

"The Paranoid Eye"

A short screenplay

Written by

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FADE IN:

1 INT. SECURITY HQ -- NIGHT

The room is small, functional, dominated by a dozen monitors all along one wall, each one showing a different CCTV image of almost identical empty corridors and offices, most of them empty, a few sparsely populated. Before them is a wide control desk.

TONY, a young man, first day on the job, is shown in by PATTERSON (38).

PATTERSON

Well, here it is Tony, home away from home. Land of the "not so" free and all that crap. So, what do you think? Live up to your expectations?

TONY

I guess.

Patterson indicates to one of the office chairs pushed up against the desk.

PATTERSON

See this chair here, this is my chair, okay? I've spent hundreds of hours imprinting my backside onto this baby, so that when I sit down my butt cheeks slip into it nice and easy. Now, I don't want your ugly butt-cheeks messing up perfection, you hear me?

Tony is speechless. Patterson LAUGHS and playfully punches Tony on the arm.

PATTERSON (CONT'D)

Hey, I was only screwing with you, man! Lighten up, okay? This your first job?

TONY

Well, I sold hot dogs for my uncle Andy one summer.

PATTERSON

Like it?

Tony shakes his head.

PATTERSON (CONT'D)

Let me give you a word of advice, son. Life doesn't get any better than this, so get used to mediocrity.

(MORE)

PATTERSON (CONT'D)

Now sit down -- don't worry, I'm not going to bite your head off. Now see that big knob there.

Patterson indicates to a big knob on the control panel.

TONY

Yeah.

PATTERSON

Now that knob controls what you can see on the monitors. Give it a spin. Go on, don't be scared.

Tony does so and the images change on the monitors, but all they show is the same boring grey corridors and offices. Some of the corridors have a door or an elevator in them and a few of the offices have a person or two working in them, but otherwise the place seems quite desolate.

TONY

What am I looking for?

PATTERSON

Trouble.

TONY

Any particular sort of trouble?

PATTERSON

In a place as boring as this, Tony, when trouble happens, you'll know it.

TONY

What do I do then?

PATTERSON

Call security, then log it.

Patterson pats a log book on the console. Tony flicks through it. There are no entries.

PATTERSON (CONT'D)

As you can see we lead real exciting lives around here. Okay, Tony, you know everything you need to know, so I'm off. Got any questions? No? Great! See ya!

Patterson quickly heads for the door.

TONY

I still don't know what I'm meant to be...

PATTERSON

Hey, I don't even know what I'm meant to be doing myself, so how  
(MORE)

PATTERSON (CONT'D)

the hell can I tell you what you're meant to be doing. If you get bored press that red button right there.

(beat)

Oh, and there's a chocolate bar in that top drawer. You eat it, you die... and this time I'm not kidding!

Patterson EXITS, shutting the door behind him.

Alone, Tony stares at the consoles and the array of monitors in bewilderment.

He takes a photograph of his pretty girlfriend, JEN, from his pocket and places it on the desk before him. She's smiling.

TONY

Okay, let's just take it nice and slow.

He twiddles the knob, moving through the endless corridors and offices on the screen. Everything looks the same.

TONY (CONT'D)

Hey, what-d'ya-know, this isn't so difficult after all. You were right, babe. This is going to be a breeze.

He picks up the photograph and kisses it.

2 INT. SECURITY HQ -- LATER

Tony is sitting back in the chair, so bored he's taken to moving the knob with his foot. The scenes on the monitors are no different than before: nothing of interest has happened.

He sits back, SIGHS, rubs his eyes, then looks at the drawer, clearly tempted.

TONY

No! Think of something else.

He turns the knob a few more times. Zip.

Suddenly he opens the drawer, takes out the chocolate bar, unwraps it and stuffs it all into his mouth in one go... and immediately regrets his decision.

TONY (CONT'D)

There, I've gone and done it now. Done something dumb... again. I know what, I'll buy him two bars to say I'm sorry.

(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

How can he say no to that? Okay, maybe one bar.

(looks at photo)

But I'll make it one of those big ones. One of those giant size things that'll make him sick for a week.

He glances at the monitors again.

ON THE MONITOR: In an empty office a BUSINESSMAN works at a computer.

He turns the dial again.

ON THE MONITOR: A WOMAN sits reading a newspaper in a corridor.

TONY (CONT'D)

At least I'm not alone in this dump. Place sure gives me the creeps. If you weren't with me, babe, I'd probably...

(yawns)

...do something I'd later regret.

He opens the drawer and checks inside for more chocolate, but there isn't any. Instead there's an adult magazine. He shrugs and begins to flick through it.

3 INT. SECURITY HQ -- LATER

Tony wakes from a doze, the magazine resting on his belly. He looks at the monitor.

ON THE MONITOR: A BEAUTIFUL GIRL in a suit walks out of an office door into a corridor.

TONY

Hey, hey, hey! Things are looking up!

(to photograph)

Sorry, babe.

Feeling guilty he turns the photograph around so that it faces the wall.

ON THE MONITOR: The Beautiful Girl walks down the corridor. Then she makes a turn and disappears.

TONY (CONT'D)

No, no, no, don't go! Where'd you go, baby?

He turns the knob until he finds her again in another corridor.

ON THE MONITOR: She enters an elevator.

TONY (CONT'D)  
 You cannot escape my clutches, my  
 lovely, however much you wriggle,  
 however much you squirm!  
 (laughs evilly)

Again he turns the knob.

ON THE MONITOR: The Beautiful girl is standing alone in the elevator. She is staring into space as the doors slide shut.

TONY (CONT'D)  
 (singing)  
 I can see you!  
 (beat)  
 Damn, she's hot!  
 (at photograph)  
 I wonder if you and she would  
 consider...

He's surprised when the girl suddenly and inexplicably HOWLS like a wolf.

TONY (CONT'D)  
 What the hell?

ON THE MONITOR: The Beautiful Girl HOWLS again and starts to scratch at the door with her nails, gnashing her teeth.

Aghast, Tony can only stare at the screen.

ON THE MONITOR: The Girl is suddenly prim and proper again as the doors slide open. She walks out as if nothing has happened.

TONY (CONT'D)  
 What the hell is going on here?  
 Did I just see that or am I going  
 crazy?

He looks at the monitors and nervously flicks through them.

ON THE MONITOR. The Businessman is hiding under the desk, GROWLING to himself. Every now and then he darts out, as if he can see an intruder.

Tony, his eyes wide, flicks the dial again.

ON THE MONITOR: The Woman reading the newspaper is KEENING, continually nodding her head back and forth. Drool drips from her lips.

He flicks the dial, skimming through a dozen monitor images. When he catches sight of something that looks like a man he skims back until...

ON THE MONITOR: A man (actually Patterson) stands facing the wall with his back to the camera. It's rather eerie.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Patterson? What the...?

Patterson brings two shaking hands to his head and starts SCREAMING.

TONY (CONT'D)  
*No, no, no, no, no, no, no! They're  
just doing it to screw with me!  
Patterson's setting me up, the  
bastard! He's setting me up!*

He looks at the red button on the control desk. He presses it.

The images on the monitors switch to show images from CCTV cameras in a shopping mall: people going about their business.

TONY (CONT'D)  
What is this?

He flicks through the images.

ON THE MONITOR. We're looking into a Men's toilet. It appears to be empty.

TONY (CONT'D)  
They put cameras in here?

He turns the knob.

ON THE MONITOR: We're now looking directly down into one of the stalls in the men's toilet. A TEENAGE BOY is crouched on top of the toilet, gnashing his teeth and twitching all over.

TONY (CONT'D)  
DAMN!

He quickly turns the knob.

ON THE MONITOR: A GIRL in a fashion shop's changing room.

She suddenly looks up, straight into the camera, and begins to stretch and stretch her face, as if she is screaming soundlessly.

Tony jumps up from his seat... and Patterson is there at his shoulder, grinning at him.

TONY (CONT'D)  
*OH MY GOD!*

PATTERSON  
Hey, easy there boy, it's only me.  
(beat)  
What's wrong? You look like you've  
seen a ghost.

Tony edges away from patterson, frightened of him.

TONY  
 Nothing. Nothing's wrong.  
 Everything's just fine. Really.

PATTERSON  
 Are you sure?  
 (sniffs)  
 There's a pretty funny smell in  
 here.

Tony looks at the monitor.

ON THE MONITOR: The girl is still pulling the awful face,  
 but Patterson doesn't seem to see it.

TONY  
 (pointing)  
 That is *not* normal!

Patterson looks at the screen.

PATTERSON  
 I'm not sure if I've ever seen a  
 girl pick her nose before, but I'm  
 sure it happens all the time.  
 They tend to be quite secretive  
 about things like that.

TONY  
 NO, LOOK AT THE SCREEN, PATTERSON!  
 TELL ME THAT IS NOT NORMAL!

PATTERSON  
 Hey hey, calm down, man. What's  
 the problem?

TONY  
 What's the problem? That's the  
 pr...

Tony looks at the monitor again. Sure enough the Girl is  
 secretly picking her nose, no longer pulling the face.

TONY (CONT'D)  
 No, no, you must have seen it!  
 You saw the way she looked, as if  
 she was screaming at something.  
 It was right there.

Patterson looks at him, bemused.

PATTERSON  
 Is this some kind of cheap trick  
 you're trying to pull on me, Tony?  
 Creep me out with some spooky crap  
 you saw on TV last night?

TONY  
 I saw...



PATTERSON

You saw what?

TONY

I don't know. Nothing.

Patterson spots the photograph on the desk.

TONY (CONT'D)

Please leave that...

Patterson turns the photo over.

PATTERSON

Hey, she's cute. That your girl, Tony? What's her name?

TONY

Jen.

PATTERSON

You're a lucky man, Tony. Hey, I want to show you something cool. Where do you live?

TONY

Why do you want to know that?

PATTERSON

Come on! I'm not going to start stalking your girlfriend in the middle of the night, if that's what you're wondering. I've got better things to do with my time! Now, where do you live?

TONY

Apartment 33, Sunbury Terrace.

Patterson types the info into the console.

PATTERSON

You're going to love this. Just don't tell anyone, okay? This is top secret stuff.

ON THE MONITOR. We see a living room in a neat apartment. JEN is sitting in an armchair, watching TV.

Tony stands in alarm, pointing at the monitor.

TONY

Hey, that's my apartment!

PATTERSON

Nice place you've got there.

TONY

No, you don't understand! That's my apartment!

PATTERSON

I know. Didn't I just say it was?

(beat)

Look Tony, we're plugged into the world spy-camera network here. You want to know what the Queen of England's doing right now, or how far Jim Carrey's got reading Crime and Punishment, it's all right here. This, my friend, is god in a box!

He pats the desk. LAUGHING he opens the drawer...and stops dead.

PATTERSON (CONT'D)

Hey, what happened to my chocolate bar?

TONY

I... er... a man came in and ate it. I tried to stop him but he wouldn't take no for an answer. Honestly, patterson, I tried to stop him, but...

Patterson looks Tony dead in the eye, and Tony turns away.

PATTERSON

A man came in and ate it, huh?

TONY

Yeah. Something like that.

PATTERSON

If you think your apartment's the only place that's wired up, you're highly mistaken. I'll find out the truth, Tony. I'll find out.

Patterson EXITS, slamming the door behind him.

Tony looks at the image of his girlfriend on the Monitor.

He presses the REVERSE button.

ON THE MONITOR. We see Jen going about her business in the room, only in reverse.

TONY

Please, please, please.

We CLOSE on Tony's face as he skims through the reversed footage. Slowly his features crumble in disappointment. We hear the CLICK when he presses the PLAY button.

ON THE MONITOR: We can see Jen, crouched in front of the TV, rubbing her face directly into the screen and talking to it as if there's someone inside the TV.

TONY (CONT'D)

Oh no Jen. Not you too!

He looks away, distraught.

Suddenly he turns back to the monitor and types away furiously.

ON THE MONITOR: We see the Security HQ from a camera placed high up on the wall. We see Tony sitting at the desk. He slowly turns to face the monitor. This is in real-time.

BACK TO SCENE. Where Tony is looking at the wall, the wall appears blank, except for what looks like a small black dot. A camera?

Tony turns back to the monitor and presses the reverse button.

ON THE MONITOR: We see Patterson exiting the room, walking backwards, and then we see everything moving in reverse to the point where Tony fell asleep at the desk.

Tony presses PLAY.

ON THE MONITOR: Tony is thrashing around in the room, PANTING harshly like a wild animal. It looks like he's possessed by an evil spirit.

BACK TO SCENE: At first Tony is horrified by what he sees, and then, as he continues to watch, he starts to smile.

TONY (CONT'D)

Hey, at least I'm normal.

The End.