

Slight

Written by
Gabriel Henneman

INT. PUPPET STAGE - NIGHT

Curtain draws back on this tiny stage, revealing Hayden's hands cutting and shuffling playing cards mid-air.

HAYDEN (V.O.)

I promise never to reveal the secret of any illusion unto the laity, unless one swears to maintain the Magician's oath in turn. I promise never to execute any illusion for any lay person without practicing the effect before I could do it well enough to maintain the illusion of magic.

CLOSE ON - HANDS: His hands draw a two of clubs and presents it. First placing the card on its stand, he removes all of the other spades from the deck. Cutting it twice he -

HECKLER (V.O.)

Cut it a third time!

He hesitates. A single bead of sweat runs down his temple. Hayden's hands shuffle with a frustrated haste.

CLOSE ON - HAYDEN'S FACE: Frustration shows in his face.

CLOSE ON - HAYDEN'S EYES: Sweat runs as his glare tightens on his struggling hands, starting the trick over.

HAYDEN (O.C.)

(tense)

I promise never to reveal the secret of any illusion unto the laity, unless one swears to maintain the Magician's oath in turn.

His hands fan the cards for the audience.

HAYDEN (O.C.) (cont'd)

I promise never to execute any illusion for any lay person without practicing the effect before I could do it well enough to maintain the illusion of magic.

Having pulled the six of spades, his hand places it in the small stand on stage.

He turns away from the stage and finishes the trick on his desk, removing all of the spades from the deck.

HAYDEN

I promise never to reveal the secret of any illusion unto the laity, unless one swears to maintain the Magician's oath in turn. I promise never to execute any illusion for any lay person without practicing the effect before I could do it well enough to maintain the illusion of magic.

He fans the cards out with emphasis.

HAYDEN (O.C.)

Diamonds! Clubs! Hearts!

Defeat replaces his look of satisfaction.

The ace of spades has somehow snuck its way into the hearts pile.

CLOSE ON - The back of the 1" x 1.25" framed photo. Hayden's seemingly massive hand reaches down to touch the frame.

CLOSE ON - The front of the 1" x 1.25" framed photo of a 12 year old Asian schoolgirl. Hayden's loving thumb rubs the front of the picture.

Hayden's head tilts in reminiscence.

CLOSE ON - HAYDEN'S HANDS: He shifts from rubbing the photo to attempting to remove the ace from the hearts pile, but nips his finger on its corner, drawing blood.

Applying pressure and turning away, he reveals a man watching from the chair in the corner.

Hayden digs through his laundry and finds a clean-ish sock.

SATAN

Hello, Hayden.

Hayden crashes back against the wall.

HAYDEN

It's you.

SATAN

Let's have a seat, shall we? Wouldn't want you crashing into anything else.

Hayden feels for a seat, never breaking eye contact.

HAYDEN
What are you doing here?

Satan looks powerful.

SATAN
I'm here for you Hayden.

Hayden looks up with excited desperation.

HAYDEN
For me?

SATAN
I'd like you to show me a trick.

The ace of spades combusts in Satan's snapping fingers and Hayden is absolutely mesmerized.

Hayden stands and follows.

HAYDEN
Triumph? The Ambitious Card? Four Queens? The Impossible Three? The Gentleman's Sneeze? The -

Satan comes to a stop at the back wall.

SATAN
Something original.

Hayden stops following and contemplates.

HAYDEN
Original?

SATAN
Completely new. Of your own creation, so to speak.

Hayden looks down in disappointment.

HAYDEN
Oh...

SATAN
You show me a completely original trick and I'll -

HAYDEN
Deal!

SATAN
Excellent...

Hayden turns away, and then back.

HAYDEN
What about -

Satan disappeared. Hayden labors over to his desk.

Hayden fidgets with his deck of cards.

HAYDEN (cont'd)
Original. Completely new. Something
completely original, all my own.

Hayden paces in and out of frame. He wipes his forehead. A single drop of sweat drips from his index finger. Hayden stops and takes a seat.

HAYDEN (cont'd)
I could - no that's...
There's... no. Well?...

Hayden loosens his tie.

HECKLER (V.O.)
Come on already. We paid good money
here.

HAYDEN
This takes time. To develop, let
alone perfect would -

HECKLER
We're waiting...

Hayden whips around to yell over his back shoulder.

HAYDEN
I'm working here! You understand
that! This is my life! This isn't
some fucking joke!

Hayden scares himself there. He turns back around. He talks to the cards as he shuffles.

HAYDEN (cont'd)
Well it is my life. If they wanna gab
and spit shells they can go spend
\$79.00 at the Moriarty show, and see
that indeed

(MORE)

HAYDEN (cont'd)
 (mocking)
 No pair of handcuffs known to man can
 contain him!

It's easy when you don't have any
 hands.

BLUR:

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

The shadow of a full audience vignettes the stage.

Moriarty the Magnificent, a double amputee with no hands,
 offers his wrists in the direction of his assistant. She
 puts the cuffs on him.

Moriarty smiles wide, presenting his bound wrists to the
 audience. Now pensive, Moriarty feigns effort and slips the
 cuffs right off.

HAYDEN (V.O.)
 Sitting up there with your assistant,
 a beautiful older woman.

Moriarty's Assistant poses with a performer's smile.

HAYDEN
 Kind, confident, with the most supple
 and ample...?

INT. HAYDEN'S ROOM - DAY

He's still talking to his cards.

HAYDEN
 Gimmicke fuck.

Hayden gets up and disrobes at the pace of his ranting. It's
 his room - why not?

HAYDEN (cont'd)
 Some of us have to work for what we
 have! Some of us know what it's like
 to struggle. To know pain, torment.
 To have a mother who bathes you and
 bathes you and then inspects and then
 bathes you again. Only to lock you in
 a room or closet or small chest for
 days straight.
 (MORE)

HAYDEN (cont'd)
That's escapism! That's craft! All
just for saying puh-puh-puh-puh-
penis!

Hayden's eyes jerk to the knock at his door. Hayden looks
down at his naked -

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Hayden rushes to redress.

HAYDEN (cont'd)
Who in the world?-

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Hayden pulls his shirt tails as he opens the door.

An electrician is on the other side.

ELECTRICIAN
Hayden?

Hayden stands there, still holding the door knob in his off
hand.

HAYDEN
Yes?

ELECTRICIAN
I'm here to fix the outlet.

HAYDEN
Oh, right. Um, yeah it's right over
here.

Follow the electrician in.

The electrician observes the carpeted floor.

ELECTRICIAN
Hang on, let me take my shoes off.

HAYDEN
No, that's alright, you can -

ELECTRICIAN
Thank you very much. Respect.

HAYDEN
No problem. Would you like something
to drink?

ELECTRICIAN

Me?

HAYDEN

I have water or some orange juice.

ELECTRICIAN

Thank you, no. Respect. Respect.

Electrician follows Hayden to the outlet.

HAYDEN

I assume it's just a blown fuse or something.

ELECTRICIAN

Most likely, probably.

HAYDEN

But, you know, might as well get you out here since I can uh -

They reach the outlet. Electrician is crouches down to it.

ELECTRICIAN

Ah, did you plug a space heater in here. Is that what happened?

Hayden watches, with his hands on his hips.

HAYDEN

No, it's, I haven't, it's very hot out.

Electrician removes the plate.

ELECTRICIAN

No, but in the winter.

Electrician leans on the wall with his off hand, leaving a mark of grease or some other black substance.

ELECTRICIAN (cont'd)

Oh no.

He tries to wipe the mark off, but it just moves around and even gets worse.

HAYDEN

That's okay, I can clean it later. Don't worry about it.

ELECTRICIAN

Oh okay. You can clean it later.
Respect.

Electrician pokes around some more, pulling the plate from outlet loose from the wall.

ELECTRICIAN (cont'd)

When did this stop working?

HAYDEN

It's never worked.

Light pokes through as Electrician pokes around and tugs on the outlet.

ELECTRICIAN

Never?

Hayden crosses his arms.

HAYDEN

I only just got here in March.

Electrician puts his tool back in his bag and grabs it up.

ELECTRICIAN

Oh I see, you just got here in March.
Alright, we'll fix it right up for
you. I'll be right back.

Hayden watches Electrician get up and cross the room. Electrician exits, presumably to the basement. Hayden's door hangs ajar.

Hayden frowns and looks left to right. Then he dances in the footprints left by the electrician, ending in his seat at the desk.

Sweat drips from Hayden's brow. He deals cards, but he has to constantly dry his palms.

HAYDEN

The components of every great trick.
The setup.

Hayden fans the cards out and then draws one at random, face down. He cuts and false cuts.

HAYDEN (cont'd)

Misdirection.

The outlet starts tugging back and forth from the wall.

Hayden looks over his back shoulder in the direction of some banging sounds in the basement. Hayden looks from left to right and then settles on shuffling the cards again.

ELECTRICIAN

Oh.

Electrician stands in the doorway.

ELECTRICIAN (cont'd)

I can come back later if you're working?

Hayden looks up from his seat at Electrician.

HAYDEN

No, that's fine, come on in.

Electrician heads back to the outlet.

ELECTRICIAN

Very good. Very good. Thank you. The wire is no good.

Hayden responds over his back shoulder.

HAYDEN

What?

Electrician is crouched at the outlet again, poking at it with tools and rubbing it with his hands.

ELECTRICIAN

(focused)

Can't fix it. The wire's no good.

Hayden gets up and watches, arms crossed again.

HAYDEN

What does that mean?

Electrician puts his tool away and looks up at Hayden.

ELECTRICIAN

When they remodeled this place they took out the wire to that outlet. I can't find it down there.

HAYDEN

Really?

ELECTRICIAN

Nope. Well, I best be getting going.

Electrician gets up and crosses in front of Hayden.

HAYDEN
When you were just down there the
outlet moved.

ELECTRICIAN
This outlet?

HAYDEN
Yes.

ELECTRICIAN
When I was just down there? Right
before I came up?

HAYDEN
Not right before, but a few minutes -

ELECTRICIAN
Before I came in here? Right before I
came in here.

HAYDEN
Not right before, but -

ELECTRICIAN
I'll be right back. Can't say I
didn't try.

Hayden turns back to look at the outlet. It tugs against the wall a few times here and there. Hayden turns back to his desk and deals out cards again.

HAYDEN
The setup.

He deals into piles.

HAYDEN (cont'd)
Misdirection.

Hayden turns at the sound of Electrician rushing in. He flies past Hayden.

ELECTRICIAN
That should do it!

Hayden turns to watch again.

Electrician is crouched and testing the outlet with his voltmeter.

ELECTRICIAN (cont'd)

Hmmmm...

HAYDEN

What?

ELECTRICIAN

It's fading in and out.

HAYDEN

What does that mean?

Electrician gets up and exits the room.

ELECTRICIAN

I'll be right back.

Hayden rubs his thumb and forefinger.

CLOSE ON - HAYDEN'S HANDS: His thumb and forefinger rub together.

Hayden looks to the door at the sound of rolling wheels.

Electrician wheels in a cot.

HAYDEN

What's this?

Electrician pauses.

ELECTRICIAN

Oh... so sorry. So sorry.

HAYDEN

You want to stay here?

ELECTRICIAN

Need to. For observation, but if you're too good to house an electrician?

HAYDEN

No, that's -

ELECTRICIAN

I see, you just wanted to appear nice.

Electrician turns away.

ELECTRICIAN (cont'd)
 (mocking)
 Don't take your shoes off. Take a
 seat. Something to drink?

Electrician spits on the floor.

ELECTRICIAN (cont'd)
 but when it comes to staying in the
 same room as one of them.

HAYDEN
 I don't -

ELECTRICIAN
 God forbid if I even so much as steal
 a glance at your bride! You people
 make me sick.

Spit! Spit!

HAYDEN
 Could you maybe just go pull on that
 outlet some more? It seemed like that
 worked.

Electrician takes a minute to stare Hayden down. Then he
 exits.

Hayden organizes his desk. Then the sound of creaking hinges
 draws his attention to the doorway.

The electrician is staring at him, feeling the sharpness of
 his buck knife with the pad of his thumb.

Hayden watches in horror.

Electrician finally turns away, toward the basement.

Hayden rushes to put his shoes on.

The outlet moves again, slow at first. Then it slams against
 the wall. Faster, faster, chipping drywall even. Hayden
 watches in horror. He backs away.

CLOSE ON - THE OUTLET: Harder, faster, then nothing. The
 outlet snaps back to how it originally was, the plate
 screwed back on and everything.

Hayden's terror shifts to confusion. His attention moves to
 the rattling sound on the other side of the room.

In the adjacent corner, Hayden's gaze finds the source of rattling metal, and his confusion is transformed to apathetic realization. He moves toward the sound's source.

Hayden removes the towels.

The large dog crate contains the greased, bound, and beaten double amputee, Moriarty the Magnificent. Hayden opens the crate and pulls him out.

Hayden pulls Moriarty the Magnificent into his lap and begins bellowing.

HAYDEN (cont'd)

*Flow my tears, fall from your springs
Exiled for ever, let me mourn
Where night's black bird her sad
infamy sings
There let me live forlorn.*

*Down vain lights, shine you no more
No nights are dark enough for those
That in despair their last fortunes
deplore
Light doth but shame disclose*

*Never may my woes be relieved
Since pity is fled
And tears and sighs and groans my
weary days, my weary days
Of all joys have deprived*

*From the highest spire of contentment
My fortune is thrown
And fear and grief and pain for my
deserts, for my deserts
Are my hopes, since hope is gone*

*Hark! You shadows that in darkness
dwell
Learn to contemn light
Happy, happy they that in hell
Feel not the world's despite*

FADE TO BLACK: