Amnesia - By Jack Clare

James Gardener walked out of the rain and into the dry sanctuary that presented itself as a small Parisian Café. Brushing the minute droplets of moisture, caused by a light shower, off of his coat he sat at one of the tables placing a laptop bag down. He was a writer, trying so hard to extract the book that he thought was hiding in his subconscious but had so far managed to evade him. His mind was elsewhere. He was only here because of his sister, Anne. It was her that convinced him a change of scene would provide some kind of mental breakthrough. He looked out of the window, at the steady stream of people passing in the streets.

*Steady stream.*

That’s good, he thought, I can use that. He began to fumble with the zipper on his laptop bag which had started to break, only just managing to prise it open. He started up the laptop and began to look around trying to find anything to capture his interest and channel that into inspiration. He looked around. It seemed like any other café. Tasteful artwork was displayed on the walls, tables and wooden chairs with the paint peeling away, and a counter with a coffee machine and a till leading onto a kitchen in a back room. He could see a family talking and laughing quite animatedly. Tourists, he thought. They were talking in English. His vision scanned around. There was no one else here.

*Look again.*

No they weren’t the only people here. His vision scanned around seeing a man that was so out of place and yet he seemed part of the furniture. He blended perfectly, and his eyes were trained on James Gardener. He was sat quite close to James, but in a way he seemed distant. His eyes pierced metaphorical holes in him. A waitress jolted him back into reality.

“Que voulez-vous?” His mind translated. “What would you like?”

He replied in perfect French.

“Je voudrais un café. S'il vous plaît” The waitress nodded before returning to the counter at the rear of the room and beginning to fiddle with the filter coffee machine. The aromas of the coffee sent his mind on a journey and it wandered aimlessly through the corridors of his psyche, almost forgetting the man looking at him. Almost on the brink of falling asleep he heard the words.

*You know this is not your -*

The words were cut off by the waitress walking back over with his coffee. He drunk from the cup, scalding his tongue in his rush. His eyes watered. They cleared and the man was there. Sat right next to him.

“Nice day” he said.

James said nothing in return, still taken aback by his sudden appearance.

The man spoke in a thick American accent.

“You been here before? I‘m sure I‘ve seen your face in here.”

James thought this was rather odd and simply replied.

“No I’m here on holiday”

He indicated the computer.

“Looking for inspiration. I’m writing”

The man stayed silent for a few minutes and James suddenly felt very awkward.

“No you have definitely been here. Do you not remember?” The man suddenly had a very angry look on his face. James shook his head.

“Listen. You have walked into this café everyday for the last six months and each time we have had this conversation. Do you not remember?”

The man stood now and cursed.

“What the hell is this?” James asked now slightly alarmed by the man’s response. The man was now ignoring him however. He then said to no one in particular. “He doesn’t remember. Wake him up” James felt his vision cloud, but not before hearing the words.

*You know this is not your life*