

A Face in the Crowd

By

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FADE IN:

INT. HI TECH OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: NSA HQ - ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE ANALYST OFFICE

DERIN, 26, dressed conservatively, good posture and clean shaven, sits in a cubicle staring intently at a computer screen.

Across which flows a succession of computer images.

IMAGE: Riot, Molotov cocktails in the air.

IMAGE: Demonstration, people jostle Police.

IMAGE: Police in riot gear, protesters stream through contorted faces.

The images continue.

Each a crowd scene, from a riot, or demonstration. Violence captured as still life.

In cubicles all around him sit Derin wannabes similar images flashing onto their screens.

Derin uses a stylus to circle a face in the crowd and hits ENTER.

On the right of the screen the software scans faces from a database, like mugshots flicked through at impossible speed.

MESSAGE: MATCH FOUND

Automated tags are added to the face on the screen before moving on to the next circled face.

Derin watches as the software identifies each person, one by one, filling the screen with tags and notes.

Next image, Derin starts circling again.

ENTER

Monotonous, scanning, repeats.

Stops.

The screen flashes: NO MATCH FOUND.

Derin peers at the screen, at the circled face that hasn't got a match.

The man is dressed too smartly for a rioter and seems somehow disconnected from the events.

He's not snarling at the Police like the others, his body and gaze are calm and not directly engaged with the rest of the image.

DERIN

Hmm.

Derin taps some keys, the picture artificially rotates slightly.

Derin hits ENTER again.

Screen flashes: NO MATCH FOUND.

Derin looks perplexed.

JAEDON O.S.

Lunch?

Derin startled.

DERIN

Jeez, man.

He turns to JAEDON, 30, not so smartly dressed but still presentable.

DERIN

Why not.

Derin glances back at the flashing screen. NO MATCH FOUND.

DERIN

You can wait.

The pair leave the office and head off to the canteen.

On screen, the man has moved.

He now stares away from the action in the picture completely.

His icy glare is fixed with purpose, through the screen and into the office.

Derin's screen saver flicks on and wipes the image.

INT. OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Derin returns from lunch, sits and types his password into the computer.

He scans the image.

DERIN

What the...

Derin scrolls back a picture. Nothing

Forward to start picture, forward to another. Nothing.

Flick, flick, flick. Nothing.

Back to start again.

The STARING MAN isn't in the scene anymore.

Derin starts to type onto the image

THERE WAS A STARING MAN HERE...

He pauses and looks at what he's written.

With a head shake he deletes the text.

DERIN

God, I need a holiday.

Derin returns to the computer and quickly re-establishes his rhythm.

The images start to cycle again.

EXT. SUPERMARKET CAR PARK - EVENING

Derin pulls the car into a clear space, flicks the radio off and heads to the store.

He's lost in thought as he passes other shoppers.

INT. CCTV MONITORING ROOM - EVENING

IMAGE ON SCREEN:

Derin walks through the field of the CCTV camera.

BEAT

Staring Man follows after him, pauses and glances up at the CCTV camera.

INT. RANDOM SUPERMARKET AISLE - EVENING

Derin wheels his trolley in slow loops.

A bag of grated cheese joins the burgers, dips, TV meals and the rest of his bachelor fare.

Derin approaches the freezers.

Catches a glimpse of a shadow in the glass freezer door.

Someone behind him.

Derin gasps and spins.

CHARLOTTE, late teens, all piercings and punk hair, is staring at Derin.

DERIN

Sorry, you, er, startled me.

CHARLOTTE

You're easily spooked. Just wanted some frozen peas man.

DERIN

Yes, of course, really sorry, sorry.

Derin moves aside.

Charlotte grabs some peas, as her mobile phone rings.

Charlotte lifts the phone to her ear, the briefest glimpse of the callers picture on the screen, Staring Man.

Derin doesn't notice, he turns and trundles off down the aisle.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Derin snores on the sofa.

The TV blares out a Football game, a team in red score a goal against a team in blue.

On the TV the camera pans into the crowd for reaction shots of the jubilant fans.

Staring Man fixes his gaze down the camera, into the living room, into Derin.

On the TV the camera returns to the game.

On the sofa Derin WHIMPERS in his sleep, then CRIES out in pain but doesn't wake.

INT. CAFE - MORNING

Derin eats his bacon and eggs, drinks his coffee.

He's in more casual clothes, weekend attire.

He glances up, catches sight of a man's head as it turns around, feigning interest in everything other than Derin.

It looks exactly like Staring Man.

DERIN

What...

Derin jumps up from the booth, approaches Staring Man.

DERIN

Hey man.

Derin puts his hand on the mans shoulder.

He turns to look at the hand and Derin, quizzical look on his face.

The STRANGER is in his late 40's, looks nothing like Staring Man.

STRANGER

Can I help you?

Derin stares, speechless.

STRANGER

Son, you okay?

DERIN

You were someone else, just then.

STRANGER

Really?

DERIN

Yes.

STRANGER

Oh, who?

DERIN

Good question.

Derin retreats to his booth, drops random coins and cash onto the table, turns and leaves.

The Stranger watches him go, concern on his face.

Stranger's face flickers, for a brief moment it's Staring Man again.

INT. OFFICE - MORNING

Derin sits at his work station.

Images flash before him. He mechanically circles faces, presses ENTER and sits back.

Tap on his shoulder.

DERIN
Not lunchtime yet, mate.

Derin turns, expecting Jaedon.

Staring man looks down at him.

DERIN
You.

STARING MAN
Me.

BEAT

Silence stretches out.

DERIN
What do you want?

STARING MAN
It's our turn.

Staring Man points at the screen.

Derin turns.

On the screen every rioter is turned, looking out of the screen, at Derin, pointing.

DERIN O.S.
Your turn?

The words come out, but sound wrong, distant.

EXT. ONGOING RIOT - DAY

Derin spins round, he's in the middle of a riot.

People push and jostle against him.

The police surge forward.

An ugly black baton descends and connects with Derin's head.

INT. OFFICE - MORNING

Staring man sits down in Derin's seat.

He picks up the stylus and circles Derin prone figure in the image.

Hits ENTER.

FADE OUT:

THE END