

Where Do Flies Go at Night?

“You’re such an animal,” she said, playfully struggling out of his hold from behind.

“What?” he teased.

“C’mon, let me go, and wash up for dinner. We’re having steak tonight.”

“How can we afford steak?” he asked, with genuine interest.

“I saved money on our groceries by using coupons from Sunday’s paper.”

“That’s my girl! I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

“Hurry up though; I know you like yours rare.”

Wayne and Alison Haskell were still newlyweds, having married just under a year ago. He worked at a night club as the assistant manager to Harry Ingles, owner of “The Lizard Lounge” in Boston, Massachusetts. Alison was a secretary for a law firm until she became pregnant six months ago when she resigned to become a full-time homemaker and soon-to-be mother. They moved into a run-down part of the neighborhood, but their apartment was clean and cheap. He was saving money for a small fixer-upper in the suburbs, but until then, they made their place comfortable with the nice furniture her parents gave them as a wedding gift.

The summer had been especially humid, and not able to afford an air-conditioner, they kept all the windows open to help get some air into the place. Unfortunately, this invited a lot of flies, moths, and mosquitoes into the place, especially the kitchen, so Alison had plenty of bug repellent and fly traps strategically placed throughout the apartment to help keep the infestation to a minimum. It was a double-edged sword, so to speak: if she closed the windows, there would be fewer flies, but the humidity would be unbearable, especially at night, when they couldn’t sleep.

As her husband was washing up, she saw a fly buzzing around his steak. Having gained experience over the summer in swatting flies, she crept up on it and smashed it flat as a pancake on the countertop.

“Got ‘cha!” she said, triumphantly.

“Got what?” Wayne asked, walking into the kitchen.

“Oh, I just killed another fly,” she replied, flicking it from the swatter into the garbage can.

“Nice going, Sweetheart,” he said, reaching for a couple of glasses from the cupboard.

“What’s there to drink with dinner? What goes good with steak and baked potato?”

“I’m afraid all we have is some iced tea that I brewed this morning and some ginger ale. I’ll have the iced tea, myself.”

“Me too.”

Wayne pulled out the iced tea carafe from the refrigerator and then got the ice tray from the freezer. “Sugar?”

Alison wiped her hands on her hips, threw her arms around his neck and gave him a big kiss.

“That’s really nice, dear, but I meant sugar for the tea.”

They both laughed.

“That was cute, honey. How was work today?” she asked, returning to the stove.

“Same ‘ol, same ‘ol,” he said, pouring iced tea into their glasses. We had a customer – sort of a weird one, even for our neighborhood, come in before Happy Hour. I’d never seen her before, and believe me, I would never have forgotten a character like this if I had. She was dressed up in what I’d call gypsy clothes. With all of the weird fashions these days, with the colored hair, piercings, and tattoos, she sort of fit right in with the crowd except she didn’t order anything. She sat at the far end of the bar sort of in her own little world. Later, when I was getting ready to come home, one of the bartenders came up to me with a book and said that he found it laying on the bar. When I went out to take a look around, she was gone. The bartender said he found it right where she was sitting, so I assumed she forgot it. I checked it out, but there isn’t a name, address, or anything in it, so when I was about to put it into the Lost and Found box, I skimmed through it and found it pretty interesting. I probably shouldn’t have brought it home with me, but I want to get a better look at it. It looks like a book of spells; witchcraft, maybe.”

“Can I see it?”

“Sure, I’ll get it from the car after dinner when I take out the garbage.”

The next morning, Wayne walked into the manager’s office to begin his shift. A young, attractive woman was standing next to his desk, waiting for him.

“Have you told her yet?” she asked.

“Not yet,” Wayne answered the gorgeous bartender.

“Why not? You said you were going to tell her last night!”

“I intended to, but it wasn’t the right time. I was late for dinner, and she went to bed early. She was feeling sick – I think from the pregnancy.”

“I don’t care, Wayne,” she retorted. “You always seem to have an excuse. Do you want to be with me or not?”

“I do darling, believe me, I do! I just need to find the right time when I can sit her down and explain the situation.”

“The ‘situation’? What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Try not to get all riled up, Mona. You know what I mean.”

“I’m not so sure I do anymore, Wayne. Do you love me?”

“You know I love you.”

“Then what is standing in the way? If you love me and if you want to be with me, then you would handle this like an adult and get it over with. I am not going to hang out on the hooks forever. In fact, if you do not take care of this by tomorrow, then we’re through. Do you hear me? I mean it!”

“Yes, I hear you. Don’t worry babe, I’ll take care of it tonight for sure.”

“You better, Wayne, or you and I are done. You understand?”

“Yes darling, I get it. Now give daddy some sugar.”

The next morning, Alison let her husband sleep in since it was Saturday. She gathered his clothes from the bedroom floor and threw them into the hamper. She made herself a cup of coffee, and noticed the strange book left on the kitchen counter from the night before. It had an old, worn leather cover and there was a

kind of symbol etched into it. She picked it up and immediately, a wave of nausea swept over her. The pregnancy had been difficult so far with morning sickness, with headaches throughout the day being the biggest challenges to deal with, but she was not concerned because in three short months she was going to be a mother with a new baby, and she couldn't wait.

She picked up the book and flipped through the pages. As a former secretary, she knew paper, and these pages were incredibly old, faded, and thick. She turned the book over to look at the back cover to see if there was an author or a publishing house or any other kind of identifier. Just like Wayne mentioned, there was no writing anywhere in the book to indicate whom it belonged to. She knew he would need to take it back to work with him on Monday in case the owner came looking for it, but in the meantime, she planned to spend the morning reading through it.

By noon, Wayne was up and asking for breakfast. As she made a cheese and onion omelet for him, she told him how interesting the book was. Apparently, it was a book of spells, and judging by the condition of the book, she surmised it could possibly be traced back to the Salem witch trials of early 1692.

"How do you figure that?" he yawned, pouring a cup of coffee.

"There is a reference to them in the middle of the book. It's almost written like a first-person account, as though the person who wrote it was actually there. You know me, I love stuff like this: horror stories, thrillers, mysteries... but this isn't a book of stories. It reads more like a diary, but throughout the book there are these spells, or recipes. For instance, here's one on how to walk among a crowd of people while being invisible..."

"It's just a bunch a nonsense, Alison. If you saw the woman I saw yesterday, you would think she was a homeless person just coming into the bar to cool off from the heat outside. Besides, I'm not 100% sure it was even her who left this book behind. It could have been someone else, we just have no idea of knowing, right?"

"Well, all I can say is that this is a really cool book and I wish we could keep it."

"You can keep it," he said sipping his coffee.

"I can?" she chirped.

"Yeah, after 30 days if no one claims it, it's yours."

"Very funny, Wayne," she said, sarcastically. "Anyway, at least I have today and tomorrow to look through it before you have to bring it back."

"Sounds great, honey. This will give you something to do while I'm out golfing with Steve and Kevin."

"Oh, that's right, I almost forgot but it's OK since I have the laundry and some other housework to catch up on. Have a great day golfing, hon."

After Wayne left for the day, Alison could not wait to read through the book. After an hour, she decided to copy down several spells, such as the ones describing how to afflict an enemy with a disease or perpetual hiccups. She found herself giggling as many of the spells seemed so petty. Almost all of them seemed like recipes for revenge, such as afflicting a problem neighbor with a poor harvest or giving a jilted lover an untreatable rash.

She copied a dozen of them into her notebook and hid it under their mattress where Wayne would never look, but she was hopeful to make the book her own in a month if no one reclaimed it. A book this old had to be worth quite a bit of money to the right collector, she thought, and they could certainly use the money with a new baby on the way.

Later in the day, while Alison was sorting the laundry, she noticed a red smear on one of her husband's shirts. Upon closer inspection, the evidence did not lie. It was obviously lipstick, and it certainly was not hers since she doesn't use it. She also noted a small cloud of flies buzzing around the house, but she had no time for this. She was too hurt and angry to think about anything else.

When Wayne came home around dinnertime, she was ready and waiting with his shirt on her lap to show him. She wanted an explanation, and it had better be a good one. However, when she showed him the lipstick stain on the collar of his shirt, she could immediately tell in his expression that he had been unfaithful to her.

"How could you do this to me?" she sobbed. "How could you do this to *us*? We have a *baby* coming... we haven't even been married a full year yet... why would you need someone else if you love me..." All of these arguments fell out of her mouth in quick succession without giving him a chance to respond because how else could he answer her other than to admit he was caught seeing another woman.

Wayne did not respond. He did not know what to say because she was right. He had been behaving as he did before he met Alison, sleeping around with any woman he wanted to, but they never meant anything to him. He loved Alison.

She threw the shirt into his face and went into the bedroom to pack.

"I don't love her," he said, as she whirled around the bedroom like a tornado, throwing her clothes into a suitcase.

"I don't care if you love her or not!" she cried. "what difference does that make!"

"The difference is that I love you," he pleaded. "She's nothing to me. I'll end it now. I'll never see her again."

"Wayne, I don't care how you handle her. I only know that I never want to see you again. I'm going to move in with my parents. We're getting a divorce. There is no way I am going to go bring a baby into a marriage of convenience so that you can sleep around with whoever you want, whenever you want. I can no longer trust you! You are dead to me, Wayne!"

In the heat of the moment, Wayne knew there was nothing he could say to change her mind, so he left the bedroom and sat down on the couch in their living room, hoping he would have another chance to talk to her when she was calm. He did love her, and he knew that he had been behaving selfishly. He did not want to lose her, especially over some bartender, regardless of how beautiful she was. He knew that he had a life and a future with Alison. He bowed his head in shame as she said 'good-bye' before slamming the apartment door behind her.

As Wayne nursed his regrets with a bottle of scotch, he noticed that flies suddenly assailed the apartment. The more he swatted, the more they seemed to multiply until he had enough of it and sprayed insect pesticide throughout the house and closed all the windows. Perhaps he would die from the fumes, he thought, and

perhaps that wouldn't actually be a bad thing, especially since he was feeling like a maggot himself.

Alison did not return any of his calls over the weekend, and here it was already Monday morning – time to face the music with Mona once and for all. As he walked past the kitchen counter, his eye caught a glimpse of the wretched spell book that Alison must have left for him to return, so he picked it up and threw it into his shoulder bag on his way out the door. The gypsy would likely return for it, he thought. Who else would possess a book as weird as this one?

After work, Mona came into the manager's office where Wayne was working on the inventory and wanted to know what was going on. He told her that he still loved his wife and that he was deeply sorry for leading her on for so long. Naturally, she did not take this well and quit on the spot, throwing her apron into his face.

When Wayne returned to the lonely apartment, he sat down on the couch with a bottle of bourbon he stole from the bar and drank himself into a stupor. He already missed his wife terribly. He cried into his hands, barely believing all that transpired over the last 24 hours.

Suddenly he realized something was different.

He lifted his wet face from his hands and looked around the room and noticed that there weren't any flies buzzing around. He left the windows open before he left for work, and they were all still wide open, but there wasn't a single fly in the entire apartment. "Perhaps that pesticide is the ticket," he thought.

He sat back into the couch, and while searching for the remote in the cushions, he noticed that a shiny black spider had made a large web in the far corner of his living room. Surprisingly, there appeared to be hundreds of flies trapped in it. He walked over to the web for a closer look of the spider. It was jet black with a tiny red spot on its abdomen.

Not realizing it was a deadly black widow, he slurred, "That's my girl. You can stay here as long as you earn your keep."

Reaching for the bottle from the coffee table to pour himself another drink, his doorbell rang. He instantly leapt to his feet thinking it was Alison returning to work things out. He put the glass down on the coffee table, ran his fingers through his hair, rushed to the door, and opened it wide only to see Mona standing in the hallway.

"What are you doing here?" he drawled, lowering his head in disappointment.

"I heard your wife left you. I'm sorry, Wayne, but you have to know that I still love you."

Wayne turned back to the living room to get his glass.

"I know this seems inappropriate, considering the situation with your wife, but I'm here for you Wayne. I love you."

Wayne remained silent, lost in regret and remorse over the loss of his wife. Mona closed the apartment door behind her and walked into the kitchen. Suddenly, a large, shiny black spider scampered across the kitchen floor toward her. Without hesitation, Mona stomped on it, squashing it to death.

Though things were never going to work out between Wayne and Mona, he never heard from his wife again.