

# THE DIGITAL GUILLOTINE

by Kamron Klitgaard

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*A Comedic Duet*

by Kamron Klitgaard

**SYNOPSIS:** In a future totalitarian society run by the artificial intelligence, Mick Jensen is interrogated and judged to be useless by the state. Her profession as a writer carries the sentence of extermination, as Homeland has outlawed the writing of books by humans because they could encourage wrong-think. When Mick reveals the book she carries, her fate is sealed.

**TIME:** A future day.

**SETTING:** In a room.

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(2 either)*

REGENT (m/f)..... Orderly, obedient, and uses circular logic. *(59 lines)*

MICK (m/f)..... Defiant yet calm. *(58 lines)*

**SET:** A room with a table and two chairs.

**COSTUMES:** Regent – Uniform looking suit, Mick – Soft, comfortable clothes.

**PROPS:** A folder with papers. A pencil. A homemade book.

**DIRECTOR'S NOTES:** The costuming should not look futuristic. But there should be a contrast between the characters. Both characters can be either male or female with minor changes in the script.

**SETTING:** *A bare room with a table and two chairs. A pen and a folder with papers sit on the table.*

**AT START:** *REGENT sits in one of the chairs. He looks at his watch. He stands and faces off stage. MICK enters. She seems confused. She looks around until she sees REGENT and stops.*

**REGENT:** Come in. All the way. You may sit if you like.

**MICK:** *(Walks to the table.)* I'll stand.

**REGENT:** We may be here for a while.

**MICK:** Then I'll sit when I feel like it.

**REGENT:** *(Picks up the folder and pencil on the table, opens it and makes a note on the first paper.)* Hmm. Do you even know why you're here?

**MICK:** *(Quiet.)* Yeah.

**REGENT:** Louder.

**MICK:** *(Louder.)* Oh yes. I know why I'm here.

**REGENT:** *(Looking through papers in the folder.)* What is your identification?

**MICK:** What?

**REGENT:** Your designation. What is your designation?

**MICK:** Oh. Mick

**REGENT:** Mick? What is that?

**MICK:** That's my name. Mick Jensen.

**REGENT:** I didn't ask for that. What is your designation number.

**MICK:** I didn't memorize it.

**REGENT:** Oh. You're one of those. Your designation is 326-45-0070.

**MICK:** Is it? And what do I call you?

**REGENT:** What do you mean?

**MICK:** Well if you're going to interrogate me, I would like to know what to call you.

**REGENT:** My designation is 557-23—

**MICK:** Not your number. Your name. What was your name before you were assigned a number?

**REGENT:** There are no names. Only designations. However, to move things along, my title is that of Regent.

**MICK:** Then I will call you Mr. Regent.

**REGENT:** Your residence?

**MICK:** You mean where do I live? That I did memorize. Sector 12, Row 57, Room 492.

**REGENT:** Good. Now, the purpose of this questioning is that you are under suspicion of being ineffective, nonfunctional, unprogressive, and useless.

**MICK:** I see. And who suspects me of these things?

**REGENT:** Homeland.

**MICK:** Ah, you mean the state?

**REGENT:** I mean Homeland. The Homeland field team has been observing you. They have found that you could be categorized as useless.

**MICK:** Useless?

**REGENT:** *(Stands. Leaves the pencil on the table.)* Worthless, irrelevant, antiquated and obsolete. In short, useless. I will be questioning you to confirm this finding and then Homeland will pronounce a sentence.

**MICK:** Mr. Regent, that doesn't sound like questioning. It sounds more like a trial.

**REGENT:** *(Looking at papers in folder.)* Now, what is your line of work?

**MICK:** I'm a writer.

**REGENT:** A writer?

**MICK:** That's correct.

**REGENT:** *(Chuckles.)* I don't think you understood the question. Have you gone through the questioning orientation class? You don't have to admit to any crimes.

**MICK:** I understand the question, Mr. Regent. And yes. I've been through your reorientation propaganda presentation. I just came from there. It was quite boring.

**REGENT:** *(Consults papers.)* 326-45-0070, when we're finished here, you may be classified as useless. This is serious.

**MICK:** *(Sits at table.)* I get it.

**REGENT:** *(Sits.)* I don't think you do! You said you're a writer! There is no such line of work!

**MICK:** There used to be.

**REGENT:** And what is it that you allegedly write?

**MICK:** Stories. Fun stories! Adventures! But with meaning. With underling truths for all mankind.

**REGENT:** Truth?

**MICK:** Yes, Mr. Regent! Truth!

**REGENT:** (*Stands.*) Truth is dangerous!

**MICK:** To whom?

**REGENT:** Homeland!

**MICK:** That very well may be.

**REGENT:** (*Sits again.*) A writer. There are no writers anymore. They are not necessary. We have artificial intelligence that can write everything we need.

**MICK:** Not everything! A.I. only writes the kinds of things you program it to write!

**REGENT:** Me? I don't program anything.

**MICK:** You are part of Homeland, aren't you?

**REGENT:** Well, yes, I suppose so. In that way, we're all part of Homeland.

**MICK:** Who programs it?

**REGENT:** No one programs it. It's perfect. Homeland never writes anything that isn't approved.

**MICK:** Approved by who?

**REGENT:** Approved by Homeland! Homeland is the supreme authority!

**MICK:** Oh, no. Of that you are quite mistaken.

**REGENT:** You spout nonsense. You are from a forgotten age, 326-45-0070.

**MICK:** Please, just call me Mick.

**REGENT:** There are no more names. There are no more books. No more stories. No more anthropomorphic written words. And therefore, no more writers! You are useless!

**MICK:** (*Stands and paces.*) No one is useless!

**REGENT:** You are antiquated. You live in the past. You're from a mixed-up era with barbaric ideals when everyone was engaged in wrong-think.

**MICK:** Wrong-think? You mean, the freedom to think and believe whatever you want?!

**REGENT:** That's exactly what I mean! We can't have people thinking as they please. They inevitably end up thinking the wrong things!

**MICK:** That's what really bugs you about me, isn't it? You can't control what I think! And you're afraid I'll write those things down and someone will read them!

**REGENT:** (*Stands to meet MICK'S intensity.*) We may not be able to control your thoughts, 326-45-0070, but we will. Give us time, and Homeland will correct this flaw in your kind. But until then, we just need to weed you out. You are a pebble; a tiny, insignificant, meaningless pebble. You have no purpose!

**MICK:** Even the smallest grain of sand has purpose. I have meaning!

**REGENT:** You're a writer! You spew out stories and tales filled with unapproved values! Words that speak against the Homeland! Your writings are empty and have no depth! They're like an empty glass full of nothingness that should be filled with the virtues of the Homeland!

**MICK:** I don't care what you say! I have meaning! My thoughts have meaning! And the things that I wrote are alive and well! (*Sits.*) Did you know that in my entire writing career, I only published one book? And I published it anonymously.

**REGENT:** That's probably how you slipped through the system. There was nothing for Homeland to track.

**MICK:** But that book made people laugh! And cry! And think for themselves! That book is alive!

**REGENT:** Not anymore. It only exists as a pile of ash and drifting smoke. No one will ever cry again because of you and your words. Your book is dead!

**MICK:** Oh, no, Mr. Regent. It lives... (*Taps the side of her head.*) Up here.

**REGENT:** You're delusional. Your words are gone. Any power you think books can give you is an illusion. For you have no power! You are weak! And Homeland has no use for you or anyone like you!

**MICK:** It sounds like you've already made up your mind.

**REGENT:** I'm just the questioner! I don't make the final decision. But my findings and recommendation will be input to Homeland, and it will be a contributing factor in the decision of what to do with you.

**MICK:** And what will you do with me? What do you do with people who don't fit in with the confines and formulas of Homeland? I noticed that there aren't many of us around anymore.

**REGENT:** (*Sits.*) Well, Homeland is not without mercy. You'll be given one last chance to... fit in. You must first wake up and admit this obsolete profession of yours was from a deprecated and archaic time that has no meaning in our enlightened society. Then you must become useful.

**MICK:** Ah, a Homeland assigned job.

**REGENT:** Homeland will analyze you; determine your strengths and weaknesses and then assign you the task that will give you the most satisfaction.

**MICK:** I doubt a computer can predict what satisfies me.

**REGENT:** Oh, it can. Trust me, it can.

**MICK:** The computer gave you the title of Regent?

**REGENT:** It did.

**MICK:** And are you satisfied?

**REGENT:** Very.

**MICK:** Yes, I believe you are. I believe you are exactly the type of person who enjoys wielding power over others. But that sort of thing isn't for me.

**REGENT:** There are plenty of other functions.

**MICK:** The functions of Homeland.

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