

Illusion

“LET’S GO TO A MAGIC SHOW.”

Jean insisted. The show was in town for one week only. It was advertised as “a night of revelation” said to be a show part artistic statement, part illusion.

“We never go out. We never do anything. Remember when our friends used to have fun?”

Marian resisted at first, but Jean got her way in the end, pouting her full raspberry lips and murmuring, “Marian, c’mon, pleaseeeee?” Marian coalesced. Jean always got Marian to do what she would rather not. That’s what best friends were for, Jean always said, always said it with a lopsided grin. When all Marian wanted was to sit in the easy chair in their living room, perhaps with a book, Jean barged in and dragged her out by both hands to whatever scheme was her latest intrigue. Marian recollected her former aversion as she sat in the chair, images reflecting off of mirrors.

The projections had to be false, they couldn’t be real. Maybe she was drugged in the interval from when they entered the warehouse. But that begged the question where in her mind did these images even come from? As soon as they arrived and gave their five dollar entry fee, the ushers pushed them into separate rooms, assured them it was all part of the show.

The room was dimly lit. The walls were mirrored except for a single projection screen opposite a straight back chair dead center.

The last thing she could recall was Jean's smooth hand excitedly squeezing hers, willing her to be a good sport.

"Anything can happen at a magic show," Jean grinned at her, wiggling her eyebrows before she waved goodbye and walked into the room opposite.

Still, Marian continued to feel rather humorless. They asked her to take a seat. Her flesh touched the unyielding wood beneath her and the lights cut out suddenly. Marian held back a small cry. The projector hummed for a moment and the film rolled.

It was a thirty second clip of a young girl in a yellow dress, sitting in a lively green field, pulling petals off of daisies. But there was something there, in between the frame; between the petals floating gently to the earth and the girl tugging on the stem. Snippets of images flashed in between the looping sequence, depicting scenes Marian was sure could not truly be real. An arm wrapped around a waist. Hands tugging on clothing. Alarmingly familiar raspberry lips smashing against a thin, pale mouth, she knew well, very well. Drifting in and out between frames of daisy petals, falling, falling, falling.

Marian sat there for almost fifteen minutes. Then the lights flickered on and the loop stuttered to a halt, the little girl superimposed on the screen hand outstretched to pick the next petal. An usher came in and asked her to join them in the next room. She felt dazed as her eyes adjusted to the light. Jean joined Marian and the other audience members. She laughed. Isn't this fun? Marian nodded, flexing her hands into little balls, as she stood by Jean. They began to walk and her fingers grazed the sleeve of Jean's jacket. Falling, falling, falling.