

## I'M NOT LYING

by Hank Schachte

*i, camera, am the medium through which many many stories  
are being communicated to the human planet.  
not bad for a machine, eh?*

I CAN SEE THIS GUY Marlon at the back of a long shot walking home from the office. He looks like a young Albert Einstein only with short hair and wearing big black-framed Woody Allen glasses. Now he's stopped at the edge of the frame, middle distance, to buy a few items from a sidewalk grocer right near his condo. He's nodding and smiling with that sort of urban cheerfulness that seems to suggest approbation is welcome from anywhere, even the gruff but jocular old grocer who looks at him like a mark. I follow him, stopping as he starts up the apartment steps with his groceries. He stops on the top step and fumbles for his keys until a couple of tomatos fall out the top of the bag and roll down the steps.

Now he's in the kitchen of the apartment, the bag of groceries on the counter, examining a pretty dented tomato and waching the TV through the opening to the small living-room—it's the six o'clock news. George Bush is on there explaining about the Iraq problem of finding weapons stockpiles in such a huge country with so much sand, and there's some great backup from Cheney. Marlon, in profile, is eating a prune, gesturing with it as he addresses the screen and saying 'Lying particularly irritates me.'

It's not just our leaders, either. The next day he's at the dentist's, sitting in the chair looking frustrated, a rubber dam stretched across his gaping mouth. I'm angling down from the ceiling, beside the lights. He keeps trying to say something while the dentist hovers over him working, occasionally cutting off my view. I can't make it out. It sounds something like 'You eyed to ee a-out eye oot canal.'

The dentist pokes him. 'What are you doing? Sit still,' he says.

Marlon smiles weakly, not aided by the rubber dam. The dentist keeps on working, hovering over him, again cutting off the view. 'I overheard uh nurse on uh hone. Your yacht eeds a ew en-ine.'

'Are you in pain?' the dentist says sounding with all the distraction pretty pained himself.

'Ye.'

The dentist turns to a drawer beside him and brings out an enormous needle.

Marlon's eyes bulge above the rubber dam. 'Oh! Ot eally. I ean, what's a little hain? It's just a question uh inter-retation— air's hain, uh hain eshold, uh ercet-tion uh hain, an air's *hain*— I ean, a rea-y *ig* hain...'

'Like a pain in the ass?'

Then close up I see this big needle going right in, right in the middle of Marlon's forehead.

THE NEXT DAY HE'S OUT on the sidewalk again on a bright sunny morning, stopping at the grocer's next to his condo. He's got a flesh-colored bandaid on his forehead, holding up a dripping tomato toward the grocer, a quizzical expression on his face. The grocer at the edge of the frame says 'They're just nicely ripe.'

Now he's in the office with his khakis and bandaid on, white shirt with a pale red stain over his stomach. He's over by the coffeepot with a few fellow employees— Wanda, the new receptionist, Max and Frances. They're all eating powdered jelly donuts except Marlon. The boss strides into frame. 'Good morning, team.'

The others all reply 'Morning, chief,' kind of as a chorus, Marlon coming in a bit late with 'Morning, Boss.'

'Chief, Marlon.'

'Chief.'

'Say, you're not eating your donut.'

'Well, I...'

'Marlon, don't be shy. You may be the low man on the totem pole, but you're still entitled to a donut.'

Actually, I'd prefer, uh... to, uh... not to, uh... uh...'

The boss picks up a donut and, grabbing Marlon's hand, slaps it in, curling his fingers around it until the jelly oozes out. Then he turns and walks off. Marlon stands there looking apologetically at the others, taking a tiny bite, catching the jelly with his tongue where it drips from between his fingers and smiling weakly. I move in for a close shot of his hand just as a blob of jam breaks free. Perfect.

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