

GUILTY

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W. W. Scott — Editor

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THE UGLY WOMAN

by MICHAEL ZUROY

She wanted just one thing, it was something she wanted bad!



BRUCE woke up to darkness and a sense of being misplaced. Where was he? Where was a window? A wall?

A fuzzy thought came to him. There had been a blonde. He tried to visualize her, but her face was dim and her form unstable.

Another thought, more concrete, came to him. He'd been kidnapped.

He was lying on something soft. A bed. He pushed up, peering into the darkness. A rush of dizziness hit him. It was frightening to be dizzy in the dark. His head swivelled, seeking a gleam of light. If he did not find it, he felt he'd go crazy.

The dizziness blew up into a storm and he fell back, his head sinking into soft warmth. He rested in warmth and comfort. He was not oriented.

There was no relief to the darkness.

He resolved not to go crazy. Although frightened, he would hold on and think. Try to remember what had happened. Search for a fact.

Cocktail party.

A fact. The cocktail party had been a fact.

It opened up. He remembered.

"So you're an architect," the blonde had said, eyeing him up and down. "I don't think I've ever met an architect. What do you build?"

He'd liked the way her eyes ran over him. It produced a nicely creeping skin and a hollow below his stomach. He liked her type anyway, tall, with very light blonde hair and a milky skin, her body a utilitarian structure. She was not hard or sophisticated or blatantly sexy, but forthright and artless, a daughter of the earth at a cocktail party, which sometimes happened because anything could happen at a cocktail party.

He met her eyes and did not try to think an answer to her question. Instead, he thought of what he would like to do

to her. He thought it at her, eyes sounding eyes, and knew that she was receiving his communication. A little smile appeared on her lips.

He promised himself that before the evening was over he would have that pinkish gown off her.

He knew that his own animal appeal had reached her. He was not six feet two, solid-necked and haughty-featured for nothing. He closed his fingers on her arm, firm and hard, and said, "We'll talk that over. Let's pick up a couple of drinks and find a spot."

The apartment was owned by a wealthy stock-broker who derived a producer's enjoyment from gathering prominent, beautiful, eccentric or unusual people and watching the resultant lather. Harman's parties were always lavish.

Bruce had come to hunt, for a client or a girl or both. He had found that very few clients stumbled into his office or girls into his bed by chance. This was still a hunter's world, the way Bruce saw it, and if you weren't willing to go on safari after what you wanted you had better learn to be sat-

isfied with the leavings of fortune.

The party deployed before them, a human barnyard full of ragged sound, disguised under cloth and trappings, tinted, scented, lotioned; flashing teeth and eyeglasses with the spasmodic abandon of fireflies. It chomped, swallowed and worked facial muscles. From behind the governed words, silent emotions and thoughts peered.

BRUCE, twisting through the crowd with the girl, picked up the drinks and found a retreat against a wall. Her name was Wendy, Wendy Thomas. He worked on her slowly and lightly. Pleasantly, he could feel the beat pick up. A few more drinks and the rapport came, tense and exciting. They looked at each other, both feeling it, but not yet ready to plunge together.

A woman edged out of the throng and regarded them. She was short, thin and stoop-shouldered with a face that puckered to a focus at the short, broad nose. Her eyes swam behind heavy lenses. Her hair might have been built

from bankers-grey broadcloth. She wore rings on her fingers and jewels at her throat. She might have been anywhere between forty and sixty.

Wendy cried, "Oh, Emma. Bruce, I'd like you to meet a dear friend of mine. Emma Gilman, Bruce Reilly."

Bruce rose and acknowledged the introduction politely.

"Will you excuse me?" Wendy said suddenly and walked into the crowd.

Bruce looked after her, aghast. He'd been sure of her. Was this a brush-off?

"Do sit down." Emma tugged at his sleeve gently.

Mechanically, he sank back, following Wendy's progress with his eyes.

"Very attractive girl, Wendy," said Emma.

"Yes, Mrs. Gilman."

"Miss. Miss Gilman. Do you know, I've been watching you two for quite a while. What a lovely spark I discerned! Do you mind my saying that?"

I mind you butting in altogether, you fig-faced hag, thought Bruce, not saying it. After all, she looked monied. Where there was money a cli-

ent might lurk. "No," he growled.

Her hand touched his arm again, resting on it. He turned his head and found her eyes glowing into his face. "Not that I blame her," she said. "You really are a magnificent specimen, you know. We women do admire the brute male."

Startled, Bruce said, "Well, thank you. But she doesn't seem too interested in me right now." Wendy was on the other side of the room, smiling at a hawk-faced man.

"Oh, she'll be back. She likes you. I know Wendy. You'll be taking us home."

Bruce swung around again. "Us?"

Miss Gilman's laugh tinkled. "Don't look so dismayed, dear boy. Wendy and I live in the same house. That is, I own the building and Wendy has quarters there. It's a large house, I assure you, and I shall disappear at once. As a matter of fact, I have a chauffeured car waiting. Why not use that?"

Bruce eyed the woman warily. Too much interest here. Too much intrusion. Too much arrangement. He didn't like nosy,

ugly friends. Why was it that so many attractive girls seemed to chum with these plaintive blemishes? And they were invariably confidants, who avidly plucked for the most intimate details. Might as well have Emma Gilman looking over his shoulder after he got Wendy's pink gown off.

Well, the hell with Emma. If Wendy wanted him in her bed, he wasn't going to worry about Emma.

Through the smoke obscured crowd, he saw Wendy returning to him, her eyes liquid and desirous.

The chauffeured car had taken them to a narrow, five story house on Riverside Drive. Keeping her promise, Miss Gilman had immediately left them. Wendy had taken him to her apartment, and he remembered sitting in a chair so soft that his posterior seemed afloat, watching her hips swing as she prepared the drinks.

Then she had given him his drink, and he had finished it and that was where his memory ended.

Now, lying in the dark, he realized that the drink had been spiked. It must have been

a wicked drug to make him feel this miserable. He'd been taken, and while he was wondering for what purpose he fell back into unconsciousness.

THE next time he awoke, the darkness was gone. A pastel ceiling stretched above him sending down gentle indirect lighting. He was lying on a large bed in silky sheets. The feel of the sheets on his skin informed him that he was nude.

He looked around, and it became glaringly evident that he was a prisoner. The room was windowless, crossed at one end by closely spaced iron bars into which a barred door was set. Beyond the bars he could see a smaller room, sealed by a solid metal door. Actually, the whole was one large chamber, partitioned by the bars.

There was no other resemblance to a cell. The rooms were harmoniously furnished in the modern manner, discharging a feeling of quiet opulence. Deep broadloom covered the floor.

Experimentally, Bruce sat up. There was no dizziness. He left the bed and prowled about

the place. There was a small bathroom adjoining, windowless too, containing every toilet article a fastidious man might require, including shaving equipment. A little closet held just one article of clothing, a deep blue man's robe that smelled fresh and new. He put on the robe and felt better.

He also discovered a pair of fur-lined slippers in a plastic bag near the bed, and opened the bag and put his feet into the slippers. Comfortable.

There was no trace of his own clothes or personal belongings. The drawers of the twin chests held nothing but linens and another new robe, folded.

So.

It was evident he had been deliberately baited and trapped. Why?

There was a painful wound in his self-esteem. He had been a fatuous peacock, imagining that Wendy Thomas was panting over him while instead she'd been coldly plotting this. And undoubtedly her eye-sore friend, Emma Gilman, was involved too.

Why? He was sorely puzzled.

He meditated.

Giving it up as an idle job, he went into the bathroom and washed. Refreshed, the desire for food sprang into being. There was no clock in the room, and no way of knowing whether it was night or day. Judging from his hunger, he must have been out a long time.

The outer door opened, and Wendy Thomas walked in.

He regarded her through the bars, silently attempting to re-appraise her. It was difficult; she showed no mark of perfidy. Her eyes were as candid and blue as he remembered, her surface as fair and fresh, her hair as light as young summer squash. She was wearing an aqua sweater that dilated over hill and dale and coal black tights that delineated her rounded bottom and hips. The long calves of her legs swelled bare below the tights.

Smiling, she looked back through the bars at him.

Bruce spoke roughly. "What the hell is this, Wendy?"

"I can't tell you."

"What?"

"I'm not here to talk. You'll get an explanation from some-

one else. I'm supposed to entertain you."

"Entertain?" Bruce croaked. "Damn it, I'm in no mood for entertainment. I want to get out of here. I've got a business to take care of."

Wendy's voice took on a lulling timbre. "Bruce, honey, I really can't discuss this with you. You'll have to wait, but I'm going to make the waiting enjoyable. Why don't you just sit down and watch?" She moved to a cabinet and flicked a switch. Slow, throbbing music crept around the room. She whirled suddenly and struck a dancer's pose, arms upraised.

Mystified, but enticed, Bruce stared.

Wendy undulated. She wiggled before him in a leisurely, sensuous manner, eyes hooded and grown darkly violet. Her back arched and her limbs formed tender curves. Lazily, she swayed about the room in various craving postures.

The beat picked up. She whirled faster. Her hair tumbled and flew. Her mouth slackened and opened. Her eyes tranced. Her breasts loosened and bounded.

Bruce felt blood beating at

the base of his throat.

Wendy stopped the dance abruptly. Her eyes brooded into him and she smiled lingeringly. Her hands fastened on the hem of her sweater and rose slowly over her head, slowly uncovering.

Bruce saw that she was large, yet shapely.

She waited before him, still, nude, lovely, loose-lipped.

Fair and white.

Woman.

Bruce had known hot emotion before, but this was different. This was more. This was overwhelming, pounding, destroying control, belittling everything but this woman.

"Wendy," he rasped thickly. "Open that damn door and come in here."

Her smile grew brilliant. Her eyes absorbed his.

She turned her back on him and walked out of the room.

Heat grew under the blasting draft of frustration. Heat grew. Heat waned. Rage came. Waned. Longing came and stayed. Longing.

And bewilderment.

Why?

LATER, two bulky men appeared, bringing him food, drink and cigarettes, which they slipped through a wicket. They eyed him curiously, but refused to speak. His questions and requests might as well have been directed at empty air. They left.

He had nothing to do but think. There was no radio or television set in the room, no reading material, no writing paper. He was totally severed from the world he had recently been living in.

Bruce was not introspective. His mind was accustomed to coping with changing realities, sometimes dwelling briefly, but moving on. Now it was being forced back upon itself. It was being forced to mull.

It lingered upon the image of Wendy. Although it drifted, it kept returning to Wendy. The longing persisted.

After a while, he slept.

When he awoke, nothing had changed. He had found the light switch, and when he flipped it, the soft light returned him to his situation. Another meal came. Time passed. He walked, sat, cursed, thought. And waited.

She came again. This time she was wearing a demure, pearly gray dress. She began disrobing at once.

An angry flush spread over Bruce's cheeks and he strode to the bars. This was funny, but appealing, but insulting. Work him up, then let him down. He was being played with, manipulated, for some reason. Just as, from the moment he'd met her he'd been manipulated. He'd never played the helpless fool before. Resentment pulled him taut.

He spoke tight, hard words to her. She put on her accustomed smile, but making no answer, went on disrobing. He stopped talking when her skirt came off. Knowing what was under this day's prim attire, he found himself growing hot to see.

The flouncy underwear came off. For many minutes she displayed her glorious body to him, standing so near the barrier that he could almost touch her, walking lithely about, turning, posing sensuously, reclining and wriggling on a couch.

Then she left him,

Was she going to make a routine of this strip-tease? He couldn't take it too long. He'd explode.

He tried to put Wendy's body out of his mind, but there was nothing to do but speculate and think and dream. Desirous thoughts grew until nothing else had meaning. What the hell did she want of him? What the hell was behind this?

He had no way of tracking time, but it seemed that many days must have passed before she returned. When she did, he was reduced to gratitude: he was actually grateful that she had come back to break the tedium if only to tantalize him more.

This time she was nude when she walked in. She began to dance, wildly, passionately.

She stopped dancing and looked at him, flushed and breathless. She made a hesitant motion towards him, and he could have sworn that she was feeling as much desire as he was. But she turned and went away.

Was there going to be an end to this? Would she eventually

give to him? There was nothing to do but wait.

She came again. And many times, enough so that he lost track. But between each appearance the waiting was always long, so that suspense, tension and the power of the animal passion in him grew unchecked. She entertained him differently each time, but always ended by leaving him in a state of sickening frustration and raging libido.

Once, he refused to look at her. She began to talk then, and in her sweet, low voice told him in detail what she wanted him to do to her. When, at last, he turned his head, he saw that, nude, she was regarding him from the couch, her hips writhing. Hypnotized, his resistance broke.

The last vestiges of control and dignity seemed to leave him. The world he had known seemed hazy and unreal. There was only this soft room with its soft lights, and this woman, and the greedy desire within him. He had no other thoughts, no other emotions. He had been rendered into a blob of pure passion.

THEN came the time that the outer door opened, and it was not Wendy.

It was Miss Emma Gilman.

Her thin body clad in a sheer negligee.

The outer door clicked shut behind her. She walked to the bars, took a key from her pocket and unlocked the inner door. She entered and faced Bruce. Her eyes, behind their thick lenses, were intent and sharp.

"You need a woman," she said. She opened her negligee.

He looked at her. Her body was scrawny and angular. Her legs were straight sticks. But ...she was a woman.

"Not you," he said thickly.

"Me." Emma Gilman came closer. "The way you're feeling now, any woman will do. Even me, dear boy."

Lord help him, Bruce thought. It was true.

Her voice suddenly went higher and a look that was a little mad came into her eyes. "Take off your robe."

He obeyed her.

She stooped towards him, as though following her sharply seeking eyes. "You brute," she bit out. "You strong, magnifi-

cent beast. Quick. I won't wait."

He went at her hungrily, and she clutched him, moaning and whimpering, nails raking. Once, she sunk her teeth into his ear lobe. In his desperation, he minded nothing...

Afterwards, he looked at the puckered face next to him where he lay sideways on the bed and at the too even false teeth in the thin, dry mouth, and bleak depression and disgust pumped through him. But, at last he was clear-headed. He was himself again.

"So you're responsible," he said.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"For this."

"Only for this?" he regarded her morosely. "I can't believe it."

She sat up abruptly. "Only? You weren't feeling that way a while ago."

He was silent.

"I'm not an attractive woman," she said. "I'm ugly. Even repulsive, a man might say. I've always been that way. Wouldn't you say I'm repulsive?"

He was silent.

"Women need to be wanted," she said. "It's very important. What man would want me? Could a handsome brute like you ever desire me madly, desperately, terribly, unless..."

"Unless he were kidnapped, imprisoned and brain-washed. With the help of a piece like Wendy."

"Why not? I'm a rich woman. I can afford to satisfy my needs. My people are very loyal and tight-mouthed. I know how to keep them loyal. High pay, pleasant light work, luxurious environment. But more than that, I've discovered that people value their loved ones above themselves. I'm very benign towards their loved ones. Wendy, for example. I saved her mother's life by providing fearfully expensive medical attention. The girl will do anything I say. Anything."

"Apparently."

"That holds true for the rest of my... staff."

"Very interesting. But you've had your fun. Will you give me my clothes and let me go now?"

Emma Gilman regarded him

with a secret, mocking look. "No, dear boy, I have other plans for you."

"You can't keep me locked up forever. The police..."

Emma looked contemptuous. "The police. Very ineffectual about missing persons. Thousands of cases every year and almost none of them solved."

Bruce made a sudden violent motion and seized the woman by the throat. "I could throttle you right now."

"Delicious!" gasped Emma. "Part of the thrill. Danger from a dominating male."

Bruce stared at her, tightening his hands slightly.

"You can strangle me, of course. But my people know what to do in that event. You will die too, soon afterwards. Horribly. Very horribly, I assure you."

Bruce released her. She rose and put on her negligee. "Come," she said. "A little patience."

"I won't be kept here like a stud horse."

"Oh, I have better than that in mind. You might even be a little proud, if you knew."

SHE walked rapidly to the outer room and pressed a button. Almost immediately, the outer door began to swing open. Hastily, Bruce donned his robe.

Three men entered. Two of them were the burly attendants who brought him his meals. This time they were armed with wicked looking automatics. The third man was a stranger, tall, wearing a drab bow-tie under a long, narrow face.

The stranger looked towards Bruce with pale eyes that seemed to show appreciation. He stepped over and ran his long fingers through Bruce's thick dark hair. He caressed Bruce's neck. Stunned, Bruce was unable to move for a moment, during which the man pulled open his robe and ran his hand down Bruce's deep, broad chest to his flat, hard stomach.

"Beautiful," said the man in a melodious voice. "Wonderful physique."

Bruce regained the use of his muscles and shoved the man violently away. "Get this fruit out of here!" he roared. "What kind of a den was this?"

"That will do, Mr. Tipham,"

said Miss Gilman curtly. She motioned towards the attendants. They locked Bruce back in his cell, guns discouraging resistance.

"Now, will you gentlemen kindly wait outside?" requested Miss Gilman. "I won't be very long." The men left.

Emma looked very scrawny and withered and her eyes very large and swimming as she regarded Bruce. He couldn't figure this, he was thinking... He couldn't figure it at all. But, by God, when he got out of here, he was going to make this hag pay....

"Bruce," Emma said softly. "I really don't want to use you as a stud horse. What I wanted from you, I've already gotten, your sincere, uncontrollable desire for me. Dear boy, we had that moment together, didn't we? You'll never quite attain that with me again, will you?"

"Damn right," growled Bruce. "You won't use me twice."

"Of course. Even if Wendy works on you, you'll know I'm waiting; it won't be the same.

So you see, I really don't want you anymore, except as a memory."

There was something about the way Emma said this.

"I have quite a few memories," she went on vacantly. "They're floating in brine in the tanks downstairs."

Something cold lightly touched Bruce's spine.

"You aren't the first," Emma said. "I like to look at them. My memories, I couldn't let them go, could I? They would have talked."

She's mad, Bruce thought. She couldn't mean this.

Emma smiled, her flat nose spreading. "But don't you worry, darling. I wouldn't put you into a tank. You're too strong and magnificent. I want you to be one of my special memories."

She regarded him fondly. As she turned to leave, she said, "By the way, I'm afraid you did Mr. Tipham an injustice. He's not what you said. Mr. Tipham's my taxidermist.... Good-bye, dear boy..."

THE END