

The face staring back at him from the mirror in the toilet cubicle was not the face of Frank Tate. The face he was looking at was grotesquely disfigured. He stood staring intently into the reflective glass, taking a few steps closer to it. Tate reached out and touched the cold glass then touched his own face with a shaking hand. His reflection mirrored these actions, but the image remained the face of a hideously scarred stranger. "How could this be happening?" thought Tate. How could he look into a mirror and see the beads of sweat on the forehead, see the fear in the eyes of another man? He shook his head slowly, mouth wide open in disbelief as he gradually backed away from the mirror, never once letting his eyes leave the sight before him.

A sudden tapping noise to his right startled him, forced him to look away from the mirror. He turned to see the woman once again back at her laptop, typing away, seemingly oblivious to the goings on around her. The man with the Walkman was also back in his seat, probing the soft fleshy tunnel of a nostril as he gazed out the window. The younger man was the only one who seemed to notice Tate. He sat staring directly at him. Tate moved towards him. He had to find out what the hell was going on.

"Where did you go?" he asked as he picked up pace walking towards him. "Where you been?"

The man said nothing; he just continued sitting staring in Tate's direction.

"Don't mess me about mate," said a frightened but now angry Tate, "I asked you a question." He lunged forward to push the younger man's shoulder, wanting to strike out and hit something, to take out his anger and

frustration. Tate's hand passed through the man's body and stopped only when it touched the rough fabric of the seat beneath him.

He let out a small cry as he quickly pulled his hand back from the ghost-like figure and fell back onto the chair behind, pushing himself further into it, wanting to be far away from this place.

This isn't happening, he thought, he *hoped*. He must have fallen asleep. That was the only logical explanation. He must have nodded off and this was all some awful nightmare. But this felt so real. He'd had vivid dreams before but nothing like this.

"Terribilis est locuste ist," said the woman, as she pulled the laptop closed. "Don't you remember? Don't you remember anything?" She stood up and slowly started making her way towards him. The gun she held and was now pointing towards him appeared from nowhere. "You have to remember, Frank, try to remember!" she screamed and she pulled the trigger.

Tate dived forward and crashed onto the floor as the bullet sped past his chest and smashed into the window above him. She fired again and the bullet tore through the material of the seat inches from his face. He scrambled to his feet and with a yell hurled himself headfirst through the shattered glass.

In that instant the window had become the bonnet of a Ford Focus, and Tate hit it side-on. The impact was incredible. Tate's limp body was catapulted into the air and landed with a sickening crack as it hit the windscreen and went smashing through, his unconscious body bending and twisting at impossible angles like a stuffed toy. As the car screeched to

a halt with Tate laying half inside and half outside of it, bleeding from everywhere, the driver began to scream.

Tate had remembered nothing of the accident or his life before it. He couldn't remember running for the train he so desperately wanted to catch, not looking as he crossed the road. Not noticing the speeding car hurtling towards him. Now he was seeing it all. His life before the accident. Now he knew who he was, what he had been.

For his entire duration in hospital, not one person had visited or even telephoned to ask how he was. No friends or family. In Tate's profession, it was best to get close to no one. Abused by both natural parents as a small boy and again by his foster parents, he had no time for family. Any attempt the police made to trace his identity came to nothing.

He had undergone countless major operations, spent hours on the operating table. His face had to be rebuilt. He had to learn to walk and talk again. Had some sort of therapy almost every day. Eventually, in a little over 4 years after the accident, he was well enough to leave the hospital. He remembered talking to a therapist about not being able to thank people enough for what they had done for him. He had remarked "this place is awesome." The therapist had smiled and replied 'Terribilis est locuste ist'. That's Latin."

Throughout his recovery, a nurse had taken a shine to him in hospital. Her brother worked for a large software company and she managed to land him a job working for with him as a games tester, nothing too strenuous, he just had to play games all day.

That was until "Heaven's Gate." It was to be a completely different kind of game, taking virtual reality into a whole new league. With the aid of state of the art hardware and software, the player would really feel like he or she was there in the game.

Tate opened his eyes.

He heard a voice say, "He's back with us."

Tate turned to see a large crowd of people gathered round him as he lay on some sort of couch. He felt strange equipment attached to every part of his body.

"Well, how was it?" asked an eager and excited voice. It was the voice of the nurse's brother, the man who had got him the job. He looked worried. "Well come on," he continued, "We've waited so long for this!"

Everyone around him stood in silent anticipation.

"I, I can't remember, I'm sorry."

Tate heard the sighs of disappointment and mutterings all around.

"You still can't get it right," he heard someone behind him say.

"We've been working for six years with your company and you still can't get it right."

"Designing drugs that effect people's memory's to the extent you need for "Heaven's Gate" isn't a walk in the park. We have been over this. Getting people to remember some things and block others out is proving to be a problem."

"Problems get fixed so fix it," said another voice. "The entertainment industry is crying out for something new and exciting, and 'Heaven's Gate' is it. I am sure it's just a matter of time until your scientists perfect the drugs

to allow us complete control over what they can forget and recall. One day soon we will perfect the selective memory drugs, we are getting closer."

Frank Tate smiled to himself. He wondered if that day had already arrived.