

THE HIGH-TENSION MAGAZINE

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*Old as history is the canine enigma. Sweet, lovable, clumsy Fido. Is his mischief as innocent as cracked up to be? Consider the threat: every dog has his day. Man's best friend, yes . . . but also bloodhound. And can the mutt be trusted with feminine secrets? This question Mr. Weyl discusses with exceptional authority. An expert in such matters, he is author of *Treason*, last year's widely acclaimed history of betrayal in America.*

B L O O D will tell

NATHANIEL WEYL

If chilled love leads to murder—what does chilled blood lead to? The answer lay with Linda's husband!

AS SOON as they turned off Canal Street, Robespierre knew where she was going. The car edged through narrow, dingy streets, making frequent turns. Linda's eyes were on the mirror, studying the cars behind. She continued to zigzag until she was certain nobody was following her.

She parked the car in the alley that they had used before, leaving it deep enough inside so that people passing on the street couldn't read the license number. Glenn lived on the street into which the alley gave. Linda walked tentatively into the bright,

swarming street, still afraid of being followed. She stopped at a second-hand store which had meerschaum pipes in the window. Behind the meerschaums there was a mirror with a too ornate, gold-leafed frame that leaned lopsided in the display window. Through the mirror, she could command a view of the pedestrians on the street.

When sure that nobody was there who might recognize her, Linda walked quickly to his apartment house. Inside the vestibule she was quite protected from the eyes of the street by the double doors with their

frosted glass windows. When she rang Glenn's bell, a spot of dust stained her finger. For a minute they waited, then, when the buzzer clicked, walked up the two flights of unlighted stairs on the shredded, once crimson, carpet.

Glenn opened the door. Although braced by the doorknob and the mantelpiece, his heavy body swayed. His eyes were glazed and his lower lip slack.

She and Robespierre went into the room, which was seething with disorder, and Linda sat down on the sofa. There was a half-empty gin bottle on the floor. The torn shades were down, barring the brilliant afternoon sunlight. The place smelled of turpentine.

"I came after all," Linda said unnecessarily. "I don't know why. Because it's all over and there isn't anything more to say about it." She looked around the room: "So you got potted?"

"What did you expect me to do?" Glenn poured some gin into the cup and took the cup to the faucet. The water came out with a rush, spilling most of the gin down the drain. He went back unsteadily to the bottle and poured a larger drink. This time he was careful with the faucet and didn't spill any liquor. He did all this very slowly, his face screwed up and concentrated on what he was doing. He came back and offered Linda the drink, but she shook her head. Glenn then noticed that his hand was trembling. He took the cup between both hands and drank.

"You said over the phone you

didn't want to live without me. You were going to shoot yourself. So instead you get drunk. You know, that's so typical."

Glenn got up and went to the easel. He tore off the cloth dramatically.

"Your portrait is finished," he said. "You can take it home with you."

Of course the portrait was not finished. He had grasped the character of her face in a few sure strokes and then had been too lazy to create the depth and shadows. Linda stared at the painting. What he had done since her last visit was to paint a jagged red line from one corner of the canvas to the other—a line which slashed through her neck.

"That was a childish thing to do," she said, not even trying to hide her contempt. "Why it's like a voodoo witch sticking pins in a wax doll. . . Really, there just isn't anything we have to say to each other. Whatever we once had in common any man can have with any woman and. . ."

"Yes?"

"I am ashamed of having had it with you."

Glenn moved quickly toward the door and intercepted her. His heavy hands with the splashes of dark hair on their backs took her shoulders firmly. The hands moved like tortoises over her body. Although he was too drunk to hold her the way a man should, she felt her knees going weak again. Linda suddenly shook him off.

"I don't want it," she said. "I really don't."

"What *do* you want?"

She looked lost for a moment. Of course, that was just the trouble. If one really knew what one wanted, this sort of thing couldn't happen.

"You're not walking out of that door yet," Glenn said. "We've got to talk. You can't leave me like this. You see I would be absolutely alone, Linda. Don't you understand that?"

"There are other women. The world is full of women."

"Nobody else would ever be any good for me—not after you." Glenn was moving back onto firmer terrain now, Linda thought. The role of the tragic suicide-to-be hadn't quite come off. So he would try charm. She remembered the charm from the other times and shuddered slightly. She went back to the couch and sat down, but didn't take her gloves off.

Glenn poured the cup full of gin and drank half of it in one gulp. She saw that he was building up courage for some purpose and she felt uneasy about it.

"I may be weak," Glenn said with dignity, "but I am also an artist."

"Oh, no—you're not! You have a flair, that's all. Just a flair. You don't have discipline and really you don't have much to say."

"I am an artist," Glenn repeated. "And together we could do anything. If you walk out on me now, I will be back in the alcoholic ward."

"I thought you were going to shoot yourself?"

He took the Walther automatic from the dresser drawer and tossed it from one hand to the other. The gun fell on the floor. He made a

motion to pick it up, then decided it wasn't worth the effort.

"The gun is loaded," Glenn said. "All I have to do is take it off safety, point it at the top of my head and pull the trigger." He paused dramatically. "But I don't think I want to. Are you really walking out on me, Linda?"

She laughed. Glenn finished the drink of straight gin, taking it like medicine. In about a quarter of an hour, Linda calculated, he would lose consciousness.

Glenn smiled at her in his crooked way:

"Like to buy one of my paintings, Linda?"

"Are you insane? How would I explain that to Arthur?"

"Store it somewhere. Wait till I am dead and famous. Make money off my corpse when I am dead and famous, Linda. Right now, right at this minute, you can have any canvas in the place for five thousand bucks."

"What are you really trying to say, Glenn?"

"Still rather have you, you understand. But you say I can't. . . And I have to live, Linda. It isn't blackmail, you see. No gentleman ever blackmails. Some day those paintings are going to be priceless, worth priceless money, if you follow me."

"The man's crazy," Linda said to Robespierre. "Come along. We're getting out of here."

"Photographs," Glenn said. "Took photographs while you were sleeping. Did it because I love you so much." His voice broke and she saw to her disgust that he was giggling. He

took some prints from his vest pocket and handed them to her. "Hate to do this, you understand. I am a gentleman. No hard feelings, I hope."

By now Glenn was too drunk to see that she was really angry. The blood had left her face and all her muscles were weak. When she had silent rages like this one, Linda was always afraid she would lose control, would do something irrevocable.

She sat stiffly on the edge of the couch, smoking. She was careful not to take her gloves off. She wondered where the negatives were. All she had to do was wait until he passed out, then take the negatives and the prints and walk out the door. She would blot him out of her mind. This would be something in her life that had never happened.

Now he was mumbling that he loved her so much he couldn't live without her. His shirt had sprung a button and she noticed how fat and dead-white his belly was. She thought of something washed up dead on a beach. How disgusting he was when one really thought about it.

It wasn't only the pictures. Sooner or later Glenn would talk. Talk to someone about her—about them. This idea came to her now with great force and clarity. She knew now that he would go from one drunken bout to the next and that sooner or later his tongue would start wagging.

Linda picked up the gun between gloved fingers and released the safety catch. Gently, she put the automatic between his limp fingers and guided his hand toward his head.

Holding his wrist, she waited until the elevated train roared past the window and then said: "Squeeze it, darling."

She helped, of course. Strangely enough, it made very little noise. But what surprised her was the amount of blood. She hadn't dreamed that a man could bleed that much. The bullet must have severed a neck artery.

She moved away from the couch the minute the gun went off. Studying herself in the mirror, Linda saw that there was no blood on her dress, none at all. She swept up the prints from the table and then found the negatives under a ball of dirty handkerchiefs and shirts in the dresser. She put the prints and negatives in her handbag. She even remembered to take the cigarette butts with the lipstick rings on them.

Thank God she hadn't written him letters. Nothing of that sort to worry about.

"Come, Robespierre." As they reached the door, she remembered the canvas. A rotten painting, but at the same a dangerously good likeness. With his palette knife, she cut the canvas from its frame. This took three or four minutes. Then she wrapped the canvas in an old newspaper and left with Robespierre.

Robespierre thought it was good riddance. He had never cared for Glenn, largely because there had been an unpleasant smell to the fellow. He walked happily with Linda to the car, waiting patiently while she dropped the cigarette butts in a trash can.

They drove out to the Palisades and walked in the woods. When she found a secluded spot, Linda emptied a can of lighter fluid on the canvas and film and watched them burn to ashes.

She had some moments of fear, but they passed. There was really nothing to worry about. She had worn gloves all the time. Therefore there couldn't be any fingerprints. Besides, he had squeezed the gun himself. The police would see at once that it was suicide.

It had been quite horrid, Linda thought as she drove up the gravel drive of their home in Westchester. Exciting while it lasted, frightfully exciting, but fundamentally so repugnant and sordid. One didn't like to say that sort of thing, but really it was better for Glenn this way. Being dead, that is. Now he could be at peace and he wouldn't have those frightful drunken spells and scream in his room about the colorless, transparent animals. Yes, actually it had been a kindness.

Dear Arthur was standing framed in the front door waiting for her. He seemed so comforting, so solid and kind, that her heart went out to him. She felt a warm glow of satisfaction at having broken with Glenn in a way that couldn't conceivably cause Arthur any pain. She ran to meet her husband and kissed him ardently.

Arthur wiped his mouth with his handkerchief. They went into the

living room with Robespierre following. Arthur poured the old-fashioned.

"There's been intriguing news over the radio," he remarked. "That young painting fellow, Glenn Corrigan, the one you disliked so much. Well, the top of his head has been blown off." When she remained silent, Arthur added: "I thought the Corrigan tidbit would interest you, darling. After all, you *did* dislike him so. I rather thought the news might give you pleasure, in a way."

"He did seem to be the suicidal type," Linda said.

"Suicide? I hardly think so. You see there were paw prints in the dead man's blood. A remarkable quadruped. He apparently left the room after the artist fellow had been killed and then closed the door behind him."

Linda knew she mustn't look. She concentrated on her drink, but slowly, as if by a magnet, her eyes were drawn toward Robespierre, who was curled up in his favorite chair, licking the brown patches staining his paws. A glance at Arthur's cold face told her that he not only knew about Glenn, but probably had always known. He sat there withdrawn, perched on the edge of the big chair, a small, prim, middle-aged man whom she had wounded and who now hated her. He lifted the telephone.

"I want a policeman," he said.