

Chapter 1

Seeing Double

Behind schedule but still determined to finish cleaning his area, Stanley found himself, on that fateful day, industriously scooping up the usual mountain of cigarette butts that peppered the pavement outside the ever-so-exclusive Groucho Club. Just starting to wilt from his efforts and ready to find one of those little hideaways that only road sweepers know about, he was in the process of bending down to get one last scoop of detritus, when the moment that changed his life forever happened.

He didn't notice the long black limousine that came to rest alongside him. The first he actually knew of its existence was when its passenger door impacted into his back and knocked him completely off his feet; its effect, to make him form a human bear-skin rug for the occupants of the limo to use when they left the vehicle.

Laughter erupted from inside the car before a cluster of beautiful models and starlets emerged, swiftly followed by Danny De Lito, the vertically-challenged major Hollywood star.

As they walked past the now prostrate Stanley, one of Danny's Amazonian entourage suddenly started screaming and manically pointing at Stanley, shouting, "My God Danny, check him out! He looks just like you. He could be your real twin!"

Stanley looked up into the eyes of the star and was struck by how right the girl was. It was as if he was looking into a make-over mirror, seeing a reflection of himself as if through a distorting prism into another world, another dimension; one where life had treated him with manicures, rather than manual labour, money rather than money lenders, and love rather than loneliness.

It wasn't the first time that someone had noticed Stanley's resemblance to the movie star. He often had his sanity challenged by his road-sweeping colleagues, as they would pat him on the head and say, "What's your next movie, my stubby superstar? No, don't tell me, let me guess: Look Who's Sweeping Now." Or they would say, "No, no, what about Lord Of The Flies?" Then ask, "Do they have an Oscar for stubby shit shovellers? If they do, you got it, Stan!"

Stanley would just internally growl and then nonchalantly shrug their jibes away, but now, as he looked up into his own face on someone else, a moment of revelation initially befuddled his mind, but eventually set in motion a chain of thoughts that would change his life forever.

As the privileged Hollywood clan walked past him into the club, he tracked De Lito, his brain trying to make sense of the reflection in front of him, but it was only as he scrambled to his feet, that the scrambled results of his brains conflicted computations became clear.

"We are identical!" He shouted after Danny, chasing him towards the club entrance. Then he offered excitedly, "Danny, mate, you ever need a stand in, you just call me!"

Danny paused and looked intently into Stanley's eyes, "You definitely got a better future being me than being you, kid. I hear the guy in New York who doubles for me makes six figures; I should get a cut. Look, my friend, the people who want me for their film will accept no substitutes. There is only one Danny D. in this world and unfortunately for you, it's me."

With that, Danny turned with an air of dismissive superiority and left Stanley to contemplate what he had said.

It was at that moment that Stanley decided he was going to change his profession and change his hairstyle. Stanley would become Danny; he would be a star look-alike for a living.

Strangely for Stanley, after his encounter with Danny it was surprisingly easy to launch his

new impersonating career. Within ten minutes of looking on the internet, he had found a plethora of look-alike agencies specialising in supplying famous faces at a discount price, and within that week he had got an 'audition', as they pretentiously called it, at one of the biggest agencies in the field.

Fake Famous Faces supplied famous doubles for everything from obscure premieres of Hollywood movies somewhere the real star refused to go, through to outrageous stag or hen parties, where the groom always had a thing about Cameron Diaz, or the bride always wanted to bed Orlando Bloom, and they wanted to indulge their fantasy a little.

Stanley often thought that society's obsession with fame was so all-encompassing, particularly with the Pop Idol/Fame Academy stuff going on, that the maxim probably stood: if you can't be famous yourself, then the next best thing is to hang out with someone who is famous. If you can't do that, then try to hang out with someone who at least looks famous.

Needless to say, for this and a gaggle of other reasons, look-alikes were in high demand. Much to his regret, however, Stanley didn't get many of the 'brides offering to sleep with him'-type gigs. His friend Brad said he got them all the time. Said they sometimes offered him an absolute fortune if he was prepared to, let's say, service the clients more complex star fantasies and desires.

With a little investigation, before his initial interview, he'd found out that as a famous face he would be able to make more in a night than he would in a month sweeping the crap off the streets.

After a quick trip to a barber's, some creative hair sculpting and the loan of a classy double-breasted suit, Stanley was ready to present himself to Jack Fielder, the agent 'with more than two faces', as he called himself on his web site.

The meeting went something like this: "Hi, my name is Stanley and some people say that I look..." "... Exactly like Danny fucking De Lito, my friend," completed Fielder, immediately aware that what stood before him was lots of money in the bank. Also, 'Stubby and Stupid' the new Farrelly Brothers' movie starring De Lito was about to premiere and he had already turned down several requests. "I can get you lots of work, Stan, my man. Make you and myself a lot of money. When can you start?"

Stanley paused, not really expecting such a quick decision, before finally he managed, "Well, what does it involve exactly?"

Jack smirked, "Nothing much, Stan. You get your look perfect and I plug you in to the deals. The closer you can get to perfection, the more you make, then you'll really start truly fulfilling the 'looking-like' part of the 'look-a-like' job description. All my best guys and girls get extra little tweaks; those last little differences eradicated. A bit off the nose here and a bit on a lobe there; you'll make shed loads more as a result."

"From your reaction when I walked in, I thought I was pretty spot on," Stanley said defensively.

Fielder, not to be put off by Stanley's reticence, enthused, "There's always room for improvement, Stanley. Perfection means pounds in the bank. Think of it that way."

"I'll think about it, Jack; you're almost definitely probably right, but..." Sensing instinctively that it was better to shut up than to continue, he paused, prompting Fielder who seemed to be displaying all the signs of someone on the verge of turning nasty, to say through an increasingly threatening smile, "Well, while you're trying out that 'thinking' thing, think about changing your name by deed-pole to Danny De Feato or something like that. Something funny though. People like to think their look-a-likes are living the dream but aren't being creepy or freaky about it."

As Stanley left the meeting with his newly acquired look-a-like agent, he pondered Fielder's words and wondered if they were wise. Then, on reflection, he found himself conceding to his

new agent's superior knowledge and experience, and decided to do all he could to make him happy.

Walking towards the bus stop, he thought to himself, "How can I make a living as the ultimate De Lito look-alike if I am not prepared to copy every twist, turn and mannerism that makes Danny D. Danny D."