

THE CULLER

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Rain pelts the cracked sidewalk in this lower class neighborhood. Small houses with bars on the doors and windows, chain link fences, broken toys littering the lawns, a neighborhood on the down escalator.

In black slicker, EVERETT, 40, mailman, trudges through the rain. He turns up a walk, looking left and right, pulling mail from his bag. He reaches the front porch and slides the mail into the box by the door. He turns and gazes into the gray, wet, cold mess.

Down the street edges a lowrider, chrome spinners and tinted windows, a gangsta machine. Everett can't see the windows slide down on the other side of the car, but he hears the GUNFIRE as the car opens up on the house across the street.

Curiously, Everett doesn't duck as bullets explode windows across the street. He watches until the bullets stop, and the lowrider races away.

INT. EVERETT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Clean, neat, dated kitchen in a middle class home, nothing special.

Everett, in dripping slicker and bag, enters. He drops the bag on the floor and removes the slicker, hanging it by the door. He kicks off his soaked boots and stretches his back. He opens the fridge and grabs a beer. Beer in hand, he grabs his bag and walks out.

INT. EVERETT HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Everett crosses the room, he pulls a thick bundle of mail from the bag. He opens a door and tosses the bundle into a closet that is already half full with undelivered mail.

INT. EVERETT HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Everett walks to the bureau. He pulls an automatic pistol from behind his back and places it on top, next to photos of a young bride and a teenage girl.

He raises his pants leg and pulls a small revolver from an ankle holster and places it next to the automatic.

He raises the other pants leg and extracts a collapsible baton from his sock and adds it to the other weapons. From one pocket come brass knuckles, from the other a switchblade. He touches each weapon before he backs up and sits on the bed.

INT. EVERETT HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Everett, hair wet from shower, in jeans and shirt, reverses the process he went through earlier. Knife and knuckles in pockets. Baton in sock, revolver in ankle holster. He picks up the automatic and starts to put it behind his back but stops. He looks at the pistol and walks to a door. Opens it and flicks on the light.

The closet is an arsenal. Semi-automatic rifles, shotguns, a row of pistols. He hangs up the automatic and picks out a slightly different pistol which he puts behind his back. He reaches out and strokes an automatic rifle.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

A local place, half-filled with the poorer remnants of the people who originally moved into the neighborhood.

Everett occupies a booth at the back of the room. He eats meatloaf and mashed potatoes; a dark beer sits in front of him. He has a view of the whole room. He turns away for a moment.

When he turns back, SLATER, 50s, a patch over one eye, a scar on one cheek, water dripping off his trench coat, half smiles. Slater looks like 40 miles of detour, someone who has seen adversity.

SLATER
Everett?

EVERETT
Who wants to know?

Slater takes off his coat and hangs it on a peg. He wears a ratty sports coat whose leather elbow patches have worn out.

SLATER
Name's Slater, not that it matters.
God, I hate rainy nights.

Slater sits opposite Everett.

EVERETT
I don't recall asking you to sit.

SLATER
I don't recall asking permission.

They lock stares.

SLATER (CONT'D)
Don't make this any harder than it
has to be.

Everett breaks the stare and takes a bite as a Waitress
delivers a beer for Slater.

SLATER (CONT'D)
Strictly speaking, I'm not supposed
to drink on the job, but what the
hell.
(toasts)
Here's to sunshine.

Everett makes no effort to toast, and it doesn't bother
Slater who drains half the glass.

SLATER (CONT'D)
Not exactly Prague lager but worth
the money anyway.

EVERETT
What do you want?

Slater holds up one finger while he rummages in his coat
pockets, eventually producing a smart phone. He swipes it a
few times.

SLATER
Here we go. I need to verify a few
facts before we continue. You're a
mailman, right?

EVERETT
Letter carrier.

SLATER
Born in Sisters of Charity hospital
a few, well, more than a few years
ago. St. Anthony grade school,
Sacred Heart high school. Army,
first gulf war, honorable
discharge. Married, one daughter,
divorce. Daughter lives across the
country. Former wife teaches at
North Elementary. Language arts,
right?

Everett makes no effort to answer.

SLATER (CONT'D)
Look, it's important that I find
the right client. I understand
that you're not in the best of
moods, and frankly, I don't care.
But I hate to make a mistake. They
dock me for that.

EVERETT

They who?

SLATER
Touche. I'll get to that later.
Your parents have passed. You have
no siblings. You had a dog up to
a year ago. They didn't have to
shoot the dog. I'm sorry about
that.

EVERETT

You seem to know a lot about me.
Who are you?

SLATER
Like I said, my name is Slater, and
I'm a culler.

EVERETT

Culler?

SLATER
Not my official title. That's one
of those bureaucratic things. You
know, specialist specialist
specialist third class or something
like that. I prefer culler.

EVERETT

And what does a culler do?

SLATER
Thin the herd. A culler thins the
herd.

EVERETT

Forgive me for not giving a damn,
but go thin the herd some place
else.

SLATER

Now, we both know I can't do that.
You're on my list. We have to
talk.

EVERETT
No, we don't. Look—

SLATER
Please, I know about the brass
knuckles and the knife and the
baton and both pistols. Don't let
them boost your courage.

Everett is surprised. He studies Slater a moment.

EVERETT
Who do you work for, FBI?

SLATER
An organization higher than that.

EVERETT
CIA? NSA? Because the only way you
could know what you know is to have
cameras and bugs in my house. So,
why don't you spit it out so I can
sue the bejesus out of your bosses.

SLATER
I don't work for any government.
Cullers serve a higher power, the
power that put you on this planet.

EVERETT
Please, you think you're talking to
a simpleton? You're getting
ridiculous. What happened to your
eye?

SLATER
Never turn your back on a surgeon.
They know how to handle knives. I
can see you're not going to
believe, so it's time to really
talk.

Slater sips beer.

EVERETT
I'm waiting.

SLATER
You're a psychopath.

EVERETT
(laughs)
You're a psychiatrist too?

SLATER
You like to beat up and rape women.

Everett stops laughing.

SLATER (CONT'D)
You're a mailman—

EVERETT
Letter carrier.

SLATER
So, you know which women live alone, which don't have dogs, which look like your ex-wife. You pick them out when you substitute on a different route, never on your own route. The police might flag that. You haven't graduated to murder yet, but you've thought about it. You've wondered.

EVERETT
You're insane.

SLATER
But that's not the worst. The worst is what you're thinking about doing in that school.

(leans closer)
Yes, I know about the manifesto, the rifles, the plans, how you're going to kill a whole bunch of people in a short amount of time.

EVERETT
You know nothing.

SLATER
Every once in a while a flawed person slips through quality control. The pencil pushers talk about genes and traits and recessive versus dominant, and how you can't really predict with certainty. I don't pay much attention to that. I just do my job.

EVERETT
And that job is?

SLATER
Culling the herd.

Everett slowly puts his hands in his lap.

EVERETT
You mean to kill me?

SLATER
If that were my only job, it would
be done by now.

EVERETT
I don't get it, then. What do you
want?

SLATER
Standard operating procedure
stipulates that you be given a
chance to change.

EVERETT
Change what?

SLATER
Your life. You dump the firearms
and the ammo. You burn your
manifesto. You stop raping women.
In other words, you become a
worthwhile human.

EVERETT
That's it?

SLATER
Not enough?

EVERETT
And if I don't?

Slater shrugs.

EVERETT (CONT'D)
I guess it's my turn. First, I
don't believe you. I don't believe
in culling or thinning or whatever
you call it. Yeah, you know some
things about me, but you don't know
everything. I could tell you what
you got wrong, but I think that's
what you're looking for. Since I
don't believe you, I'm not about to
change my life. I may not have the
best life in the world, but it's
comfortable. It's enough. And as
you know, I'm armed, always armed.
(MORE)

EVERETT (CONT'D)

I know how to use my weapons which I don't think you appreciate. So, be warned, Mr. Culler or whoever you are. If I see you hanging around, I'll assume you're going to harm me, and I will take appropriate action. Do you understand?

Slater nods and sighs.

SLATER
I was afraid of that.

EVERETT
Do you really expect a psychopath to change?

SLATER
No, I expect you to lie.

Everett laughs and stands.

EVERETT
Then, we understand each other?

SLATER
I wish it was different.

EVERETT
Stay out of my way, Mr. Culler.

SLATER
Slater.

Everett moves away, leaving Slater to signal for a second beer.

INT. EVERETT'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Everett, wearing body armor, removes a thick binder from a drawer in his bureau and places it in the center of his bed. He looks around at an immaculate room.

INT. EVERETT'S HOUSE - WEAPONS CLOSET - MORNING

Everett straps on a holster and fills it with an automatic pistol. He takes two semi-automatic rifles off the wall and places them to the side. He grabs a bag and fills it with fully loaded magazines.

INT. EVERETT'S HOUSE - GARAGE - MORNING

Everett loads the rifles and bag of ammo into the trunk of his car. He grabs a jacket to cover his holster and hits the button. The door rises.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

A lone car parked at the far end of the lot. Everett climbs out of the car and opens the trunk. He pulls out the ammo bag and sets it on the ground. He reaches for a rifle as tires SQUEAL behind him.

He turns to see a small sedan hurtling across the parking lot. Behind the sedan races the lowrider. Everett watches as the sedan passes him.

The driver, Slater, waves.

A few yards past Everett, Slater spins the car and starts across on the other side of Everett. As he does, the THUGS in the lowrider open FIRE.

Everett twitches as bullets slam into his body, mostly stopped by his body armor.

Slater stops on one side of Everett, the lowrider on the other. Bullets fill the air.

A bullet hits Everett in the neck. Blood spurts. Surprised, he looks at Slater who shrugs.

A bullet hits the gas tank, and Slater's car explodes, blowing Everett to his heavenly reward.

The sedan rips away in one direction, the lowrider in the other.

FADE OUT.