

The Insider

by Jude Bridge

The squiggly line in my eye is called a floater. The optometrist says that this condition is common in people over forty, there's no treatment, and I shouldn't be concerned about a black thing that partially obscures my vision.

The line develops into a stick man. Sometimes he lurks in my peripheral vision like a cobweb or annoying fringe, sometimes he stubbornly stands in my pupil so that I have to see my world around or through him. One day he becomes less stick and more man. He has a strong jaw, broad shoulders in a white t-shirt, dark hair and long legs in blue jeans. Not only is he solid, but he begins to do his own thing. While I read on the bus, he shaves in my eye, using our reflection in the bus window as a mirror. And he starts singing Beatles songs. He can't carry a tune and makes up most of the words. I ask him nicely and then not nicely to stop singing. He doesn't listen. The only way to stop the eye-man is to close my eyes, then I can't see or hear him.

I go back to the optometrist and tell her what's happening. She's surprised, but not surprised enough. "A man came in yesterday," she says, "complaining of a Miniature Schnauzer in his left eye. I couldn't see it, but he said he couldn't stand the constant barking. I thought he was on something."

She won't give me the dogman's number, but agrees to give him mine. Perhaps we can figure out a solution together.

We meet in a café, the dogman's eyes are closed. He opens them to greet me. My



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eye-man is singing Twist and Shout at the top of his voice. The dogman and I lean in, trying to see each other's eye-dwellers. His Miniature Schnauzer leaps out of his eye into my eye-man's arms.



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