

I'M WATCHING YOU

As my plane touched down in Furnace Creek Airport, California, I looked out the window at the American morning. I had travelled through the night and I was really tired.

"Please do not undo your seatbelts until we have stopped completely".

The announcer was just as tired as everyone else on the plane and that announcement didn't really brighten anyone up. When we did stop I got out of the plane as quickly as possible. Then I went to the baggage reclaim area to collect my camera gear after which I went to find my guide.

I finally saw what I was looking for. Someone was holding a sign that said Seán Hutter. I went over to him. I shook hands with him.

"Seán Hutter but everyone calls me Shutter".

"Howard Byrne-Ryan Parker Lenihan Kennedy Owens (he was American) but everyone calls me How".

"O....K.... nice to meet you".

"Come this way, I have a taxi waiting", he said impatiently.

I followed him out of the airport and true to his word there was a taxi waiting. I got in. We travelled for about 3 hours and then we stopped outside a posh looking hotel called *THE PEOPLE*. Underneath it said the Death Valley Hotel.

“I’ll meet you tomorrow morning outside the hotel at 9 o’clock. Then we’ll head to Death Valley”.

When he said that I felt a little shiver of excitement run up my spine. Death Valley was one of the hottest places on Planet Earth and no human being lived in it. The taxi rushed off so I turned and walked up the steps and into the hotel. Once I was in, I walked over to the reception.

“Hallo, em... I’m Seán Hutter”.

The receptionist didn’t react.

“Err.... Hallo.... Charlotte” as I read the name tag. She looked up.

“Do I know you?” she asked.

“It was just to get your attention”.

She shook her head slowly.

“You’re in room 1001, and by the way the lifts are broken down so you might want to use the stairs”.

I left straight away. The stairs were hard going and it took me 30 minutes to get up the stairs. When I got up I looked over to the lifts. There was a family coming out of one of them.

“Thank God we didn’t have to use the stairs”, said the father to his wife. I felt like killing Charlotte at that precise moment, but I was too tired. I found my room and jumped onto the bed. I slept well that night.

The next morning I went out to wait for Howard. Charlotte wasn’t at the reception. Howard arrived 2 minutes later.

“Hey... Shutter. You ready? It’ll take about 45 minutes to get to the valley”. I said nothing, I was too excited. I thought I was acting a bit like a boy but when I heard Howard.... I didn’t think so anymore.

We got there at 10 to 10. We set up camp. It was absolutely roasting there. I got a couple of pictures and then we had lunch. Then we went out again. We sat down a number of times. I was talking to Howard about where he came from when I saw a rattlesnake some way off. I badly wanted to get a picture of it.

“Howard, look at that!”

“Don’t go near that. It will just think you are an attacker”.

I didn’t really believe Howard but I went along with it anyway. I got a picture of it from some way off. It was O.K. but it would have been better if I was closer.

That night just as I was getting into my sleeping bag Howard said something strange. He said that if I heard noises during the night not to go out of the tent.

“Why?”

“Because there are snakes, spiders and other creatures out there that only come out at night that can kill you” he replied.

I didn’t ask anymore questions, but I was getting suspicious.

That night the sound of an aeroplane flying over my tent awoke me. I was curious so I crept out of my tent and looked into Howard’s tent. He was still asleep. I went back into my own tent. The plane must have been flying to Europe and just past overhead. That morning I asked Howard about it.

“Yes. It must have been a plane flying to Europe. I didn’t hear a thing”.

That night I heard yet another aeroplane pass overhead. Again I went into Howard’s tent and yet again he was asleep. This time I went in further. I went right over to Howard’s sleeping bag and saw much to my amazement that Howard or who I thought was Howard was a dummy! I went back to my tent,

got my camera and went out into the cool night air. I walked for about 20 minutes until I heard a faint noise that sounded like shouting and a plane's engine running. Now I was becoming excited and a bit scared. The cliff turned a little and just as I turned the corner what I saw would make the world news.

I saw two planes and some men coming out of the plane with sacks slung over their shoulders. Howard was there as well talking to a big sturdy man, with broad shoulders. I took some pictures for evidence remembering to deactivate the flash and then went back to the tent.

The next morning I asked Howard could we go back to the hotel. He seemed suspicious.

"Why? You couldn't have taken that many pictures yet."

"I need to talk to someone and I actually have taken 30 pictures".

What I said there was actually true. He took me back to the hotel anyway.

When I got there I thanked Howard and I actually gave him a tip of \$5. He drove off in the direction of Death Valley. When he had gone I went straight to the police office. I told them what I had seen and showed them the pictures.

The police thought it looked like drug smuggling. I then told them about Howard. They didn't know him so they asked me to describe him. I did. They did a bit of police work in the back room and eventually came out.

“This man Howard Byrne-Ryan Parker Lenihan Kennedy Owens, that you talk about. We think he gave you a false name [in fact a lot of false names!!!] That man sounds like Walter Wallace Walker Douglas Dillon Power. He smuggled drugs”, stated the chief. “Leave this to us. We’ll get him”. And true to his word they did. Walter got sentenced to 30 years in the slammer and his workers got 10 years. This is the story of Seán Hutter’s trip to Death Valley.

The End

[Joe Kenny](#)