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## People Rarely Look

by Lawrence Howard

People rarely look the way you expect them to, even when you've seen pictures. He was younger than I'd expected, possibly late 30's, about 5ft 10" with dark wavy hair.

I'd been standing behind him in the queue for a few minutes waiting to order fish and chips – after all it was Friday and I was on holiday miles from home with a hungry family waiting back at the apartment. He was on his own, just like me, with about 7 other people in the queue, all waiting. Finally, it was his turn to order.

“Haddock, chips and mushy peas twice,” he said, “oh, with salt and vinegar and some ketchup.”

Immediately I recognised his voice but wasn't sure where I'd heard it before. As he turned around from the counter to wait for his order I looked at him but there wasn't anything familiar about his face. Lightly tanned skin, brown eyes, thin lips and a couple of days stubble that was slightly grey around his chin. As he moved away his eyes caught mine and suddenly his expression changed. There was a look of fear and panic, but he didn't say anything.

“What's your order pet?” asked the impatient voice behind the counter.

“Oh, um, three cod, 2 chips, ketchup and a pasty please,” I stuttered back.

I looked round and the man had gone. Why hadn't he waited for his order? Has he gone outside for a cigarette while he waits? Who was he I thought to myself. I replayed his voice in my head over and over. I suddenly went cold. That's it, I thought.

Now I remember. It's the man at the end of the phone. The one who used to call up and make sinister threats. The one who knew my name, address, where I worked and seemed to know most of what I was doing on a daily basis. When I'd asked him what he wanted he'd say, "I'll tell you when I'm ready."

The police had been called but they couldn't trace him. And then after 3 months it stopped without warning. The police said he might have been arrested for something unconnected as people who make nuisance or threatening calls often have a criminal record.

For me that wasn't good enough as everything had been left in mid-air. I didn't feel safe anymore as I didn't know who or where he was. But now I'd seen him. This guy was real, in the same place as me. I ran outside to see if he was anywhere to be seen. But now I'd finally seen him he'd just vanished. Was I going to be able to put an end to this, or was it just about to start all over again?