

Eye See You

by Matt Shaw, 1980–

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I'm driving. The car is out of control. Dane, my husband, he is in the passenger seat. He is panicking, telling me to brake but I *am*. The brakes aren't working no matter how much I stamp on them. My children, Bridget and Lucas...' Jennifer stopped talking and swallowed back some tears as her emotions start to get the better of her, just as they had when she had experienced the dream for real—as opposed to just reliving it. She had woken, in a sweat, crying.

'Go on,' the man rasped. His voice croaky. Strained. Unpleasant.

The road ends. Concrete turns to wooden slats. Dane is screaming at me to stop now, I can see the fear in his eyes and he can see the fear in mine... The kids are screaming.' A tear runs down Jennifer's cheek, quickly followed by another. 'We're on the pier. People are diving out of the path of our runaway car. I don't think anyone is badly hurt but...'

'*But?*' Jennifer couldn't see the man sitting in the shadows but sensed a smile spread across his cruel mouth. A satisfaction at the thought of the possible horrors yet to unfold.

'I don't want to do this.'

'You know the deal. Finish. Tell me. What do the people look like? The ones who are jumping out of the way?'

'They look scared. They're yelling at both us and the people still in our path. Telling us to stop. Telling them to move...'

'Young? Old?'

'Both. They're families out for a day at the beach. Local people. Tourists...'

'What were you going to tell me? The people were jumping out of the way. You said that you didn't think anyone was badly hurt but... What were you going to tell me?'

'The end of the pier was fast approaching. People were leaning over the barrier watching the world go by. Some were fishing. Some were just standing, watching the waves gently lap against the pier's supports below them. A few seagulls were resting on the barrier too—begging for food from people enjoying fish and chips.'

'Go on.'

'I'm still hitting the brakes and they're still not responding. Just before we go through the barrier there is a moment of peace. Just a moment. I look at Dane. He looks at me. He smiles. For a second—I feel at ease. I feel peace. I... Smile at him and whisper that I love him. He doesn't say it back as we go through the barrier.'

'You hit anyone as you go through?'

'No. They moved. People scattered. Birds flew off. We went through the barrier and crashed into the water.' Jennifer paused. 'Why are you doing this?'

'Because I want to know what scares you.'

'I told you. I worry about driving a car into water. I guess this particular dream just comes about when I am stressed about something.' She paused a moment. 'The only thing I don't understand is where the pier comes from.'

'How so?'

'Where I live... Well, you've seen it. That's where you...'

'Careful.' A warning.

'Met me.'

'Pretend I've never seen it. Tell me about where you live.'

'Why are we doing this?' The man doesn't answer Jennifer so she continued. 'I live on the Harvester Golf Course in the middle of nowhere. A big, white house with a wrap-around porch and lots of windows. Lots of comfortable chairs and loungers to sit on around the porch. From the backyard there is a view of the lake which sits by the third hole, where the geese like to hang out. The house is on Carver Avenue—a little stretch with about twelve other houses. It's nice. Peaceful.' She got back to the point she was making. 'But it's the lake... I thought... If I were to dream about crashing the car into water... The amount of times I've looked at the lake, I would have thought that would have featured in the dream...'

'Brain works in mysterious ways. Tell me what you see when the car hits the water.'

'Everything goes black beyond the windscreen. The sound of water trickling in through a small crack in the window to my side. Not open enough to climb through. The kids—and me—are still screaming. Dane is trying to open the door, warning us that the water will rush in. He tells us that we just need to wait for the car to be completely full and then we can swim out but—he can't open the door.'

He's hitting the window next with both hands clenched into tight fists but it's no good. The pressure of the water from the other side is making the glass stronger... Harder to break...' Jennifer paused. 'That's when I wake up.'

'You don't see your family suffocate?' She can tell the man is still smiling. 'You don't see them as the water fills their lungs? You don't see them as their body spasms as they run out of air, forcing them to gulp a lungful of salt water?'

'Please stop.'

'We're not done.' The man continued, from the darkness, 'Tell me about your family.'

'I told you their names... What more do you want to know?'

'You told me their names. What do they look like?'

'What?'

'Describe them.' He paused a moment. 'If you want this to end...'

'My husband is roughly six foot tall. Brown hair. Brown eyes. He's handsome.'

'What does he do for a living?'

'He works for the government. I can't tell you what he does... What I can say, though, is that he will do anything for his family.'

From the shadows: *Laughter.*

'Lucas, my son...' Jennifer continued just to stop herself from hearing the repulsive throaty laugh. 'Average height. Dark brown hair, brown eyes. He is a student at Iowa State University. In his spare time, he likes to DJ. He works hard and is a nice kid but—if you provoke him—he can get angry. He just snaps. I worry that, one day, he might get himself into trouble.' She waited for a reaction. There was none. 'Bridget. My daughter. About five foot. Shoulder length brown hair and brown eyes again. She is studying at the University of Iowa—an artist and a musician. Like her brother, she can snap when provoked...'

'Any pets in the family?'

Jennifer was getting frustrated, 'Why do you want to know all this?'

'Because I want to know you. I want to know what your life is like...'

'But why?'

The man asked again, 'Any pets in the family?'

Jennifer sighed. 'I have two dogs. Wrigley and Jarvis. Wrigley is a caramel coloured small mutt. And Jarvis—he's a fat pug...'

There's a snort from the corner. 'I had you down as a cat lady.'

'You would have seen the dogs at the house when you...'

'Be careful.'

Jennifer ignored his warning and finished her sentence, '...When you took me.' She looked down at the restraints binding her to the chair. 'Please—let me go. You said you would let me go if I answered some questions. I've answered your questions. Please, just let me go home.'

'Describe yourself.'

'What?'

'Describe yourself!'

'Just let me go!'

There was silence.

'You know what I look like.'

'I want you to describe yourself. I want to hear how you view yourself?'

‘Why are you doing this?’

Silence.

‘I have short black, pixie-like hair. I’m petite—only five foot tall. I’m a mother. I’m a wife. I’m an ex-librarian, illustrator, writer. I love to read. I love horror.’ She corrected herself. ‘I *loved* horror.’ Hard to love horror when you find yourself living it. She continued, ‘I’m a nice person. I’m loving. I usually see the best in every situation. I’m family orientated. I give people second chances even when they don’t always deserve them. It takes a lot for me to get angry and I like to travel but—generally—I’m a homebody...’

‘You sound like you see the best in everything.’

‘I try.’

‘I like that you see the best in every situation.’ The man paused a moment before he asked her, ‘Do you see the best in this situation?’

Jennifer started to cry, no longer able to keep the majority of the tears held back. How could she see the best in this situation? She had been at home. Alone. There had been a knock at the back door which had taken her by surprise. She had opened the door and—*nothing*. Then she had woken up here, bound to a chair.

‘What does it feel like?’ the man asked.

‘What does what feel like?’

‘What does it feel like to cry? To have tears spill from your eyes...’

‘*Why do you want to know this?*’ Jennifer wept.

The man leaned forward out of the darkness. His face was weathered by age. His forehead wrinkled with lines around his eyes. His complexion, ghostly pale. He had no eyes; just dark sockets where they should have been. ‘Because I’ve never had eyes...’ the man rasped.

Jennifer screamed as the man sat back, into the darkness. So many questions—thoughts—went through her mind. If he had no eyes, how had he found her? How had he brought her here?

A door opened behind Jennifer. She tried to turn to see who it was but couldn’t due to the restraints—and positioning of the chair.

‘Who is it? Who’s there?’ she asked, panic in her voice. She flinched as a hand—covered by a surgical glove—landed on her shoulder. Whoever it was was standing right behind her. Still couldn’t see their face.

‘Are you ready?’ the voice—male—asked. Jennifer guessed he wasn’t talking to her but, instead, the blind psychopath in the corner.

‘She sees a lot. I’m ready.’

‘Please. Whatever you’re doing. Let me go home. Please.’

‘Ssh,’ the man behind whispered. ‘You can go home soon enough but first...’ The man reached round to the front of Jennifer with his other hand, also gloved. Grasped in his grip was a pair of small forceps. ‘...We have just this little procedure to carry out. I warn you now, I can’t promise that it won’t hurt.’

The hand resting on Jennifer’s shoulder moved to her face. With no warning—and no words of comfort—the fingers prised her eye open. The man in the corner leaned forward, out of the shadows. He was smiling. Stained teeth from a life time of smoking and coffee drinking.

‘Give me your eyes. Give me your sight... Let me see what you see...’ the old man was whispering. There was nothing comforting about what he was saying, nothing that filled Jennifer’s heavy heart with hope. No hope. Just dread.

‘Please don’t do this...’ Jennifer screamed as she couldn’t help but watch the forceps get closer, and closer, to her eyes. Cold metal on skin as the contraption started to press in between eyeball and flesh. Jennifer screamed again and jolted her head to the left, pulling away from the man’s fingers.

‘You stupid cunt!’ the man roared as the edge of the forceps pierced the eye. Jennifer screamed—not from fear this time but an agonized scream as her eyeball pissed a clear liquid. ‘Hold still!’

‘What? What happened?’

‘It’s fine. There’s still a good eye.’ The man took a step back and a deep breath as he struggled to keep calm.

‘What have you done, you idiot?’

‘She moved!’

‘I’ve told you before about this... We should knock them out first... It would make it easier.’

‘Easier but not as satisfying for me. Remember—your last payment to me didn’t go through so I suggest you shut the fuck up and let me do it the way I want to...’ The man grabbed Jennifer’s head and moved the forceps to the second eyeball. As the metal neared her eye, she yanked to the side again. ‘Fuck sake!’ He looked across to the old man, ‘Step forward and hold her head. You want her sight, you make yourself useful.’

‘Don’t forget who you’re talking to...’

‘I haven’t. A rich man who’s payment bounced. Now take hold of her fucking head and hold it still so that I can get the eye.’

‘I’m only paying half the price if there is only one.’

The man snapped again, ‘Just take her fucking head so that I can get on with some real work...’ He gave the old man some directions, ‘Step forward five paces and you’re here.’ A slight pause as the old man followed the sound of his voice. ‘Let’s get this done.’

‘Please! Don’t do this! Whatever he is paying, I’ll pay more! Please don’t do this!’ Jennifer screamed through the pain of the burst eye. The two men laughed at her offer. ‘Please don’t do this! I have a family!’

‘And you’ll still have a family. You know what they look like... Remember earlier when you said you see the good in everything?’

‘I try,’ Jennifer wept.

‘Here’s the good: You’re giving the old man the chance to see again. You should feel good about that. It’s generous of you...’

‘I don’t want to be blind!’ Jennifer screamed.

The old man shook his head, ‘Neither did I but—thanks to you—I will have the chance to see again. So, for that, thank you... Now... Sssh...’ The old man turned his attention to his helper. He said, ‘Let’s get this done now.’

The man leaned in close with the forceps again. He pushed them between flesh and eyeball. With Jennifer unable to move, this time the man was successful in gripping the whole of the eye. He smiled when he realised he had it. He didn’t say

anything. The old man wouldn't have heard him over the screams of Jennifer. But—he was ready. One quick tug...

Jennifer's scream changed in pitch.

The next time her eye would see, it would be through the head of an old man. An old man laughing: watching a newly blinded woman stumble around, tripping over the various objects purposefully placed in her path.

