

As soon as the light flashed I knew I'd regret this photograph. Not just for the quality of it: the poor lighting causing the colors to be unsaturated, so much so that the majority of the scene somehow appeared almost black and white, save for the light burst from the flash catching on the leaf of a voluptuous fern standing in the foreground of the photo and turning it a sickly, neon green; the toxic color overpowered everything around it, washing onto everything like water from waves on the beach; the subtle blurriness of the background came from my shaking hands and made it so that I almost—almost—didn't even get the target of the photograph in frame. I was a fool though, certainly no professional at sneakery and the art of wall flowering. I was not, as some would say, a fly on the wall. Maybe you've figured it out already. I wasn't supposed to be noticed, but my fat fingers never switched off the flash. The light erupted over the scene. It was a dark room. And alas, the regret washed over me instantly. But I knew it would only get worse with what had to happen next.

I quickly gathered up the camera and tucked it in my bag. Heads in the room all turned in my direction, so I too turned my head as if I was also looking for the culprit of this spontaneous flash. I'm not sure how well this worked, as I was standing against a wall and clearly, there was no one behind me who could have been responsible. But eventually, with their brows wrinkled and their heads cocked, they turned back to whatever they were doing. This only proved completely my grandest theory of humanity. Listen to this. If you act the lie well enough, no one will ever question you. No matter how irrational or silly a thing is, if you play the part most convincingly, everyone will believe you. You've already seen it in action, haven't you? If you were watching you saw it all play out before you!

Only one person seemed to be on a mission to test my theory! The target of my photograph circled the room with his eyes on me. I fondled the canopy leaves of the fern to look busy, desperate not just to remain undiscovered but also to prove my grandest theory correct. Oh how I fondled those leaves as I'd never fondled anything before. I threw every inch of my being into my subtle display of busy innocence. Eventually, my disguise worked so very well that the target swooped into the kitchen, and I dashed to the front door to make my exit. I grinned from ear to ear, grabbing a pastry from a tray of them as I swept through the entrance way towards the light at the end of this nightmare.

The light was snuffed out easily, as before me appeared my target. My path to safety was blocked. I swallowed the lump of the flaky pastry in my throat, wadding up what was left of it in my fist. I licked the crumbs perched on my teeth before opening my face with a wide smile. It was time to act as I had never acted before. The lies would be truths. I would throw up the world's best illusion. I would not—could not—lose or fail my greatest doctrine. Mentally, I rolled up my sleeves and got down to perhaps my magnum opus work.

"Why hello there, glorious party isn't it just?" I purr with a smile. "Most unfortunately I can't remain here, I was just heading home to feed my dear old pup Chester. I'd best be going, friend, I'll just step past you then, thank you."

"Oh no. I saw your shenanigan back there. What do you think you're up to this time?"

"My good sir, I haven't done anything but admire the lovely plantery at this wonderful event. What fine plantery it is as well. I am quite fond of ferns, and I do think this establishment has quite spectacular ones. Did you notice?"

I can feel a steady bit of sweat starting up, just on my back, like my shoulder blades were really faucets for the stuff. But of course I don't show this. The target doesn't see a thing. My illusion is coming along splendidly.

"Bullshit, Wackerman. I saw the flash. I saw you stuff something in your bag there. Why don't you show me? I have a feeling I know what it's going to be."

Now he might think he was a clever guy, and he might think he knew what he saw, but I did not doubt my plan yet. All I had to do was turn up the glamour on my illusion. If I believed the lie, the lie would be reality!

"Of course, righto. I know what you saw." I reach into my bag with the hand that has the ball of pastry remains in it and pull it out like I grabbed it from my bag. I am careful not to brush up against the camera I have nestled in there. "Wallah! You see, I thought I'd grab this pastry to try. I nibbled on it some and found it not to my tastes—you see, I am not quite a fan of hazelnut, it does make my tummy fairly queasy—but I did not want to be rude and toss it in the bin! What a horror it is, to be rude. Truly a terrible horror and shame. So instead I thought I'd tuck it in to my bag, just out of sight, and avoid the whole ordeal! I'm actually quite embarrassed that you saw me. That was not my hope at all. I apologize for being incredibly rude! Not my intention at all, no no."

The large man before me squinted down at the odd clump of flour and sugar and dough in my hand. He looked at it for a long time, blinking quite a bit. He then looked back at me. "Sure." So he was believing me! I began to grin the victor's grin. "And the flash?" Drat! I had not come clear yet! Oh, but I could still!

"That flash was quite peculiar indeed. I'm not sure what would have caused such a thing. I looked around for the perpetrator just as you all did! Quite an oddity, especially when it goes so unexplained! What a mystery! Though I do say, it was quite entertaining. Really caught my interest. Perhaps one should write about it or investigate further. I'm sure there's someone you can hire for that, good fellow! Now I do apologize but I really should be going. Poor Chestwinkle needs his nightly grub, and I have kept him waiting."

Again I try to step around him, feeling the sweat continue to pour like honey down my back. My shirt was beginning to stick to the skin of my back, and I feared it was becoming quite a gruesome sight to all those in rear of me that might have turned to look. Lucky for me, the target was still in front of me, and my back was not something he had vision on. Other than the sweat problem, I do think my illusion was beginning to enchant him. He thought he had his claws in me and that the trap had closed down, but soon enough I would be popping free! I could taste the breeze of the outside, just beyond the door; it tasted like the wind. I moved to step around the target again.

"Not so fast. You're not getting out of this. Explain what you're up to. What was the flash?"

Alas, the target stepped with me. My path remained blocked, the obstacle has not been lifted! I felt my grandest theory shudder a little. Oh, but I would not give up! Surely I just hadn't used the right kind of persuasion yet. My façade was not its best, true. I was out of practice, but now was no time for beginner's mistakes! I would not let my failures take over!

"Sir, there truly was nothing. I'm not sure you saw anything, really. I know I saw nothing, nothing at all. I honestly cannot recall a flash anymore. Hmm. No, it's quite like a dream I think I had once. Perhaps it's your eyesight? That would be my best guess, friend. I can say nothing more, though I do wish you luck with your peculiar problem there."

There! That surely would be the thing to spring the trap and set me free.

The target clenched his hands into fists, his eyebrows coming down across his eyes. Then, he looked up, at something over my shoulder. I made sure I stayed just as I was, remaining just so. I was utterly stationary.

In came a tall woman with quite thin arms and hands. She looped one of those spindly arms across the back of the man in front of me, giving him a squeeze. I noticed it was a very tight squeeze, but her face was smiling rather nicely I thought.

"Now dear, what are you two talking about? You've spent quite a bit of time with this one guest who seems to be trying to leave! Let's let him go and spend some time with the others? Come now, we've got a party to host."

"Jean, be serious."

"I am quite serious darling. Come now. Ta ta, Mr. Wackerman. We do hope you enjoyed our get together."

“Ever so much, thank you! I had quite the pleasurable time!”

I turn then, hurriedly putting my back to the door so they can't see the sorry state of my shirt. I wave enthusiastically. The target's wife still has a firm grip on her husband, and I hear her mutter to him as they walk away.

“Jake, you can't just harass our guests by the front door of our party. God, who raised you?”

“Didn't you see the flash, Jean? How could I just ignore it?”

“Easily. We have guests. Now tend to them.”

“He's like a dog. He shits on the floor and then pretends it wasn't him, leaving us to clean it up.”

“Jake! Honestly, you are a nightmare.”

The trap had been sprung! I throw the door open before and walk through it, walking straight into the lovely arms of the breeze. I grin. The grandest theory of humanity lives on. I worked my magic, lived up to my truest potential. The target swallowed my lies as if they were truth, because I acted as if they were truth. I can get anyone to believe anything. My regrets evaporated in the black dark night. I had my photograph. All was well. So now I could move on to the next part of my plan.