

MAILBOX

Written by

Marq-Paul LaRose

mzeroq@gmail.com
(443) 306-5659

INT. HALL - DAY

We hear footfalls of A DELIVERY PERSON echo as he approaches an internal door on the 9th floor of an old dilapidated New York City slum apartment building. Breathing heavily he knocks on the door. After an impatient second attempt with no response, he leaves a paper bag in front of the door. The bag has a logo of an Asian style takeout (Vietnamese) restaurant. After depositing the bag, he leaves and his footfalls echo as he descends the stairs.

As the footfalls cease, the door slowly opens, and GREGORY's old man's hand reaches out, snatches the bag, and quickly draws it into the apartment, silently closing the door behind him.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Gregory, a 70 year old hunched over white man in plain jeans, t-shirt, and work boots worn with the arches turned out, prepares his Vietnamese take-out pho soup at his kitchen table, which is just inside the door to his small apartment. On the wall there is a calendar with days crossed off, showing that today is Thursday. He removes all the ingredients to his pho soup, all neatly packed in separate containers and combines them into a large porcelain bowl with Asian-styled graphics on it, already set on the counter.

Gregory throws away the included plastic-ware and supplied packets of hoisin and s'racha sauces. From unlabeled squeeze bottles Gregory puts homemade sauces on instead.

Gregory places his bowl on the kitchen table, sits opposite the front door, and with chop sticks and a special soup spoon, begins to eat in silence.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gregory sits on his recliner chair strategically placed in the space between two externally facing windows. The seat is not back nor legs up. The windows open to an alley and another building.

The living room is sparsely furnished, a small couch and coffee table, writing desk, army surplus, and a throw rug on the floor.

He scans the alley below as if on guard duty.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

A door from the building opposite Gregory's building opens into the alley. A COOK enters the ally with a bag of garbage.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gregory gets agitated at the sight of the cook entering the alley. He hears the sound of the cook putting the trash in the dumpster across from the door he exited, and then the cook closing the door as he re-enters the building.

Gregory breathes a sign of relief and resumes scanning the vacant alley.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nightfall descends on the city, and the sounds adjust, but Gregory does not move from his post. Once the sun has set completely, and his apartment is completely dark, only then does he relax, pulling a laptop and headphones from a backpack.

Gregory logs onto his computer and brings up an on-line a war game. He wraps his legs in an old army blanket to keep warm, wraps his head in his headphones, and chuckles as he enters the game.

EXT. HUT - NIGHT

Rain in sheets masks Gregory's approach to a hut door at the edge of an Asian jungle village. As lightning flashes, it illuminates a scene inside the hut's doorway:

A YOUNG GIRL holding her MOTHER's head on bare floor.

She turns to face Gregory as his form is framed in the doorway, blank and emotionless.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gregory is jolted awake by the nightmare. Still seated in his recliner, laptop and headphones absent, he checks his wristwatch, a nylon banded chronograph with glow-in-the-dark numbers, reading 3AM. He checks the alley for activity from his perch, folds his arms, and closes his eyes, still sitting, not reclining.

INT. HALL - DAY

Gregory silently and quietly steps outside his apartment door. He pauses for a moment, as if to ready himself for some monumental task, and once prepared he walks down the hall towards the stairwell at the end.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Gregory makes his way down the staircase. The apartment is relatively silent except for random noises heard through paper thin walls of the apartments. He descends flight after flight with the greatest of care to make no sound at all.

Suddenly, a door in a hallway bursts open, and two PRE-TEEN CHILDREN run into the hall, straight towards Gregory in the stairwell. Gregory freezes as the children chase each other down the hall, arguing in a foreign language he doesn't understand.

A MOTHER emerges from the apartment and screams into hallway, threatening them both with a slipper in her hand. The mother advances towards the children as they run around her and back into the apartment, the mother scolding them both as she enters and closes the door behind them.

Gregory is completely unnoticed. He lets out a breathe, collects himself and continues to descend down the staircase.

INT. MAILBOX BANK, 1ST FLOOR - DAY

Gregory lands on the first floor of the apartment. To the left of the water stained tiled floor is a large bank of several time-worn brass mailboxes. To the right of the mailboxes is an old metal mesh sliding door to an elevator. A worn sign hangs on it saying "Out of Order", with cobwebs on it.

Gregory removes a key that is hung on a string around his neck, and moves to open his mailbox. As he tries to insert his key his hand begins to shake uncontrollably.

He enlists the help of his other hand and successfully inserts the key and opens his mailbox. He carefully retrieves a single light blue envelope with handwritten addresses, quickly stows it in an inside jacket pocket, unopened, and turns back to the staircase.

As Gregory lifts his first foot to attempt to ascend, the sound of a door slamming closed from several floors above

shocks him in fear as he falls to the ground. Reaching up to the handrail, Gregory swears under his breath. He struggles to lift himself back to his feet, and continues upward.

INT. STAIRWELL, 8TH FLOOR - DAY

As he nears the summit, Gregory is confronted by his overly cheerful 8th floor neighbor, ASTRID, a young woman from the south, who was waiting for him.

ASTRID

Just lick clockwork, ain't you,
Mr. E?

GREGORY

Hmf...

Gregory keeps walking up the stairs, trying to ignore her.

ASTRID

Yeah, I know, I know. Did you git
another letter today?

Gregory freezes, clenching his lips.

ASTRID (CONT'D)

Okay! Okay. Should mind my own.
Just trying to be neighborly, like
the good Lord said, y'know?

Gregory shakes his head in disapproval, and begins to ascend again.

ASTRID (CONT'D)

Well, you have a blessed day, Mr.
E. You don't be careful I might
just start callin' you Mr. G, for
"grumpy". Just kidding, Mr. E,
bless your heart.

INT. STAIRWELL, 9TH FLOOR - DAY

Gregory, while Astrid is still talking to him from down the stairwell, turns the corner on his floor and hustles to his front door. He lets out a sigh as he enters his apartment.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gregory places a frozen dinner into his microwave and startles himself by slamming the microwave door a bit harder than he wanted. He closes his eyes, listening to the gentle purr of the microwave radiators, until the final ding.

Gregory places the piping meal on the counter, and immediately consumes it with a sense of urgency, ignoring the pain of the scalding food.

EXT. HUT - NIGHT

Back to the nightmare scene, rain in sheets as Gregory approaches a hut door. Lightning flashes, illuminating a young child holding a woman's head on bare floor.

She turns to face Gregory as his form is framed in the doorway, blank and emotionless. In this low light, everything is all gray tones. You see patches of dark in places it should not be, like in the mother's crotch area, on her head, and a curved mark where the mother's throat has been cut.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gregory is jolted awake by the nightmare. His wristwatch says 2am. As previously, he checks the alley, folds his arms, and closes his eyes, forcing them closed.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gregory, eyeing a calendar on the wall which shows that today is Friday, 3 weeks have past, and today is his day to check his mailbox again. He sighs and prepares to make his trek to the mailbox. He puts on his well worn work boots and his jacket, both set neatly to the right of the door.

Gregory puts his ear to the door and listens for a moment, then looks out its peephole. He very carefully, opens the door, but it squeaks ever so slightly. He immediately freezes, and reaches over to a can of WD-40 just within arm's reach, and sprays both top and bottom door hinges.

After testing to make sure the squeak is gone, he repeats his process. Listening with his hear, looking through the peep hole, and stealthily opens the door and leaves his apartment.

INT. HALL - STAIRWELL - DAY

As previously, Gregory descends the staircase, slowly, making next to no sound. Thankfully, he successfully makes it to the first floor without encounter, and makes his way to his mailbox.

As before, he has difficulty preventing his hands from shaking, but eventually opens his mailbox and retrieves his letter.

As he closes the mailbox door and removes the key, 3 YOUNG MEN bust into the foyer and bound there way up the stairs, startling Gregory. A 4th young man, SIMON, enters the foyer and stops in the center of the foyer 4 feet behind Gregory. Gregory freezes.

Simon casually pulls out a pack of cigarettes, taps one lose, inserts it into his mouth, and removes a fancy metallic cigarette lighter from the back pocket of his designer jeans.

Simon holds up the lighter and with a dexterous snap of his fingers, ignites a large flame, and lights his cigarette. He takes a long drag, and billows out a cloud of smoke in Gregory's direction. Gregory does not turn, but just waits.

SIMON

Ah...kids. Whatcha gonna do?

Gregory turns his head slightly towards the staircase, but does not make eye contact. Simon grins, and walks over to a door labeled "MANAGER" just to the right of the staircase. A lanky man, he purposefully takes up the space in front of the stairs, preventing Gregory from making his escape.

Simon bangs on the door.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Hector! Hector, get your beaner ass out here. Hector!

Simon continues to pound his fist on the door.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Hector, I thought I told you to fix this fuckin' elevator! I'm tired of walking 8 stories just to get a piece of ass. And I know grampa stanky drawers over here would rather not have a heart attack, am I right, ol' timer?

Gregory shrugs. Simon smiles and bangs on the door again.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Hector! Lazy ass Mexican. Get to work or I'll deport your ass back to Nicaragua myself!

SIMON puts out his cigarette on the door. Looks back at Gregory, who still has his back to him, smiles, and ascends the staircase slowly.

After a long pause, Gregory turns and begins to ascend the staircase. As he does, he pauses as he hears Simon's voice echo down from the 8th floor.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You boys better not have started without me!

Gregory sighs, and begins his ascent.

INT. STAIRWELL, 8TH FLOOR - DAY

Gregory is again accosted by Astrid's cheerfulness.

ASTRID

Just like clockwork, huh, Mr. E?

GREGORY

Hmf...

ASTRID

Don'tcha get all lonely up there by yerself?

Annoyed, Gregory finally looks Astrid in the face. Only, she has a fat lip and a swollen red mark the size of a baseball on her left cheek. Gregory's face turns from scorn to surprise, but says nothing. Astrid continues on as if nothing is wrong.

ASTRID (CONT'D)

There you are. You seem like a sweet ole man. I bet you were a heartbreaker back in the day, weren't you, bless your heart?

Gregory is still stunned by the state of Astrid's face. After a moment of awkward silence, Astrid continues.

ASTRID (CONT'D)

Well, if you ever git lonely, I'm in 802, and I make the best iced tea you'll ever taste, or my momma is a liar.

A beat...

SIMON

Leave that old geezer alone,
"ass-trid", and get your ass back
in here. You got more work to do.

ASTRID

Well, duty calls. What is your
first name, anyways, or is it
still going to be a mys-ter-ee?
Lol.

Astrid turns and walks back to her apartment, Gregory just watches her go. Astrid passes by Simon, who stares menacingly at Gregory. Gregory quickly turns away and starts his ascent. Simon chuckles, slams the apartment door as he enters. The sound does NOT startle Gregory as before.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As previously, Gregory plays his video game on his laptop with his headphones on. He is getting upset, as he is being beaten by other players. Frustrated, he slams the laptop closed, gritting his teeth in darkness.

EXT. HUT - NIGHT

Gregory dreams again of the scene of the hut in the jungle village. As before, he enters the door frame, seeing a little girl holding the head of her dead mother on her lap. As before, she turns with a blank stare at him.

A lightning flashes, and a large dark form of a MAN standing in a dark corner appears. He has his back to all of them, appears to be fastening his belt-buckle.

MAN

You can have my scraps.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gregory is jolted awake again, this time knocking his laptop onto the floor, cracking its screen. Swearing under his breath, he brings out his phone and 1-click orders a replacement, rush-delivery, from Amazon. Then he checks his watch, 1:00 am, folds his arms, and squeezes a tear from his eyes as he tries to force himself back to sleep. He does NOT check the alley.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Once again, Gregory prepares to go to the mailbox. 1 week's worth of X's appear on the calendar. As routine, he listens, peeps, and silently exits his apartment.

INT. STAIRWELL, 8TH FLOOR - DAY

Gregory approaches the 8th floor on his return trip, but as he climbs the stairs, Astrid is not there to greet him as usual. Confused, he looks to where her apartment door is and notices an arm sticking out, palm down, on the floor. Hesitating, he decides to investigate.

INT. HALL, ASTRID'S DOOR - DAY

Gregory discovers the arm belongs to an unconscious Astrid. After looking around, he inspects her more closely and sees several more cuts and bruises, and a small puddle of blood pooling by her right temple. He drops to one knee and checks her pulse on her wrist.

Just then, Gregory hears Simon enter the apartment building, making a party-ruckus with his GANG. Without deliberation, Gregory immediately hoists Astrid onto his back and fireman-carries her down the hall and up into his apartment one floor above.

As he silently closes his door, Simon and his gang reach the 8th floor and enter Astrid's apartment.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Gregory carefully places Astrid onto his kitchen table and begins to triage her wounds, intermittently checking his apartment door peephole for Simon or his gang. On his third check, he freezes as he sees Simon breaching the stairwell entering the 9th floor hall. He is tracking something on the floor, a trail of blood drops, leading right to Gregory's door.

Gregory curses under his breath and looks back at Astrid's limp form.

INT. GREGORY'S DOOR - DAY

Simon knocks on Gregory's door.

SIMON

Hey hey, old man. Are you home? I think you might have something that belongs to me. Why don't you come out here and give me what's mine.

No response, Simon intensifies his knocking.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Old man, come come now. Let's not make this difficult. I know you got my little piggy with you. Don't make me huff and puff now.

Simon's gang members are waiting in the stairwell, snickering.

GANG MEMBER

Git'm, wolf.

SIMON

SHUT the fuck up. Go back to the apartment, or do you think I can't handle this old geezer?

In shame, the 3 gang member's descend down the stairs. Simon turns back to the door, furiously banging on the door.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You trying my patience, old man. You obviously don't realize my reputation. I'm going to have to remedy that, now OPEN THE FUCKING DOOR, NOW!

A door opens up in the middle of the hall. An OLD WOMAN steps out of her door.

OLD WOMAN

Leave that poor old man alone. You're nothing but trouble. I'm callin' da cops.

Without turning, Simon pulls out his semi-automatic pistol and points it behind him in the direction of the old lady.

SIMON

Sure about that?

A beat...

SIMON (CONT'D)
You were saying...?

OLD WOMAN
No.

SIMON
No what?

OLD WOMAN
No, wolf.

SIMON
No what?!

OLD WOMAN
No, Mr. Wolf.

SIMON
No, Mr. Wolf, damn right. Now go
back inside before you make me
lose my temper.

OLD WOMAN
Yes, Mr. Wolf.

SIMON
You see, old man, people around
here respect me. So God help me if
you don't open this fucking door
right THE FUCK NOW!

After a beat, Simon kicks the flimsy old door in and enters Gregory's apartment.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Simon enters the apartment kitchen, but sees no sign of Gregory or Astrid. Pistol held in front of him, sideways, he scans the small apartment from the foyer.

SIMON
Alright, old man, come out come
out wherever you are. Mr. Wolf's
hungry.

Simon begins to search the apartment. He sees a very plain apartment, minimal furniture acquired from army surplus. He carefully enters the living room, seeing Gregory's recliner with a neatly folded olive blanket on the head rest, a small couch and coffee table. Above the couch is the sun

worn shape of a small cross, centered on the wall.

On the far wall is a small writing desk. On it is standing framed photograph of a beautiful Vietnamese woman. Next to it is a small tray with several opened envelopes. Simon picks up the picture frame and admires it.

SIMON

Oh I get it. You like the chinks.
My uncle took out whole mess of
'em in 'Nam. Freakin'
zipper-headed gooks.

Simon tosses the frame out the open window and returns to the kitchen and down the hall, continuing to search, arms outstretched gun brandished.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Simon appears in the open bedroom doorway. He sees Astrid lying on the bed, still unconscious. To the left of the bed is a small night stand with a lamp on it. At the foot of the bed is a plain wooden foot locker, painted dark green, with the name "EDWARDS" in black stencil on it. Across from the bed is an old wardrobe with several boxes stacked on top. A circular throw rug is on the floor between the wardrobe and the foot locker.

SIMON

There you are, you bitch. What,
you been doing the old man,
gettin' all friendly with him?
Answer me, BITCH!

Simon slowly advances to the foot of the bed. He puts one foot on the foot locker.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Well, it was fun while it lasted,
"Ass-trid", but your time is up.
Party's over, sweetheart.

Simon slowly takes aim at Astrid's head.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Old man can have my scraps.

As Simon prepares to fire, Gregory stealthily emerges from the wardrobe. Gregory grabs Simon's gun arm away from

pointing at Astrid. Startled, Simon fires a shot, the bullet piercing the far wall. Gregory twists Simon's arm, forcing him to drop the gun. Before Simon can respond, Gregory drags him to the floor, places a knee into the center of Simon's back, and slits his throat with a KA-BAR knife.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gregory sits patiently in his recliner, hands cuffed behind his back, as numerous POLICEMEN, CSI, and PARAMEDICS enter and exit his apartment. The remains of 3 young men, Simon's gang members, are strewn in various places between the living room and kitchen, all dead and bloodied.

The police escort him out of the apartment door. As they leave, Gregory sees that Astrid is still unconscious as they are wheeling her out of the bedroom on a gurney.

A CSI hands a plastic bag with a bloody knife to a WOMAN INVESTIGATOR in a trench coat. She shows it to a middle-aged MAN INVESTIGATOR with her.

MAN INVESTIGATOR
KA-BAR. U.S. Marines.

WOMAN INVESTIGATOR
You mean the old man took out
Simon and his crew with just this?

MAN INVESTIGATOR
FAFO.

WOMAN INVESTIGATOR
FAFO, AF.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Gregory is escorted down the stairwell. All the apartment's RESIDENTS are by the stairwell watching, some in disbelief, but most voicing their approval. Gregory meets there eyes and grins, straightening his back as he pass them.

INT. MAILBOXES - NIGHT

Police lights flash and the sound of a small crowd gathered outside are heard inside the foyer to the apartment. Rain. Gregory exits the building with several police officers escorting him outside. As he passes the mailboxes, turning to face them, his smile turns to sorrow and a tear creeps down his cheek.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

MAN

You can have my scraps.

Gregory, enraged, rushes the dark form, dragging his arm to the ground, puts his knee into his back, and slits his throat with a KA-BAR.

EXT. HUT - NIGHT

Gregory carries the little girl out of the hut and away from the scene.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Gregory is escorted to the back of a police vehicle.

The End.