

Letters from the Asylum

(3)

by Lillian Ann Slugocki

Venice, 1913

Private Deposition of Case No. 431 File No. AB012.

Dr. Leo Berlin

Yes, it's true when I met her she was very young and initially I loved her more than life itself, but that kind of love took its toll on me, and when madness descended, irony of ironies, I couldn't help her, and I tried. And it's also true that over the years, I've come to wish I had never met her.

There is no afterlife, there are no ghosts, we were not the bride and groom she saw in her hallucinations, processing down the mountain. There is no heaven or hell, no sacred wedding. She did not have a story to tell. It was just madness. Nothing more, nothing less. I'm sure you can see this.

There is only this moment, this second, this instant. Nothing else. Time is linear, we die and then we are buried, period. I am a man of science, not mysticism. And I was also a man with my back up against the wall, and that is not a pleasant place to be. I had every right in the world to end the affair, to start over, in Venice. But she wouldn't let me.

No. She escaped from the asylum, and tracked me down like a dog. And then slept with my lover. A woman. Madness, sheer madness. And it couldn't go on. I saw into the future; her obsessions, her hallucinations, her fits, her fevers, more treatments, more doctors, and where would I be in the midst of all this? Living my life? No, not at all.

I would be in the eye of the storm, dead center. AND THEN SHE WOULD DRAG ME DOWN WITH HER. So I went back to her hotel

room after our disastrous dinner. I knocked on the door and she immediately opened it,said, "You're here to kill me aren't you?"

"No, to talk," I replied. And at that point,I swear, that was still true.

"Liar, liar," she chimed, and then she laughed, as if this was a game! As if ruining my life meant nothing to her, just another diversion in whatever madness she had cooked up inside her brain.

She said, "If you're going to kill me, fine. Do it. Get it over with--- because I will never let you go, never."

"Gilda, listen to me," I pleaded

"I have something for your darling."

"Gilda, please," I begged.

"Something you will like very, very much. Trust me," and then she winked.

She slid out of her silk wrapper, it fell like water at her feet, her breasts and her hips exposed to the air. She stepped into a pair of high heeled slippers and began to dance. She was Salome, a witch, dancing like the most beautiful, the most skilled whores of Paris.

She knew exactly what she was doing. Just like she's always known exactly what she was doing, how to manipulate me, bend me, twist me. A classic narcissist. A nascent sociopath. This is my professional diagnosis. I stand by it. And if I hadn't killed her, she would've killed me.

I grabbed her and threw her down on the bed, violently, but with such despair in my heart. Because it was happening all over again. I knew I would never be free of her, and that we were both damned. She wrapped her hands around my neck, as I entered her, and it quickly became difficult for me to breathe.

I said, "Let me go, let me go, you're choking me," but she only held on tighter. I tried to pull away from her, but she was strong, she rolled over, now on top of me, squeezing harder and harder, I thought I might pass out. My erection---- failed, and she mocked me!

"What kind of a man are you, Dr. Berlin, where is your manhood now, Dr. Berlin?"

I dragged myself away from her, a carcass, an empty shell, my head spinning. She continued to mock me, "Oh, Leo, you can only fuck young girls now, is that it? What's next? Young boys?"

And then that laugh of hers, as if she really was possessed. I spied her jeweled letter opener, the one I gave her, glinting in the candle light. And without thinking I reached over, grabbed it and stabbed her. And for one brief moment--- as she lay there bleeding, as I stood over her, we were as we used to be, in the beginning. When she was my only love, my light. I bent down to kiss her.

