

HOTLINE TO GRANDMA PEARL, 311

Written by

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INT. BUILDING LOBBY - AFTERNOON

The foyer of a NYC coop. Dingy, though colorful - like PEDESTRIANS who pass by outside.

A sweaty KERRI (30s) waits outside the elevator. Waits some more. The antique fails to move: jammed forever on the top floor.

Frustrated, Kerri slaps the door.

KERRI

My shower's waiting. Dammit, move!

The elevator slips down to the 5th floor, stalls again. Kerri beelines for the stairwell, until...

Entrance doors RATTLE. Kerri whirls around to notice:

GRANDMA PEARL HETTINGER (80s) - a frail, wizened bird.

Weighed down with shopping bags and a cart, Pearl fumbles weakly at the door.

Kerri darts over and swipes Pearl in with a keycard. BUZZ

GRANDMA PEARL

Oh, my. That new fangled card's such a time saver! I'm surprised they didn't install it before. But honey, you didn't have to rush. It may be summer, but I won't melt.

KERRI

Oh, Pearl. You've only got TWO hands. Here. Let me help you out.

Kerri scoops up Pearl's bags. All four of them: a massive amount of food. How much can one old woman chow down?

The plastic tangles Kerri's legs and arms. Pearl frowns.

GRANDMA PEARL

Honey, that looks constricting. Are you sure?

KERRI

No sweat. I got this!

The elevator DINGS. At long last, it's reached the lobby. The doors slide open, and almost instantly start to close. It's on a timer: 3, 2, 1...

KERRI

Wait for us, you moth...!

Side-eyeing Pearl, Kerri swallows the curse and stumbles forwards; *almost* sandbagged by Stop N' Shop.

Pearl shuffles past, casual. Jamming her cart in the elevator, she stops the doors.

Waddling under the weight, sheepish Kerri follows her inside.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Both woman enter. The door stutters shut.

The elevator rises; punctuated by antique jumps and starts.

As it does: Kerri and Pearl pant from exertion. Staring at the door, they stand shoulder to shoulder - comrades in arms.

KERRI

Phew. That was close!

GRANDMA PEARL

(grins)

Honey, this old frame's got a few slick limbo moves left in her yet!

She evaluates Kerri's disheveled look, head to toe.

GRANDMA PEARL

"No sweat"? My wrinkled butt. Looks to me like you've been ridden and left out wet!

KERRI

Oh, Pearl! It's just my afternoon jog. As an actress, you know I've got to stay in fighting shape.

GRANDMA PEARL

Good girl. So what's the latest project?

KERRI

This time? A horror flick.

GRANDMA PEARL

(excited)

A horror? Goodie! I love those. Let me guess; something like the Exorcist. And maybe: your big break!

KERRI

(sighs)

Not exactly. I play Victim #4. The good news: they don't kill me until the third act. Which means, plenty of cheesy lines.

GRANDMA PEARL

(grins)

You remind me of my granddaughter. She's artistic...different, too!

KERRI

You have a granddaughter?

GRANDMA PEARL

Of course! I swear, I've told you that before.

(scoffs)

And people think *I* have memory issues...

KERRI

Uh, my bad. What does she do?

GRANDMA PEARL

Well, she just dropped out of community college in NJ. So a bit of everything, I suppose. She's a headstrong hellion, like I was once - back in my youth. These days, she wants to star in a rock band. And puts her parents through Hell.

(chuckles)

What "goes around, comes around" as wisemen say. *I* say: Karma that delicious should be savored. Lord knows I made enough mistakes raising her mother. Perhaps second time's the charm. If I give Trisha the right opportunities, encouragement, and freedom she'll turn out right.

(laughs even more)

Too bad I won't get to see her mother's face when she reads the will. Knock on wood - years from now. Her spoiled Gen X asscheeks are sure to burn!

KERRI

So - what's with all the groceries?

GRANDMA PEARL
Preparation. With a dash of hope.

KERRI
Hope?

GRANDMA PEARL
The kids *might* stop by Saturday.

KERRI
Might?

GRANDMA PEARL
Well, they haven't visited since last year. Eventually, don't you think they would?

Another floor reached. DAMN. This elevator's slow!

Kerri tucks the four plastic bags in Pearl's cart. It takes mad Tetris skills, but the rearranging works!

Pearl grins and pinches Kerri's cheeks. The younger woman winces, forces a smile.

GRANDMA PEARL
Honey, you'll never know how *blessed* I feel to have you living over me. It's as if you're my very own guardian angel, looking down! I know I'm a pest, I call so often...

KERRI
Oh, I'd never say that -

GRANDMA PEARL
Like when I'm at a doctor's appointment - but forget to lock the door, and have you check. But dear, my TV set's been giving me grief all week. Could you possibly drop by tonight to take a look?

KERRI
Um, cable's not my specialty. MacBook audio's and Moviemaker's more my style.

GRANDMA PEARL
Oh, I hate to be a bother! It's just - paying a repairman for two seconds of work is... burdensome. Thanks to Stuart, God rest his soul, we paid off the mortgage.

Leaving me on a widow's budget, of course!

DING! The doors snap open. Oozing guilt trip, Pearl shuffles out. Turning rheumy puppy dog eyes on Kerri, she gazes deep into her soul.

GRANS

That shopping trip drained me something fierce. For now, I'd best take a nap. Though if you'd stop by at 6PM, I'd be ever so grateful. Because if you don't, I'll miss my news!

The elevator doors frame the old woman's face, as they close. 3, 2, 1...

KERRI

(quick)

6 o'clock. I promise!

Grandma Pearl perks up and waves.

GRANDMA PEARL

Bless your heart, my angel!!

The elevator doors scissor shut. Drained too, Kerri leans against one wall.

KERRI

I'd *nail* a "Good Samaritan" role.

(mutters)

God. I hope Pearl doesn't have HBO!

INT. KERRI'S SHOWER - LATER

A small, cramped NYC space. Kerri suds up, hums a tune.

On the sink: her phone chimes. Blinded by soap, Kerri fumbles through the curtain for her cell.

The ID on the screen announces: NEIGHBOR G. PEARL.

Slick from conditioner, the phone slip-sides out of Kerri's hands to the bathmat padded floor.

And flips to voicemail via speakerphone:

GRANDMA PEARL (O.S.)

Honey, I love you like you were my own! So, one word of warning. These days, I sleep like the dead.

But loud noise is sure to rile me.
If I'm not up at 6, bang on my door
if you must. And prepare for
consequences. When I rouse, I have
a temper. And my hair's a fright!
...What? Is the recording over? I
should hang up, yes?

BEEEEEP. Kerri grabs a towel. Still blinded, she steps on her
phone like it's a Leggo piece. Yipe!!

KERRI
Ow! Dammit. My screen!!

INT. KERRI'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kerri relaxes on the loveseat. Clean and satisfied, she
watches TV. Sipping a beer, she glances at her cracked cell.

KERRI
It's 6:15?!? Shit. Fuck me!

She scrambles to hit redial for Pearl.

The phone rings repeatedly. After no-one answers, voicemail
kicks in. Playing another quaintly awkward Pearl recording:

GRANDMA PEARL (O.S.)
Is this the part where I leave a
message? Trish, dear - do I hang up
now...?

BEEEEEP! Kerri sighs and disconnects.

Walking to her front door, she taps one foot on the floor.

KERRI
Pearl, Sorry I'm late. On my way!

No reply. Kerri heads out into...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Grimacing at the elevator, Kerri takes the stairs.

INT. PEARL'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

She rings the doorbell. No answer. A bit hesitant, she
knocks. Shave and a haircut, two bits. Still no response.

Should she give up and head home? Kerri mulls her options.

KERRI

It's either now, or Pearl calls at midnight to help her watch the Golden Girls. You've got casting at three, Kerri. You tell *me*, which is worse?

No contest. Kerri bangs on Pearl's door.

KERRI

Rise and shine, Mrs. H! ABC waits for no woman...

Kerri twists the knob. It's not locked! The door creaks open.

KERRI

Pearl?

Still no answer. Concerned, Kerri slips inside.

INT. PEARL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Though hard to see in the dark, it's decorated old lady style. Plastic on the sofa.

A fleet of Hummels stares at Kerri from one wall.

The TV glows almost supernaturally. Creepy static on the fat tube screen.

KERRI

Pearl, you left the door unlocked.
Is everything... all right?

Still red-eyed from shampoo, Kerri squints and looks around.

Pearl's recorded voicemail echoes in her mind:

GRANDMA PEARL (O.S.)

Prepare for consequences. When I
rouse, I have a temper!

Just ahead: a shadow...

Of a FIGURE slumped in a crochet-covered recliner. The head faces away from the door. Kerri gulps and tiptoes forward.

KERRI

Are you *still* sleeping? I can go-

She swings the chair around. Cries out!!

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

A dejected Kerri loiters in the hall.

PARAMEDICS roll out a sheet-covered body on a gurney.

The old lady hand and RING peeking out one side drives the point home. Pearl's not "sleeping". She's long gone.

Other NEIGHBORS rubberneck behind Kerri - angle for a front-row view of the "crime scene."

One RED HEAD pipes up nasally.

RED HEAD

You're the one who found the body?
Cool.

KERRI

Yes. Wait, I mean no. I did. But
that's not cool!

RED HEAD

So, what did she look like?

KERRI

Pearl? She looked peaceful.
Happy... in a way.

RED HEAD

Pearl who?

Kerri shoots Red Head a nasty look.

KERRI

You know - the woman who lives - I
mean "lived" on your floor? The one
they just escorted out?!?

RED HEAD

Oh. *That's* the old lady's name?

KERRI

You didn't know?

RED HEAD

(huffs)

It's not like I ever *talked* to her!

A BLOND MALE RESIDENT taps Kerri on her shoulder.

BLOND MALE RESIDENT

You think the apartment's
available?

KERRI

What?

BLOND MALE RESIDENT

I know a guy who's looking. Cash.

What follows is a blur. Calendar days and months fly by.

BEGIN MONTAGE

- Kerri stair-runs for exercise. For a breather, she stops at Pearl's floor. Junk fliers fill every crack of Pearl's door. Kerri clears them away reverently. Polishes the knob with a tragic smile.

- In the lobby: Kerri waits for the elevator. It's taking its sweet ass time.

Behind her, the door rattles. Kerri swings around - subconsciously expecting...

Needless to say, it's not Pearl. Just a PIZZA DELIVERY BOY. The kid waves for entry. Kerri shrugs - walks away.

- Kerri showers. Her cell chimes. Blinded again by soap, she fumbles for the phone. The cracked ID displays: Spam Caller.

Kerri swipes it to voicemail. What a waste of time.

INT. KERRI'S LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

SUPER: A few months later.

Kerri chills on her couch. Watching TV, she cracks a beer.

KERRI

"Victim #4", you died organically!
Director's cut be damned, I think
you've earned this one, girl...

Suddenly - something intrudes on her celebratory drink.

A strange THUMP THUMP THUMP downstairs! Kerri mutes her channel, strains to hear.

More CREAKS. PATTERS. Eerie GROANS. Kerri holds her breath.

KERRI

Nah. It *can't* be.

Then: CRASH! Whatever's downstairs sounds... agitated.

KERRI

What the ever living, uh, not-live
fuck?!?

Chugging her bottle, Kerri grabs her cell. Darts downstairs.

EXT. PEARL'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The door's *slightly* ajar. Weird thumping echoes inside.

Kerri dials 911, poised to "send". The time onscreen: 2 AM.

Raising the bottle like a bludgeon, she yells to unseen intruders:

KERRI

This apartment has no valuables.
The family cleared it out long ago.
At the count of three, I'm calling
911. That's me being nice to you.
If you're smart, you'll just go!

The door flies open. Kerri yelps.

Shockingly face to face with -

TRISHA: 20 something and pink haired.

Two PUNK FRIENDS loom behind the girl. Oozing against Trisha's side: A lanky BOYFRIEND smothered in tattoos.

Despite her piercings, Trisha looks oddly familiar.

TRISHA

Go ahead and call the cops. Ms...
whoever-the-fuck-you are?

KERRI

Excuse me? My name's Kerri.

A blank stare from Trisha. Annoyed, Kerri stumbles on.

KERRI

I live upstairs. In *this* building.
Just so everything's crystal clear:
we prosecute trespassers here.

Her thumb glides towards "send" for 911.

Trisha laughs, and flips Kerri the bird. Displaying an oddly familiar RING on her middle finger...

TRISHA

I'm the new owner. If anyone's
gonna get arrested for trespassing,
it's your ugly face!

Trisha slams the door. CLICK. Bolts slide shut inside.

Leaving a stunned and confused Kerri in the hall.

KERRI

"Ugly"? "New?"

A noise behind her. Kerri whirls around with the beer bottle -
about to throw...

It's the Red Headed neighbor from before. Wearing Hello Kitty
PJs, the woman blinks in cold and heartless hallway light.

The male resident sticks his head out of a different door.

BLOND MALE RESIDENT

Guys, I'm trying to sleep here.
Parties at 2AM are *definitely*
against house rules. Especially in
the halls!

RED HEAD

No. Kerri here just met Pearl's
granddaughter, Trisha.

KERRI

(beat)

That's.. Pearl's granddaughter? The
"Hellion"?

RED HEAD

If that's what you wanna call her,
sure. I met her "entourage" in the
lobby this afternoon. They're...
uh, definitely a new flavor for
this neighborhood.

BLOND MALE RESIDENT

(sighs)

See what happens when you
automatically grandfather -

RED HEAD

That's "grandmother".

BLOND MALE RESIDENT

Kids into a deed? I tried to help
my friend buy that unit.

But according to the frickin'
Board, Pearl left it to that brat
in her will!

Kerri glances towards Pearl's old "home sweet home". Behind the door, pulsing music pounds.

KERRI
Pearl's "headstrong rock star." But
since they're related, the kid's
got to be OK in some ways, right?

Her two neighbors exchange looks. Not in *their* eyes.

START MONTAGE

As witnessed by the time stamp on each event, Kerri and Trisha's relationship goes south. FAST.

- Kerri watches Netflix. Hearing music, she stomps on the floor. Downstairs, Trish flips multiple birds at the ceiling. Turns her speakers up extra loud.

- Kerri snores on the couch. Downstairs: Trisha's boyfriend chips into the ceiling with a knife. Trish presses a portable player against the hole.

TRISHA
(giggles)
That bitch doesn't like my tunes?
She's sure gonna hear 'em now!

She blasts the volume. Kerri jolts awake, tumbles to the floor!

- Kerri relaxes in the tub, rehearses lines. SCREECHES downstairs break into her reverie. Kerri splashes involuntarily. Instantly, her script's a soggy mess!

Downstairs: Trish screams to Punk Pals across the room. Kerri bangs on a water pipe to retaliate.

Trish snickers, and dials her phone.

TRISHA
Hi - yeah, 311? I wanna file a
noise complaint. My upstairs
neighbor's having, uh, issues.

- Kerri bangs on Pearl's door. Trish flings it open.

TRISHA
What now, bitch?

KERRI
Listen, I don't want trouble.

TRISHA
You shouldn't. Trust me.

KERRI
I just... wanna talk. I know you're
just trying to have fun, but the
noise you make is a *huge*
inconvenience.

TRISHA
To you, maybe.

KERRI
No, throughout this entire
building. We're your neighbors, and
we *deserve* a peaceful, quiet home.

TRISHA
I'm at home, too. If you don't like
how I live my life - move!

Trisha starts to shut the door. Kerri stops it with her foot.

KERRI
Listen, Pearl and I were neighbors
and friends for years. She was
always such a sweet soul. I knew
her well enough to say - she
wouldn't want you to act this way!

Unexpected tears glimmer in Trisha's eyes. Followed by a
deflective sneer.

TRISHA
Don't you dare bring up Grand-mama!
She always loved me. More than Mom!

WHACK! Trisha slams the door, clips one of Kerri's fingers.
Kerri yanks her injured hand back.

KERRI
Ow!!

Behind her: footsteps. Kerri swings around. Her two neighbors
stand like awkward kids in the hallway, side by side.

RED HEAD
We just got off the elevator.

BLOND MALE RESIDENT
And heard a noise.

RED HEAD
Though on this floor, these days?
No surprise.

KERRI
Did you hear what Trisha said?

RED HEAD
The way she yells? *Everyone* on this
side of the building did.

KERRI
I give up. Reasoning with her
doesn't work.

BLOND MALE RESIDENT
Nor do complaints to the Board.

KERRI
What else can we do?

RED HEAD
You could always move to Yonkers.

BLOND MALE RESIDENT
(to Kerri)
If you do: my friend's still
looking. How much would you want
for your place?

Kerri frowns, and sucks her injured finger.

KERRI
The neighborhood's gentrifying. A
million, or I don't budge. But this
ordeal's gotta end. Now.

INT. KERRI'S LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Lying on the couch, Kerri flips through pictures on her
phone. Downstairs, Trish's music's cranked to max.

Kerri pauses on a selfie of herself and Pearl. The old woman
flashes rabbit ears. Old school, but she's having fun.

KERRI
(sighs)
Pearl, I'm glad you're not
around...

THUMP THUMP THUMP from downstairs. On Kerri's coffee table, a
framed headshot vibrates from the noise.

KERRI

I mean, I wish you were around.
Family or not, you'd give that
"Hellion" a talking to! And also..
I really miss you.

Prodged by nostalgia, Kerri toggles to a saved voicemail.
Pearl's recording, from months ago:

GRANDMA PEARL (O.S.)

Honey, I love you like you were my
own!

Inspiration strikes. Despite the noise, Kerri beams.

MOMENTS LATER

Kerri monkeys with her MacBook. Jacking in a microphone, she
snakes a cord across the floor.

INT. PEARL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Trisha and pals party like there's no tomorrow. Beers are
chugged. Music blasted. Trisha's boyfriend pounds on the
ceiling, like it's a drum.

SUPER: One Hour Later (Though it Seems Like More)

Everyone's either passed out or gone. Even in the dark, the
apartment's a disaster zone.

Pearl's Hummel collection stares down disapprovingly. One's
been painted with a "Joker" face. Another covered by a THONG.

Trisha sleeps on the floor, sucks her thumb.

If it weren't for the still smoking bong and half-naked
boyfriend, she'd look cute. *Almost* innocent.

Temporarily peaceful, Trish snores. Until -

A CREEPY VOICE slithers through the gloom. Coming from
somewhere... beyond?

GRANDMA PEARL (O.S.)

Honey... you were my own. But...
one word of warning.

Trisha snorts awake. She glances at the ceiling. Smoke from
the bong conjures swirling, ghostly shadows over her head.

The girl shudders. Pearl's eerie voice drones on:

GRANDMA PEARL (O.S.)
 These days, I sleep like the dead.
 But loud noise is sure to rile me.
 Bang... if you must. But... prepare
 for consequences. I have a temper.

Trisha's eyes bug. She jumps to her feet.

TRISHA
 Grand-mama. Is that really you?!?

GRANDMA PEARL
 Yes! But... Rouse... me... I'm a
 fright!

Shivering, Trisha stares at the ceiling. Whispers as she
 searches for a clue.

TRISHA
 Grandma P? What do you want from
 me?

GRANDMA PEARL (O.S.)
 (extra eerie echo)
 What... I should. I'm... dead!

INTERCUT BETWEEN KERI'S LIVING ROOM AND TRISHA

Upstairs: Kerri uncorks a bottle of FAKE BLOOD from a movie
 set. Laughing quietly, she waits until she hears Trish's
 voice directly below her feet -

...and pours the "blood" directly through the hole Trish's
 boyfriend chipped into the floor!

Downstairs: Kerrie hits a bulls-eye. The red stuff splatters
 Trisha's face!

The girl SCREAMS. So piercingly...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

That two neighbors poke heads out their doors.

RED HEAD
 Is that Trisha Hettinger? Again?

BLOND MALE RESIDENT
 Louder than usual. A personal best.

RED HEAD
 Sounds like someone's killing that
 girl!

BLOND MALE RESIDENT
(sighs)
We never have that much luck.

INT. PEARL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Looking like Stephen King's Carrie, Trisha bounces in a panic. She stumbles over beer cans, petrified.

TRISHA
Grand-mama, I'm so sorry!

She trips over her sleeping boyfriend. Waking up, he grabs the girl - attempts to soothe her in his arms.

BOYFRIEND
Babe?!? Relax. One bad trip's not gonna kill you.

TRISHA
No, I swear it's - she's - real.
Tonight, I only drank one beer!

BOYFRIEND
Just one? Give me a break.

TRISHA
By the time I was done, you and Henry chugged the rest!

BOYFRIEND
Oh. Yeah. Good point. So you just had a nightmare?

TRISHA
What do you think *this* is, Craig?

Trisha waves her "bloody" arms in the air.

BOYFRIEND
Uh, you had your period?

TRISHA
No! Grand-mama's pissed. And it's all my fault. We woke her up from the dead!!

INT. BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

SUPER: The very next morning.

Kerri leans against closed elevator doors. A sign taped on it reads: "Out of Service". No surprise.

A few feet away: Trisha and her entourage struggle to fit beer stained furniture through narrow doors.

The two neighbors approach from the stairwell.

RED HEAD

Trisha's moving? I thought she was
"happy" here? Living the glamorous
New York life and all?

KERRI

(shrugs)
Word is, she wanted someplace...
safer.

BLOND MALE RESIDENT

Safer than the Bronx? Where?

KERRI

And more creative. One of her
friends has a couch in
Williamsburg.

BLOND MALE RESIDENT

If she doesn't mind shoe boxed
sized closets, that'll do.

As her punk pals exit, Trisha shuffles over to Kerri with a BOX. Though far from friendly, the girl seems subdued.

TRISHA

Listen, um.. You.

KERRI

The name's Kerri. That hasn't
changed since the night we met.

TRISHA

Right. Uh, Kerri? I just wanna set
the record straight. I'm sorry
about being such a raving bitch. To
you and...

The neighbors glare at her in unison.

TRISHA

Everybody else. If it makes you
feel better -

RED HEAD

Oh, I sincerely doubt it will!

TRISHA

It was never nothing personal. It's just.... my Grandmama died. And she's the one I care about in our whole stupid family. So I'm just going through a rough patch, right?

Kerri nods, her voice suddenly soft.

KERRI

I know. I lost Pearl, too.

TRISHA

She'd want you to have this.

Trisha shoves the box into Kerri's arms. Before Kerri can respond or peek, the girl grunts and stalks towards the door.

Glancing up at the ceiling as she leaves:

TRISHA

Mama P, our Karma's cool now, right?

Kerri waves to the kids as they exit.

KERRI

Have a great life!
(whispers to her
neighbors)
With them gone, I know I will!

RED HEAD

I wonder what caused her to move out so quick?

KERRI

(shrugs)
As a wise woman once said to me, what "goes around, comes around." I'm sure Trisha'll be happier somewhere else. Staying in her grandma's apartment was just... too close for comfort. Not to mention bizarre.

BLOND MALE RESIDENT

So the apartment's back on the market?

KERRI

That friend of yours; is he the strong and silent type?

BLOND MALE RESIDENT

You kidding? He's a librarian at the 42nd Street library. Plays Vivaldi on the weekends. But only during the day. And through headphones!

KERRI

Sounds like a guy I'd love to live above!

Kerri walks towards the stairs.

Peeking in the box, she discovers: Pearl's Hummel Collection!

Kerri smiles back at their ceramic faces, dot's the "Joker's" button nose.

KERRI

Pearl, you and your friends watch:
third time's sure to be the charm.
Don't ask me why, but I have a
hunch: with the right opportunity
and freedom, Trisha's bound to turn
out just right!

FINAL FADE OUT: