

Berthier Door

by Mark Reep

Say there's a Berthier door somewhere. If you don't know, look it up. What they won't tell you's this one's monitored by a tiny surveillance camera mounted in a streetlamp, tapping city power. Door of course impeccably constructed textured with hundreds of years of city grime flawlessly integrated into context. So much so that three years later the address on its plaque still exists. City workers still clean graffiti. Exclusion of mailbox clearly wise.

On Day 1122 at 4:14 AM the door which has remained since installation firmly glued to the masonry behind opens and a man emerges blinking shielding his eyes against fine stinging snow. He's thin pale in boxer shorts black socks and he hugs himself and shivers. Looks bewildered up down the empty street. Somewhere a bored boy playing Gears 6 half-listening to Edith Piaf in a room mostly darkness and bright screens notices this happening in a corner of the carnage. Fuck, he says, four years for this?

Or it's a fat man in a three-piece vested cut from a prewar issue of Look. Up down the street too but impatiently, reaching for his pocket watch. Turning, exclaiming something to the doorway, someone not following closely enough, a gust of wind blows the door shut. Bang. Locked now. Won't open, never has, never could. Thumping it with his umbrella handle, yelling something you can't make out. Audio's down again. You get up, run for the Rolodex in the other room. Lipreaders, who do we know. The doorlatch has frozen. You throw coffee on it. Sticky. By the time you force it open the street's empty, snow's stopped falling. No tracks.

