to a stop on a busy corner, and studies his surroundings.

His eyes squint, focusing on a city bus. As it nears, it moves into the right-hand lane, and stops next to him. Expecting the pick-up, Starke steps into the vehicle. A lady carrying several shopping bags runs up to the bus, but the doors close and it drives off before she gets near.

INT. HQ BUS - SAME

Cornelius Starke passes the driver and survey's it's contents. The windows are misted, with cardboard cut-out passengers in the seats, so from the outside it looks normal.

At the back sits MR. BROWN, who studies the assassin suspiciously. Brown wears a drab suit and tie -- skinny, with pale skin. He doesn't get out much. Nearby sits a female AIDE working on a laptop.

Starke sits calmly across from Brown, who looks at a dossier.

MR. BROWN
Cornelius Starke. Assassin.
Specializing in Bare-Handed
killing.

Mr. Brown looks up, closing the dossier.

MR. BROWN (CONT'D)
I'm Mr. Brown, I'll be your handler
on this assignment, and I want to
make one thing perfectly clear. No
fuck-ups. I'm the guy who decides
where the guns point, so you don't
want to mess with me.

Starke stares uninterested.

Brown shrugs.

MR. BROWN (CONT'D)
Had an interesting night?

STARKE
I could have used more sleep.

MR. BROWN
I'm betting you got more than I
did.

STARKE
What's the job Mr. Brown?

Mr. Brown hands Starke a small touchscreen tablet. Starke
studies the face that appears on the screen.

MR. BROWN
Benton McGuire. Arms dealer. Been
operating out of Vancouver for some
time. Our client wants him dead.
Publicly.

STARKE
Publicly? The Canadians aren't
going to like that.

MR. BROWN
The Canadians are the client.

STARKE
Really? Bit out of character?

MR. BROWN

He's pissed off the wrong people.
I'm guessing he was caught trying
to smuggle Justin Beiber back into
the country.

Brown laughs.

Starke ignores him.

MR. BROWN (CONT'D)

Yeah, well there's what we know of
his itinerary.

MR. BROWN (CONT'D)

I'll leave it up to you where to
make the hit, but do not fuck this
up?

STARKE

I take safety more seriously than
anything.

MR. BROWN

Obviously. You killed four people
last night.

STARKE

They woke me up.

MR. BROWN

Why didn't you have let them take
your money? I was up until 3 last
night with Mr. Frost up in my ass
trying to explain why we needed to
dispose of four bodies. Corpse
disposal costs more than replacing
your per-diem!

STARKE

Does your ass hurt that much?

MR. BROWN

Most people would've called the
police.

STARKE

They had guns.

One of Mr. Brown's aides gets his attention.

AIDE

We're here.

MR. BROWN

Right.

Starke stands, Brown jumps up and tries to stare him down, but the assassin towers over him like a giant.

Mr. Brown reaches into his pockets and draws out a key-chain.

MR. BROWN (CONT'D)

Here's your wheels.

Starke takes the keys.

MR. BROWN (CONT'D)

Call me as soon as you're done.

Starke nods and heads to the front of the bus, as it comes to a halt. As he waits for the doors to open, Starke turns back to Mr. Brown.

MR. BROWN (CONT'D)

I hear good things about your work, but frankly after last night, I wonder.

STARKE

I've been with the Organization longer than you have Brown. I know my job.

MR. BROWN

You don't have a license to kill. It's a privilege that can be taken away.

STARKE

Don't worry. You may aim the gun, but it doesn't go off until I say so.

The stand off ends as Starke steps off the bus.

Mr. Brown sits back down and turns to the Aide.

MR. BROWN

So? Dinner tonight?

AIDE

Fuck off.

MR. BROWN

Right.

MONTAGE - STARKE FOLLOWS MCGUIRE AROUND TOWN

-- BENTON MCGUIRE comes out of the Amazon Lounge nightclub, and looks about suspiciously before getting into his sports car.

--Starke watches from inside his car.

-- McGuire checks out an old warehouse.

-- Benton McGuire meets a Middle Eastern man (RAFIQ) at a coffee shop.

-- Starke stares at the proceedings through small binoculars.

-- McGuire has a quick visit to what looks like a brothel, called the Candy Cane.

-- He then returns to the nightclub.

END MONTAGE

Starke stares at the nightclub and nods.

FADE TO:

INT. AMAZON LOUNGE - NIGHT

The bass thumps and bangs and the crowd of hot, sexy young people follow it's lead. Cornelius Starke emerges from the shadows and moves like a coiled snake.

McGuire sits at a booth like a king. He wags his tongue at the women who pass by. They continue on in disgust.

Starke walks straight as an arrow -- immovable as a train. His eyes are trained on McGuire, and do not sway from his target. When he closes half the distance, GORDON PHILLIPS walks up to McGuire's booth. They shake hands. Phillips sits and they talk.

Starke halts. His brow furrows.

Starke studies Phillips. He's in his late thirties, blond hair, well dressed, but not flashy, no visible weapons.

Dancers flow around Starke like water around a rock in a river.

STARKE

Fuck it.

Starke's attention is fixed, and like a shark, he moves in for the kill.

McGuire and Phillips notice his approach.

Starke looks down.

The booth's table is not bolted to the floor.

Starke stops at the table and sits.

PHILLIPS

You know this fucker?

MCGUIRE

No.

(To Starke)

You're not getting lucky here,
mother-fucker, so screw off!

STARKE

I have a message.

MCGUIRE

I don't care! I said fuck off!!

Phillips' hand reaches down below the table. Starke keeps his eyes on McGuire.

STARKE

Tell your friend to keep his hands
on the table. If he stays out of
this, he stays out of this.

Phillips brings his hands back into view.

MCGUIRE

Something tells me I'm not going to
like this message.

STARKE

Probably not.

The two men start for their guns.

Starke explodes in a flurry of movement, flipping the table into Phillips.

With the table out of the way, he charges, pinning McGuire's hand to his torso, before he can draw, while Starke's other hand drives a brick-like fist into his opponent's temple. The man goes limp. Starke lifts McGuire up the booth by his head and slams him down, CRACKING his neck over the top of the seat.

Several people nearby freeze in shock.

Cornelius Starke searches for a pulse, and casually drops the corpse. McGuire's body kicks the upturned table, which falls, revealing a limp Phillips. The man's nose is clearly broken, blood pours a river down his face.

Checking Phillips' pulse, Starke shakes his head.

STARKE (CONT'D)

Fuck.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

The door to the alley bursts open, and Starke emerges. He reaches the lip of the alley, and before he steps into the street light, he brushes down his suit, removes his gloves. Assured he is clean, he calmly walks down the street.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Cornelius carefully crosses traffic towards his car, and throws his leather gloves into a trash can. He quickly dials a number on his cell.

STARKE

(Into phone)

It's done.

Cornelius Starke hangs up, gets in his car and drives off.

One block away people run screaming out of the Amazon nightclub.

The piercing sound of a phone RINGING grows louder.

INT. HOTEL ROOM 2 - MORNING

Starke snaps out of bed and answers the phone.

STARKE

Starke.

(Beat)

I'll be there....

Starke hangs up.

STARKE (CONT'D)

...Shit!