

Scott Kelby on Monday Motivation

They're not Lucky Shots.

For years I had dreamed of shooting the island monastery of Mont St. Michel in Northern France, and I finally planned a trip for my wife and me, and two dear friends, to make the four-hour drive from Paris' Charles DeGaulle airport to this "Disney like" scene not far from Normandy.

When our friends picked us up at the airport, it was pouring rain, and the awful gray sky seemed to go on forever. As we drove for hours through driving rain, it became clear that my dream of shooting Mont St. Michele at sunset would be just that – a dream. We were spending the night in a nearby town, and maybe I would at least get a chance to shoot it in good the next morning. Unfortunately, this isn't really a dawn shooting location – it's a sunset shoot, but sometimes you have to take what you can get, and at this point – surrounded by angry clouds and unrelenting rain, it seems like a hopeful backup plan.

When we finally arrived at the official parking lot for the island (still a 30-minute hike away, but a flat, easy one on a paved road that used to allow automobile traffic), the rain let up a bit, so I stood outside in the light rain gazing at the gray island off in the distance and wishing the weather the different. It was at that moment that I looked up at a tiny "hole" in the sky and pointed it out to my friend, "Look! There's a tiny opening of blue sky there." It was indeed tiny, but it was hope. I convinced the other three of us that we should at least make the hike in the light rain, so the whole trip wasn't for naught, even if we didn't wind up getting any pictures, so we headed out.

About five minutes into the walk the rain turned into a light sprinkle. Five minutes later it stopped altogether. Five or 10 minutes down the road the sky started to open up, and when we got to the base of the island, we were greeted with the sky you see here. We were all just floored. Thrilled, shocked, delighted, and none of us saw this awesome sky coming our way.

When I'm teaching my workshops, and a student comes up and shows me a shot like this, if I say something nice about their image, they generally say, "Aw, it's a lucky shot." I tell them, it's not luck. It's them finally "getting even" for all the times they clouds didn't break, and instead the rain got heavier, and the model didn't show, and your camera battery died at just the wrong time, and you dropped your lens, or forgot to pack the one accessory that would have made the shoot, or you were there on a wrong day, or the wrong time and the place was closed, or your car broke down on the way to the shoot.



In reality, we got incredibly lucky that the rain stopped and that amazing key appeared. But if you think about all the times in your life when something simple went wrong at your shoot, we don't need to explain it away as luck – we need to celebrate the fact that for once it all went right, and enjoy it for what it is. But when it happened, when that marvelous sky appeared over the perfect scene, you had it all together. You had your tripod, all the right accessories, you had the right lens, the right body, and you were ready to make the shot.

So here's to every once in a while us "getting even" and having everything just come together, and when someone sees your amazing shot and gives you a compliment, you get a pass – you don't have to say, "Aw, it was just a lucky shot." You can just simply say, "Thanks." 😊

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