

The Mysterious Invite

By Ron Greer

© 2003 Ron Greer
PO Box 15
DOWNSVILLE NY 13755
gorillaescapesfromzoo@yahoo.com

INT. APARTMENT UNIT HALLWAY —MORNING

GREG, a young disheveled man in his bare feet and too short pajama pants, plods sleepily through the hallway towards the front door. He reaches for the knob, but his attention is drawn to an envelope shoved under the door. He scoops the envelope up and bends down to look under the door. He looks stupidly at the envelope in his hands, and then opens the door.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY –MORNING

There is no hint of anyone in the hallway. GREG heads back into his apartment, checking both sides of the envelope for signs of an address.

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN –MORNING

DENISE darts around the kitchen, in all her sweat pants and heavy metal T-shirt glory, flipping her long straight hair this way and that to dry it. She butters an english muffins. As GREG enters, she places his coffee mug on the counter in front of him. It says GREG on it, naturally.

DENISE

Did you get the paper?

GREG

Huh? Oh, no. Somebody slipped this under the door

He shows her the envelope in his hand. She holds back from taking it.

DENISE

Are you gonna open it?

GREG

Should I? I mean-

DENISE

Who is it addressed to? Is it for me?

GREG takes a quick swig of coffee, but finds it to be too hot

GREG

There's no name on it

DENISE

Then go ahead

GREG
Should I?

DENISE
I wanna see

GREG
um

DENISE puts down her english muffin.

DENISE
You're driving me crazy. Hand it over

GREG
I got it, Denise, I got it

He opens it gingerly, trying to lift the flap without tearing the envelope.
DENISE hand him a butter knife

DENISE
Do you need a letter opener, Sir Gregory? As to not sully
your cuticles?

Ignoring her, GREG finally opens the envelope and pulls out a cream-colored card, with
the word "invitation" embossed on it

GREG
It's an invite. For tonight.

DENISE
Who's it from?

GREG
There's no name

He examines the invitation further

DENISE
Where is it happening?

GREG
some place on ninth, at 8...PM

DENISE
Tonight, did you say?

GREG

ahh-yep. Seems awfully mysterious

He hands the card to DENISE; she reads it, inspect it again

DENISE

It doesn't say who it's from

GREG

No

She glances at the calendar on the refrigerator

DENISE

Do you want to go?

GREG

I don't know, I guess. We didn't have anything else planned, did we?

DENISE

No. We never get invited to anything. It might be a car dealership opening, but we should go. Let's go!

DENISE pulls a scrap piece of paper from a drawer and starts copying the address on it.

DENISE

I'll meet you there after work. I might be a little late

She looks around the kitchen counter as if she lost something.

DENISE

Where's the newspaper?

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET –NIGHT

GREG is standing around stamping his feet, looking at the small buildings on the cold and lonely street. He sees DENISE coming from around the corner, and give her a quick kiss when she arrives.

DENISE

How long have you been waiting here?

GREG

I showed up maybe five minutes ago

The both look around for signs of life

DENISE

Is this the place?

GREG

I'm not sure where it is. I couldn't find an address. But it would be this side of the street, according to the invitation.

The two of them pace around a bit, going up steps, peering in doorways, but the address doesn't offer itself up.

DENISE

And you haven't seen anyone else?

GREG

Nobody who looked like they were invited

DENISE stops in her tracks.

DENISE

Listen... I hear music.

GREG

And I hear muffled laughter

Along one of the buildings is an iron railing and a set of stairs that leads to a basement flat. A dull red light glows in the window

DENISE

Maybe it's down there. We should go check

GREG

It could be some fortune teller or something.

He jiggles the gate, but it does not open

GREG

Are we allowed to open the gate ourselves? I mean, Legally?

He gives it a few more tries

DENISE

I like it. It's mysterious. This is fun.

GREG

Maybe we should—

They hear the sound of a latch unlocking from below. The basement apartment door opens, and a tall and lanky bearded man steps out, in somber but elegant dress. He is smiling gently, but when he reaches them, he becomes quite imposing. Through their whole exchange he acts as if they've come to his beloved grandmother's funeral service.

DMTRI

You came for the thing

GREG

Sure

DMTRI

I'm so happy. We're having a lot of fun

The man looks around the street

DMTRI

I really should put a sign out here or something so people know this is the place. You know, a sign like a symbol or secret code. I'm trying to keep a low profile, you know. Not bother the neighbors. They can tend to be a little uptight

DENISE

okay

DMTRI makes what seems to be a wild guess at their names

DMTRI

Craig? Greg! and Denise... Denise, I'm sorry but I forget your last name

GREG can't hide his astonishment. DENISE lets out a laugh like she just watched a magic trick being performed.

GREG

Do I know you? How do you know us?

DMTRI

Oh, I never forget a name. Or a face, ha ha. Don't worry. I wouldn't expect you to remember me.

They look him over. He really is quite a character

GREG

No, I think I'd remember if we met.

DMTRI

Please, don't apologize. I've accepted that I'm one of those people that just kind of... fades into the background; but you know, that's a good thing for an artist

GREG shrugs to be agreeable

GREG

It's what an artist does...

DMTRI looks at them and surveys the cold surroundings. He claps his hands

DMTRI

Here, What kind of host am I?! I don't mean to keep you two standing out in the cold. Or me either, brrr! Come on, it's warm inside, and we've got an open bar

They head down the stairs. GREG leans into DENISE and whispers.

GREG

Do you remember this guy?

DENISE

No but he sure seems to know us!

DMTRI opens the door to his flat.

INT. FOYER –LIGHT

DMTRI herds them to a small red room that looks like a cross between a Van Gough painting and a David Lynch set. Four oak doors crowd the facing wall, set off at odd angles, while an end table with flowers and a wine bottle sits in the middle.

GREG

Which door is it?

DMTRI grins placidly.

DMTRI

Well, I think you're too big for this one...

he squats down and points out a tiny little dollhouse door, made up exactly like the other doors, just underneath the table

He lifts himself back up and picks up the bottle on the table, pulling on a tag around its neck.

DMTRI

See? "Drink me" It's my idea of a joke

DENISE

Would it actually—

GREG looks downright confused

GREG

Isn't it "Eat Me" ?

DMTRI clumsily places the bottle back on the table when he sees he doesn't get that much of a laugh.

He thinks for a moment, which door to take.

DMTRI

We'll...pick... this one.

He yanks at the handle, and the door almost takes the wall with it, as it is really all cardboard or stage flats. It looks ghostly dim on the other side.

DMTRI

I think I hear some others outside. Go on. I'll catch up with you.

He reached into his coat, and pulls out a flashlight

DMTRI

Here, just in case

He hands the flashlight to DENISE, and almost pushes them through the doorway.

INT. TUNNEL –LIGHT

The couple walk down a long uneven fabric tunnel, sparsely lit with Christmas lights. They look around themselves in awe.

DENISE
wow this is kind of weird

They can hear muffled music in the distance

GREG
Did you get his name?

DENISE
I still don't remember him

The tunnel continues on, and seems to curve slightly, but then the light at the other end grows brighter, until...

INT. BAR -- LIGHT

They spill out of an archway into a cramped low-ceilinged BAR filled with various PARTYGOERS. A DEEJAY is spinning eastern european techno in the corner, and a few people are actually dancing.

The BAR is all very faux-exotic, like the interior of an Arabian tent, patchworked from various bedsheets, parachutes, old quilts, blankets, and beach towels. The draped ceiling hangs low, just above people's heads, and the whole thing is lit up with Christmas lights, Chinese lanterns, or lamps shining through the fabric. Along one wall are catacomb booths and bean bags. A few people are sitting at low tables, playing chutes and ladders or backgammon. The red glow of a chill room can be seen beyond another large doorway.

On the other wall, is an open bar, which consists of a series punch bowls with different colored drinks in them, and (YES!) spinach dip in a bread bowl. While it appears self-serve, there is nonetheless a bartender behind the counter

BARTENDER
Don't worry, its all spiked.

He proceeds to dump a whole bottle of vodka into one of the bowls, which are all garnished with rubber duckies or motorized bath toys.

GREG and DENISE proceed to fill up tumblers. GREG takes some from the blue punch, and some from the red, and swishes it around until it becomes purple.

GREG
Look, mixed drink!

DENISE
cute

GREG starts to bob his head with the music, while DENISE looks for anyone she knows.

GREG
This is different. We don't get invited to things like this too often

DENISE
I like it

DMTRI is already there, in mid conversation with a group of CRITICS. He turns around to answer DENISE.

DMTRI
You like it? It's kind of my opening, although I'd like to call it my "enclosure". It's taken me 3 years to get it (ha) "fully operational"

One of the CRITICS titters.

DMTRI
...But I still consider it a work in progress.

CRITIC
Its so... whimsical. You're full of such whimsy!

DMTRI
ha ha, why thank you. Oh, excuse me.

Part of the "ceiling" over the main room is drooping in too low. DMTRI pulls on an adjacent wall, and the droop disappears.

GREG
Why do I feel like I'm hiding under the table at a fancy restaurant?

DENISE
The guy's like Crisco (sic). He's a genius

GREG

I wish I kept my pajamas on

They stroll past the DEEJAY and look at the Chill Room behind him

INT. CHILL ROOM –LIGHT

The Chill Room is all in warm colors and PEOPLE just sitting around

DENISE

Is there a bathroom in this place?

GREG

You gotta go already?

DENISE

I've had to go since I left work

GREG almost panics

GREG

You're going to leave me here alone with these people.

DENISE

Don't worry. Go mingle. Make some friends.

GREG

But you know I—

But, alas, DENISE walks away. She goes and asks the BARTENDER where the bathroom is, while GREG forlornly watches her depart.

And then he sits there and looks at people, tries to listen to their conversations but doesn't get involved.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. BAR –LIGHT

GREG has since settled into one of the beanbags in the corner. By himself.

DENISE finally returns

DENISE

You have got to check out the bathroom! Really, its spectacular! it belongs in an art museum, or a gallery

GREG

But I don't have to-

DENISE

Go on, go, you will by the time you get there

GREG removes himself from the beanbags and heads off down the tunnel to the bathrooms

INT. TUNNELS –LIGHT

GREG walks through a maze of low-ceilinged tented halls, backtracking occasionally and tripping over the occasional hipster toy, until he finds a map on the wall, complete with a YOU ARE HERE marker, which leads him to the restrooms

INT. CORRIDOR –LIGHT

GREG heads down a thin corridor, where two WOMEN are waiting by the ladies' room. At the end of the hall is the door for the men's room.

WOMAN

(to other woman)

Didn't you ever camp out in your backyard? That's exactly what this is like

GREG passes the WOMEN and reaches for the door to the john.

INT. COMMUNE –LIGHT

GREG pushes the door open to find that it is nothing more than a dreary, disused commode.

DMTRI appears behind him with a gentle smile.

DMTRI

Oh ha hah. You were expecting something fancy. I put all the work into the ladies' room, and then ran out of steam. Y' wanna see?

GREG

Um—

INT. CORRIDOR --LIGHT

DMTRI scoots away the two women waiting for the room. He gives a series of quick sudden raps on the door and deepens his voice

DMTRI
I said no smoking!

The door quickly opens, and a SMOKING WOMAN pops out worriedly, but then DMTRI gives her a gentle look of surprise, as if to say “oh, I thought you were someone else!” THE SMOKING WOMAN rushes away, and DMTRI address the other women.

DMTRI
Excuse us. This will only take a minute

INT. POWDER ROOM –LIGHT

The powder room is indeed an opulent fantasy, a cozy jewel box, with a clawfoot tub and vanity, all lit by beautiful candles. DMTRI sits on the rim of the tub.

DMTRI
I don't think any woman is actually going to take a bath here, but I like the possibility

One of the WOMEN peers in

WOMAN
Hello?

DMTRI
Oh we are sorry

The two men get up and out.

INT. CORRIDOR --LIGHT

GREG shakes DMTRI's hand

GREG
I still gotta- well, nature calls

DMTRI
Yes it doe's doesn't it. The call of the wild. To build a fire.
Be sure to lift the seat. And flush when you're done!

DMTRI exits, to who knows where.

INT. COMMODE –LIGHT

While standing there doing his thing, GREG smirks and gets lost in his thoughts.

Out of nowhere, he hears some strange clanking noises outside, which bolts him out of his reverie.

INT. CORRIDOR –LIGHT

GREG leaves the bathroom, but the corridor looks different, all turned around. He looks back into the toilet to make sure he is in the right place.

INT. TUNNELS –LIGHT

GREG wanders around aimlessly and bewildered through the fabric tunnels, even finding the old map, which now says “ YOU AREN’T HERE”. He continues to walk around until he emerges into the bar from under the same arches he and DENISE first entered from.

INT BAR –LIGHT

DENISE is in a deep and animated conversation with some of the other guests. She spies GREG, and excuses herself to meet him

DENISE

You didn’t come back the same way you left.

GREG

I think he keeps changing things around

DENISE

“Like the ever-shifting patterns of life”

GREG

huh?

DENISE

“Like the ever-shifting patterns of life” here, it’s his catalog

DENISE hand him a small “program” with DMTRI’s face on the cover. He thumbs through it.

DENISE

Do you want to buy one of his CDs?

GREG

I think I need to sit down.

Meanwhile, the party continues. The guests mill about, having drinks and playing backgammon.

The fabric walls and ceiling continually unravel or droop . Whenever a piece falls in, DMTRI energetically props it up with a broomstick, or a brace, or a pole, or staples it back.

At one point of the place caving in, he has a WOMAN raise her arms and hold the thing in place.

DMTRI

I'll be right back

Rather than be insulted, the WOMAN laughs to be part of the fun.

DMTRI returns with a few chairs, and piles them on top of each other until they are holding up the cloth.

GREG

Maybe this is supposed to be his metaphor for a mining disaster

DENISE

I used to camp in my backyard when I was a kid

Suddenly, DMTRI shouts and grabs everyone's attention

DMTRI

SILENCE!

GREG

Huh?

DMTRI

Stop the music!

The DEEJAY hits the faders and the music dies down

DMTRI

There's been a murder! Or a disappearance. I'm not sure which... someone's missing.

The crowd rumbles. GREG leans over to DENISE

GREG

Christ, I've never been around a person who's just been killed. Maybe we should go.. you know, get out of here—

DENISE pats him to calm down

DMTRI

I'm going to have to ask you all to please stay, we don't want anybody to leave until we've searched the place and found the body, or the person, if she, or he, is still alive.

The crowd murmurs, and a few titters are interjected.

DMTRI

There's still plenty of party left. Feel free to make yourself at home and wander around the grounds.

He gesticulates for the faders to come back up, and the music booms back on.

DENISE

Why does this guy think somebody's been murdered?

GREG

Maybe he thinks they suffocated underneath these sheets.

GREG tries to stay cool. Tries anyway...

GREG

I'm sorry but this is really creeping me out... and who are all these other people? We don't know any of them. Do you know any of them?

DENISE

I think that guy works at my building

To pass this "dead time" the other PARTYGOERS start looking for various other things to do

PARTYGOER

Who's up for "spin the bottle"?

DENISE

The natives are getting restless

GREG

Maybe we could go hide in a corner, We could go look at
the... fabulous kitchen or something

Meanwhile, DMTRI has been working the crowd, darting in and out of the rooms like he's got another idea up his sleeve. Finally, he gestures for the music to come down again.

DMTRI

Listen to me. We'll have to make search parties. You
three...

He bunches up a few people standing around him together

DMTRI then singles out our couple

DMTRI

You two, you look like you work well together.

GREG

(aside)
ahh, I don't know about that

DMTRI

You can take the southwest corridor. But be careful.
Danger could be lurking around any corner.

The crowd laughs

DMTRI

Here, provisions

DMTRI dumps some hor d'vours into a paper bag, dunks an empty vodka bottle into one of the punch bowls, puts the cap back on and throws that into the bag also.

DMTRI

Here, take this whistle, but blow on it only if you find
something, or someone. Or if you need your conscience to
be your guide.

GREG

Where are we supposed to look?

DENISE

(aside)

I think he's just trying to show off

DMTRI

Go, quickly! Before I change my mind.

GREG and DENISE head out for adventure, while DMTRI forms more posses.

INT. TUNNELS –LIGHT

GREG and DENISE wander around through the spaghetti of fabric tunnels , finding themselves lost, but no bodies.

GREG

I wish I had a pocketknife so we could just... cut our way through

He punches at the fabric wall of the tunnel, only to be stopped with a smakt!

GREG

ow, there a stone wall here!

DENISE

You just can't start tearing through this guy's... work of art or something

GREG

Look, we don't know this guy. We'll never see him again. He'll never see us again.

GREG exasperatedly tries to get his bearings

GREG

No one will ever see us again!

DENISE

Say it with me: "bitch, be cool"

GREG

This place is –it’s crazy

DENISE

It think it’s cute! It’s so... childlike

GREG

Well, I’m about to throw a tantrum

DENISE

You can tell he’s very proud of it

GREG

Maybe I could just lift a corner of it up.

DENISE continues to walk, while GREG manages to peel up a piece and crawl under.

To his dismay, he ends up where DENISE has already walked.

DENISE

Get up before somebody sees you

GREG

What do you think the rent is on a place like this?

They hear a faint voice

VOICE

hey is someone over there?

DENISE AND GREG

Yes, yes can you hear us? Are you on the other side?

They rush towards the voice, looking for an opening.

A human form presses into the screen

VOICE

Will you touch me?

GREG

Run!

GREG and DENISE run off deeper into the mysterious passages of the tunnels

VOICE

In a friendly way! A friendly way!

INT. TUNNEL –LIGHT

The couple continue searching the tunnels, running their hands along the walls. GREG takes another swig from the vodka bottle. But he's not that drunk, honest.

GREG

When he cleans the place, do you think he hoses it down, or takes the whole thing to the laundry?

DENISE

Look—here's a zipper!

DENISE finds a full length zipper embedded in the tunnel's side.

GREG

Well, go ahead, like you've never undone a stranger's zipper before.

DENISE gives him a look, takes a swig from the bottle herself, and proceeds to open the flap to reveal:

INT. ALCOLVE –LIGHT

They find a small room with a sleeping bag on the “floor” and backpacks sewn into the wall. And lots of sock monkeys.

DENISE

This might be someone's room

GREG

Or embryonic sac. We should go before the mother alien comes back to protect her young

INT. TUNNEL –LIGHT

The two search for more zippers, until GREG finds one and unzips

INT. ACOLVE

Inside this cubbyhole is a ton of mismatched laundry.

GREG

Now I know where all my missing socks have gone

INT. TUNNEL –LIGHT

DENISE unzips another opening and uncovers a waist-high tube just big enough for one person at a time to crawl through. She smile expectantly at GREG

GREG

Oh, come on...

DENISE

Oh, we have to! Why else would it be here?

Before GREG can do anything, DENISE climbs in. GREG has no choice but to follow

INT. TUBE –LIGHT

DENISE and GREG crawl through the tunnel. DENISE keeps accidentally putting a boot in GREG's face.

GREG

Hff. Quit putting your foot in my face!

DENISE

Quit looking at my ass!

GREG shugs, as much as he can while crawling through a fabric tunnel

GREG

I can't help it if you decided to wear you asspants to this thing

They continue crawling

GREG

It feels like we're going up

DENISE

Oh, you're paranoid. How much did you have to drink? Is there anything left in that bottle?

GREG

I'm sure we're going upwards

DENISE

It only feels that way. Besides, I think I see a trapdoor or something. Hold on.

She gives a grunt and moonlight streams into the tube.

EXT ROOFTOP –NIGHT

DENISE and GREG pop out of a hatch. Surprise, they find themselves on the roof.

DENISE

That's strange. How weird.

The only other people up there are pigeons.

GREG

You got a pen? Maybe we could send out a carrier pigeon with a rescue note.

DENISE

Hmm. I suppose we have to go back.

GREG

Hmm, yeah. I s'pose

DENISE

Oh, you know it's the most fun we've had in a long time

GREG looks at DENISE and gets sheepish

DENISE

Come on, say I'm right...

GREG

Okay, this is the most fun we've had in a long time.
(BEAT) This weekend I promise to take you to Foxwood

DENISE

(excitedly)
You promise!

GREG

Yep, I promise. Now let's see if we can get back down from here

They head back to the hatch.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. BIG TUNNEL –LIGHT

The couple wearily plod down another festooned cloth corridor. They've had enough of this.

DENISE

What happened to everybody else?

GREG

Maybe we're not finding anyone else because he killed the others

At the exact moment, DMTRI walks towards them, wearing a blacksmith's smock and carrying something evil-looking in his hand

GREG

Ah christ he's got a gun or something...

DENISE clings to GREG in fright

DMTRI

Woah!

It turns out he is only carrying a portable sewing machine. He inspects a nearby wall and makes a quick repair.

DMTRI

You're still up? I would have thought everyone would have left or gone to sleep by now. I still have some space if you need somewhere to crash. you've been wandering since I sent you off? wow. Let's go

DMTRI returns to walking, checking over his shoulder to sure they are following him. They are.

GREG

you found the "body"

DMTRI

yeah, she popped up, soused to the gills. I guess we spontaneously had what you call an intervention...

INT. SLEEP TUNNRL –LIGHT

DMTRI pulls out a map to get his bearings

DMTRI

Lemme see, I know one of this has to be empty

He moves down the hall, zipping and unzipping sections, puts his fingers to his lips for silence.

HE looks into one and smiles

DMTRI

Hey, how's it going in here?

INT.SLEEP POD –LIGHT

Four people are in sleeping bags hanging on the wall, astronaut style. They are playing cards and give him a thumbs up!

INT. SLEEP TUNNEL –LIGHT

DMTRI unzips another “door” and nods his head.

DMTRI

Here you are. I like to call this one the...
”honeymoon suite”

Without further ado, he ushers them in

INT. HONEYMOON SUITE –LIGHT

The room is filled with a kind of a tented hammock housing a queen size futon cushion.

After GREG and DENISE enter the suite and have a look around, DMTRI pokes his head inside

DMTRI

I'm having a continental breakfast for everyone starting at 7, but I got to get you out of here by 10, because the landlord's showing up, and , um, he has no idea.

He grins at them and tugs at the “walls”.

DMTRI

Don't worry, I've used a lot of padding in these rooms, so
you can make all the noise you want. Nighty night

DENISE

thanks?

DMTRI's head disappears, and he pulls the zipper closed.

GREG takes off his shoes and crawls into the hammock. It swings a bit, but seems sturdy
enough.

DENISE picks up a radio clock on a stand and sets it for the morning. She takes off her
own shoes and crawls in the hammock also.

DENISE

Do you think its safe?

GREG

I don't know. Just turn off the light and let's try to get some sleep

AND, SCENE!