

# Sympathy For The Devil

According to those in attendance, I only gained consciousness after a few heavy snorts of smelling salts and none-too-gentle slaps across the puss (face!). Once awake, I found myself lifted roughly by the attending officers and ushered<sup>1</sup> downstairs to the slammer.

Yet again, I underwent the indignities of what I had suffered upon first being tossed in the can for public indecency;<sup>2</sup> mugshots were repeated, fingerprints reproduced, supercilious comments regarding my disheveled appearance and genetic heritage tossed about with general hilarity. Handcuffed, I was led to a lockup not intended for the unfortunate naked inebriate awaiting arraignment on misdemeanor charges as before, but to a tank intended for dangerous felons. My escorts marched me to a dank hallway lined on both sides by iron-barred jail cells populated by ladies of the *classe basse* set; crack and opioid whores, biker chicks, and Walmart greeters. The cells were filled with women of every conceivable race, religion, orientation/presentation, and psychoses. Given my recent public outbursts regarding the socially disenfranchised,<sup>3</sup> I felt like a cricket about to be tossed into a jar full of ravenous centipedes.

“Check out dem ta-tas!” a hoarse voice called.

“Fresh meat walkin’” shrilled another. “Taint misbehavin’!!!”

General whistling, hoots, and gamboling throughout.

It was evidence of my bedraggled appearance that not a single inmate

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<sup>1</sup> Dragged.

<sup>2</sup> See: Volume 1

<sup>3</sup> See: Volume 1

shouted out my name in recognition. All for the best, I thought. The last thing I needed at that point was to be recognized by some burly sociopathic bull looking to make a name for herself as yours truly's assassin.

Provisionally, I wasn't tossed into one of those shared cells, but was instead led to one not yet manned (Womanned? Personned? Themmed?) by anyone else. I still don't know if this was meant as protective custody or if I'd just gotten lucky with the roll of the dice. In any case, I shortly found myself uncuffed, provided with a scratchy polyester blanket, a basic toiletry kit, a stiff bologna sandwich, and a sippy cup of orange juice concentrate.

*Clang!*

Alone, I glanced around at my new digs; a metal cot topped by a thin lumpy mattress, wall mounted toilet and sink, walls covered in half-faded graffiti written in homemade ink and assorted bodily fluids, and a weakly flickering recessed fluorescent lamp made inaccessible by a metal ceiling grate that cast a sickly yellowish light about the space.<sup>4</sup>

In such a situation, a girl has a number of options; tears, complete meltdown, psychotic break, even suicide. Or preparation. I was too shell-shocked to weep, and no sharp objects were in evidence, so I opened my toiletry kit and got to work.

An indeterminate amount of time later, I awoke to the sound of my cell door being slammed shut once again. I opened my eyes and through the fog saw, leering above me, the last thing an emotionally fragile incarcerate such as myself would ever want to see.

Glenn Close.

Rubbing my eyes in revulsion (who, after all, ever wants to wake up from a dreamless sleep only to see that beady-eyed visage scowling down at them?), I leapt off the mat and faced the *Fatal Attraction* bunny killer. Once my vision cleared, though, it quickly became apparent that I wasn't being confronted by the seven-time Academy Award also-ran. True, the lady (?) standing before me was practically the separated-at-birth twin of the famous actress, except that this incarnation sported an even stronger jaw, shoulder and arm muscles to

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<sup>4</sup> I've lived in worse.

make Dave Bautista sick with envy, nasty facial scars that I recognized from my circus days as the results of any number of broken beer bottle bar fights, and a mullet so redneck as to put Billy Ray Cyrus to shame.

“Guess ah hit da’ jackpot tonight, hooeeyee!” she (it?) yodeled. “Who says crime don’t pa – ”

During that last, my new roomy had reached out to grab a handful of my right boob, but I abjured like a flash. I would never insult the reader’s intelligence by suggesting for a moment that I’ve got a demure bone in my body, but a very long line of Libido family mothers, aunts, and grannies had trained their daughters well in the fine arts of protecting their dignity. I could write a book on the effective uses of knees, elbows, foreheads, palms, teeth, and press-ons as defensive weapons where uninvited physical offense is concerned. None of which, though, came into play here.

You may recall that upon analyzing my imprisoned digs, I mentioned that I prepared to make ready for any unhealthy contingencies. This came in the form of the toothbrush my captors had provided me. Did you know that that innocuous length of plastic and bristles by which we all guarantee ourselves basic oral hygiene is the ideal item for manufacturing a truly deadly jailhouse shiv?<sup>5</sup> The manufacture of said item is simplicity itself comparable to the preparation of a Rachel Ray muffin recipes.

## RECIPE FOR A JAILHOUSE TOOTHBRUSH SHIV

1. Remove toothbrush from clear plastic bag.
2. Remove self from jailhouse jumpsuit.
3. Twist jumpsuit into a stiff length that – when held aloft above your head – will add an extra foot or two to your reach.
4. Poke the bristled end of the toothbrush into the end of the jumpsuit, thus placing the base of the toothbrush at the farthest end of your reach.

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<sup>5</sup> Knife.

5. Holding the jumpsuit at arm's length, point the end of the toothbrush as close as possible to the overhead light as possible. Keep the plastic end close to the heat of the light until your arm tires.
6. Retrieve toothbrush in free hand, place its warm tip at an 80-degree angle on the rough concrete floor of the cell, begin to scrape the tip vigorously on the concrete, thus wearing its edges into a sharp point.
7. Repeat above steps as necessary until the tip of the toothbrush takes on the shape and physical damage potential of a #2 pencil.
8. Use tip to bury into the exposed eyeballs, carotid arteries, and/or genitals of an attacker.

Having done all of the above and placed my improvised polyvinyl shank behind my ear, I was moderately prepared for whatever the Los Angeles County Women's Correctional Facility had in store for me.

Before Glenn (my nickname for her) could so much as touch the fabric of my jumpsuit, I swiftly stepped aside, grasped her wrist and (using my knowledge of Aikido, which I had mastered through rigorous sparring practices with Jackie Chan whenever we both had a day free) pulled her towards me – thus catching her off guard and using her forward momentum to my benefit – and spun her around. Now that her back was to me, I wrapped that arm around her throat and used my weapon hand to shove the point of the shiv about three inches up her left nostril. I (and definitely she) could feel the shiv's business end make contact with the base of her brainpan. So much as a halfhearted thrust on my part would have sent the dental tool deep into the underside of her grey matter.

“Nice to meet you,” I said.

She made only an uncomfortable snuffling noise in response.

“Before we exchange further pleasantries, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Aida Libido. Possibly you're familiar with my work. You may not know it yet, but I've just been arrested for first degree murder. I'd like you to know that I'm completely innocent. But I will admit that I am completely able – and willing – to perform said felony on a hyperthyroidic piece of trailer trash such as yourself. The details of how I came to have such talents I will share with you once we get to know each other a tad better. Suffice it to say that I come

from circus folk, and to make spare change in my youth I would on occasion wrestle alligators. The gators always got the worst of it. So, I would appreciate it if you would acknowledge that I've got you by the short nose hairs and also that you understand that if you ever so much as pass gas in my direction, I will slice you like a spiral ham. If you understand clearly everything I've just said and promise to forever keep your hands to yourself, please acknowledge by slowly nodding your head... and when I say slowly, I mean that if you move even a *tad* too much, your upper sinus will immediately become a drain for your neurologic juices.

With that, she lifted her head back very slowly and followed that with an even slower decline.

I released her and spun her around to face me.

"Lovely," I smiled graciously. "Something tells me we're going to be the very best of friends." Some hours later found Glenn and I sitting face-to-face on my cot, legs crossed, hands clasped tightly together, our eyes just brimming with understanding and emotion. In those minutes since our initial meeting we had progressed from potentially deadly adversaries to heartfelt kindred souls swearing eternal fealty to one another. I'm sure our friendship would have blossomed into one of the all-time great pairings on par with Lucy and Ethel, Laverne and Shirley, Mary and Rhoda, or Melania and Trintellix.

She gushed on and on about how much she admired the way I'd risen from mere circus roots to become a superstar. I told her I had always admired a woman who could pull off a strong jaw and facial hair.

But alas, fate saw to it that our accord would be short-lived. Within days, Glenn tragically passed-on after suffering multiple baton-conks to the noggin by sheriff's deputies who had taken umbrage to being kicked in the genitals. I often send a little prayer up to her in that big, beautiful biker bar in the sky.

But I've gotten sidetracked.

Glenn and I were passing the interminable hours as best we could. She entertained herself by doing push-ups and shadow boxing, I spent the time fretting over what had actually happened to my (apparently) deceased husband. Joe gone? How? Why? Who?

Eventually, one of the guards approached and opened our cell door.

"Aida Libido... come with me."

I knew my rights, however. “I’m not talking to anyone until I get my phone call and have a lawyer present!”

“They’re here.”

“Who’s here?”

“Your lawyer.”

“My *lawyer*?”

“What am I, your personal secretary? You comin’ or not?”

I just didn’t see how it was possible. I hadn’t been arraigned yet, so no judge had granted me a public defender. My repugnant husband had guaranteed that I no longer had a cent to pay for one, and besides, what good Hebrew defense attorney<sup>6</sup> was ever going to represent me after the very public anti-Semitic rant I’d supposedly made?

The guard led me to a private interview room and I found myself staring at an elegantly familiar-looking woman seated at the table. She glanced up from the files she was perusing and stood to greet me. All class, this one; frosted brunette hair, fetching red power suit, expensive shoes, and very complimentary jewelry. She approached with hand extended and introduced herself.

“Ms. Libido,” she said with a confident smile. “Let me introduce myself. I’m Gloria Allred.”

The second hand of the clock had spun around two or three times before my story finally wound down.

“ – and so after leaving Tay-Tay’s compound, I found myself running naked through assorted westside neighborhoods until at some point I burst into choir practice at a joint called Agape International Spiritual Center and screamed, “SANCTUARY!” just like Quasimodo. Please! I was a woman desperately in need of help and I guess they provided it the best way they knew how by immediately tackling me to the ground and performing the holy rites of exorcism!

My memory’s foggy about that mess but I do sort of remember there being a lot of speaking in tongues, spinning heads (theirs, not mine), vomit (mine), rousing gospel numbers, tambourines, and hallelujahs. Apparently, the ritual

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<sup>6</sup> Oh, get over it! You know as well as I do that all the best lawyers are Jews.

didn't meet their satisfaction, because the comeuppance was that they tossed me bodily out the front entrance and set the locks on the doors. I pounded on those doors begging to be let back in and swearing that I wouldn't again throttle the choir director, but they weren't having it. I didn't handle the rejection well and expressed my frustration by kicking the bumpers of half the cars in the lot. That's how I broke the heel on my shoe. Then, with no destination in mind, I started racing down the middle of the street and eventually found myself on the onramp to the northbound 405 Freeway and telling a good-looking police officer that he could cop a feel if I could feel a cop." I took a breath. "I think you know the rest."

Ms. Allred stared at me steadily for a long moment. "So, Anderson Cooper's an albino leather daddy?"<sup>7</sup>

It seemed she needed some time to digest the whole tale.

But I needed some answers myself. "Ms. Allred –"

"Call me Gloria."

"Gloria... How is it you come by being here?" A tear rose in my eye. "I'm easily the most detested person in the country. I'm not sympathetic. I've been accused of murdering my husband. You already know I'm broke, and anyway you're a *civil* lawyer as far as I know. And I'm not *suing* anybody."

She raised a finger. "My dear, let me correct you on a number of points. The reason I asked you to explain your side of your dilemma is because I wanted to get a good overall picture of exactly what *I* am considering getting myself into. Because of your frankness and some other information I've been provided –"

"What – ?"

"I'll get to that shortly. Because I have this very basic understanding of what's happened to you during past weeks, I can tell you that I agree you're currently universally vilified. But not for long, dear. I'm convinced you've been railroaded, and as a devout feminist I take it very personally when one of us women are treated shabbily by a corrupt and abusively patriarchal system. In short, your late husband *done you wrong*, and that makes you quite sympathetic

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<sup>7</sup> See: Volume 1

in my eyes. It's true, I'm known as a civil lawyer, but I've got *trial* in my blood and yours is exactly the kind of case that meets all my requirements for putting my talents – and reputation – on the line. A young girl who comes from nothing rises to the very peak of success and fame, only to be robbed of all that hard-earned acclaim and wealth and reputation. And all due to the evil machinations of a misogynistic, sleazy grifter and attempted murderer.” She leaned forward and patted my hand. “Aida Libido, when my part in this epic has concluded, you'll not only *not* be despised, you'll once again be beloved by all and reseated in your rightful throne as the “Queen of All Entertainment!”

*Such confidence!*

But what'll you get out of it?”

She gave me a gently remonstrative look. “My dear, payment will come in the knowledge that Justice has been served... (her grave look then snapped into a delightful smile) “...and the obscene payloads of cash we make when I start filing suit after suit on your behalf! I suspect we'll begin with wrongful arrest. What have they arrested you for? Motive? Motive isn't a felony. But any evidence at this point would be circumstantial at best. The sheriff's department and city ought to be good for seven or eight figures.”

I was stunned!

But her expression once again became serious. “That is, if you feel that my services as your council are... a good fit.”

The long pause that followed was caused purely by my need to regain my breath. At last I was able to gasp, “I think it goes without saying!”

Gloria's smile returned. She slid a swath of papers and a pen before me and gave a little wink.

“Sign here.”



An astonishingly short time later found Gloria Allred; Esquire, stepping up to a massive cluster of microphones from every media outlet of any worth in the city and the nation. On her face was that expression of barely suppressed moral outrage coupled with steely determination which she is so known for during press announcements. She cut right to the chase..



“My client, Ms. Aida Libido, is not, *I repeat*, not a murderer. Nor, despite spurious videos suggesting that she is an intolerant racist, anti-Semite, and homophobe, she is anything *but* a bigot. Ms. Libido has a long record of goodwill with people of all colors, religions, and orientations. I believe that if the media and the public at large will take but a moment to remember the Aida Libido they knew so well only a few short weeks ago, they will know in their hearts that she is – and always has been – the champion of *all* mankind. In the days to come, we will provide clear and incontrovertible evidence that Aida has been the tragic victim of an evil conspiracy to rob her of her reputation, her wealth, and yes, even her life. Law enforcement officials of the City of Los Angeles arrested my client with flagrant disregard for just cause and I will be filing suit for unlawful arrest on her behalf. Not only has Ms. Libido been released from custody today, but the court has freed her on her own recognizance due to lack of evidence against her in this terrible matter, police overreach, and the fact that she is too famous, recognizable, and *innocent* to be a flight risk!”

With that, as you undoubtedly recall, the press went bananas. Questions were hurled, all of them at me. For my part, I was standing slightly behind and to the right of Ms. Allred. Her people had worked their magic and provided me with just the right outfit for such an appearance; a very conservative jacket and below-the-knee skirt in subdued blues and greys, shoes with barely an inch of a heel, a modest brimmed hat with a hint of veil, pearls, gloves, and less makeup than I wear in bed. I felt like a Mennonite.

Gloria turned and took my arm protectively, as though I might wilt to my knees without her support. I stepped forward and took only one question from the crowd, giving a nod to MSNBC’s Chuck Todd.

He shouted, “Aida! Can you state unequivocally that you did not murder your husband?”

I had to make this moment pay off. With all the stoic dignity I could muster (think Garland in *A Star Is Born*), I looked directly into the lens of the nearest camera and said, “Count Jose Delgado was the love and passion of my life. I wish I had been his also. No... I did not kill my husband.”

When they make the biography of my life, that will be my *Evita* on the balcony of the Casa Rosada moment.

In any case, shouts and questions thundered forth, but Gloria gave my arm a tug and I was led away.



Once in the sedan, I collapsed against my seat and sighed heavily. Gloria beamed as though she had just hit a grand slam in the ninth inning to win the game.

“Where to?” I asked.

She seemed a bit surprised by the question. “Why home, of course.”

“What home?” I demanded. “Joe took it all! The house, the money, the investments... everything!”

“Mm-hm.”

I was hoping for more. “And?”

“You were legally married, yes?”

“Of course.”

She nodded. “Any children?”

“God, no!”

She looked at me with meaning. “And when a married person dies, who inherits the estate?”

“But —”

“But nothing! Lady, you are once again rolling in it!”

*Absolutely gob-smacked!*

“But... how... I mean... it can't be all that easy!”

She waved me off. “Well, granted, it'll take a bit of time to clear things up.”

I wasn't ready to believe. “What if he had a will? What if... if...”

She looked at me as if I were a silly little thing. “What of it? He fraudulently embezzled everything you owned *after* unsuccessfully attempting to knock you off. To that, I can only say ‘Poo!’”

I nearly ricocheted off the car's walls with joy!

“And I should let you know,” she continued, “word has come down to me that during your absence Mr. Delgado went on a bit of a spree of his own. Seems he jury-rigged himself a king-sized mattress... made entirely of your

hard-earned cash. All in crisp, clean one-hundred-dollar bills. I'm sure that should see you through until all the financial legalities have been straightened out."

We arrived at my front gates (sans demonstrators but now just lousy with news crews) and pulled up the drive, which was now littered with assorted law enforcement personnel. Once parked, Gloria and her team ushered me post-haste inside. It was, of course, a circus. Policemen guarding each entrance and exit, technicians dirtying up every surface for fingerprints and DNA, coroner's personnel snapping photos of absolutely everything, and assorted officials of who-knows-what agencies gathered in small groups speaking in low, grave whispers. I got the feeling at least some were hanging around merely as looky-loos. One young man wearing a badge on his belt basically gave his proclivities away by staring critically at the entryway ceiling and stating,

"I don't know... I'm not sure I would've chosen that particular gold leaf for the crown moldings."

Some people.

I was led to a sofa in the living room of the north wing. Once settled, one of Gloria's assistants thoughtfully presented me with a nice hot cup of chamomile tea to settle my nerves. I thanked the young lady and, once she (upon my request) topped the cup off with a jigger of gin to cool it down, took a long sip. Promptly, I felt the blood running afresh through my veins and was braced for what I knew was going to be a long and difficult evening.

When my lawyer had taken a few minutes to conference with her team, she sat down beside me and brought me up to speed with what was known at that point.

Poor Joe.

Can anyone deny that he died a horrific death? In all likelihood, you learned many of the gory details from the news reports of the time. But I can guarantee you don't know the half of it!

First, it was the smell that initially brought his demise to anyone's attention. The location that this took place at was the historic and infamous gay cruising dump called the Anemone Sands Motel, located on one of East Hollywood's seedier streets. The building is built in such a way that none of the rooms look out to the street, but instead face inward to a central, condom

and syringe-strewn courtyard. The smell of marijuana, crystal meth, and poppers vapor waft through the air at every hour. It is rare to not find nearly all the doors slightly ajar (not so subtly inviting the curious to have a peek inside); while inside, a miasma of humanity's less eminent personages (and the occasional slumming celebrity) recline and lounge and pose in louche states of dress, assuming they are dressed at all. The threadbare yellowish 'linens' on the beds barely deserve the name and the ancient linoleum floors are either slippery or sticky, depending on where one happens to stand (or kneel).<sup>8</sup>

Joe's body was found in Room 14. The management had become alarmed when complaints came from the adjoining units regarding the aforementioned smell, a complaint very rarely made by the establishment's unfussy clientele. After several knocks at the door, management felt it advisable to investigate further and let themselves in.

No crime scene photos have (to my knowledge) ever been leaked to the public, but I can assure you that Joe had not entered Valhalla with a smile upon his face.

They found him on the bed, completely naked, his chest and head pressed down against the mattress, his arms tied behind his back, his hindquarters hiked up so that his anus appeared to be presenting itself for penetration. Drying urine and feces covered the bed and my husband, front and back. In fact, Joe's hair and face were so encased in excreta that the observers weren't at first able to detect that something quite large had been inserted into his mouth. Said item later turned out to be the genitalia of what researchers later determined to be a blue ribbon-sized Berkshire hog. Neither were those initial witnesses able to identify the object protruding a few inches from Joe's anus (keeping in mind these were folk who were well-versed in the near limitless variety of *objets* adaptable for rectal penetration. The coroner, however, was quickly able to diagnosticate the item as being approximately eighteen inches of the business end of an organ pipe cactus.

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<sup>8</sup> I happen to be so knowledgeable about the Anemone Sands Motel's inner sanctums because my dear friend, Kelly Ripa, once threw an exclusive – and truly memorable – menopause party for Meredith Vieira there (catered by the cast of *Thunder From Down Under*) in eight adjoining rooms. I still get itchy just thinking about it.

Once his body had been removed and a full autopsy performed, it was discovered that Joe's stomach was full to bursting with semen. DNA tests later confirmed that this was provided by many men of many races. It's worth noting that the *soupe d'homme* in Joe's stomach contained an impressive variety of STI's.

Undoubtedly the party had gone on for some time.

Laying down the police photos and coroner's initial findings, I sat back and closed my eyes.

Oh, Joe... Joe, Joe, Joe.

I asked myself, did *anyone* deserve such a fate? Should anyone, no matter what their sins, suffer the abuse of body and mind and the dehumanization which Joe had? Maybe, but I'm still trying to make up my mind on the subject.

Ms. Allred, empathetic soul that she is, and understandably assuming that I was suffering dreadful torments, placed a comforting hand upon my knee and said, "Aida, no one knows what to make of this. What do you think happened there?"

What sprang to my lips was a snarky, "Obviously a case of suicide." But fortunately, I bit down on my tongue until blood flowed and merely shook my head silently.

"What are you thinking?"

What I was thinking was that the close up photo of Joe's horrific expression would make a smashing Christmas card. But not wanting to come across as crude, I bit my tongue until blood flowed and no hint of an insensitive smirk surfaced. "Who needs a drink?!"

Turned out, everyone did.



Right about now you're probably finding me downright reptilian in my lack of feeling.

But, let's chew on reality just a bit, folks. My husband tried to kill me, he stole from me, ruined me professionally, and now, through no fault of mine and because of him, I was faced with accusations of first-degree murder (and kidnapping and conspiracy obviously) in a state that still implements

the death penalty! And to those simpering souls who I often hear say that they don't hate anyone and could never live with hate in their heart, I suggest they've never been premeditatedly served up as the main course for a ravenous school of hammerheads! Worse, I doubt they would have survived four (count 'em, *four!*) particularly grisly attempts on their life and then come away from the experiences filled with Christian charity! After all, even Jesus only had to endure his crucifixion *once!* Add to that reality, having everything that meant anything to them ripped away like a rug beneath their feet, thus leaving them penurious and abhorred, and I bet even the saintliest Pollyanna would find within their hearts little more than razor blades and shards of glass.

Yes, I had loved Count Jose Delgado with all my being, but someone very wise<sup>9</sup> once said, "While great love abides in light, great hatred lurks in its shadow." My heart ached dreadfully for my lost love. But my spleen was venting copious green bile over that same dead rat.

Try to find it in your heart not to judge.

About the time most of us were deep into our second highball, a familiar gentleman entered the room carrying a file box loaded with materials. Anthony Pellicano, private dick (dick!) to the stars, who had provided the videotaped proofs of Cha-Ching's infidelity with Kirsty Alley, plopped the box down on the coffee table with a look of just satisfaction.

You may recall that shortly before getting kicked out of the house, I had received a packet containing a letter and photos from the red carpet at the Tony Awards. The letter came from one Tiffany (heart symbol over the 'i') who claimed to have witnessed me being set up for a fall (literal and otherwise) by Joe and his gang of accomplices. You may also remember that I immediately contacted Anthony and got him working on contacting dear sweet Tiff in order to get her on record about what she had witnessed, plus start scouring the planet for anyone else who had been present when things went bad. Well, Tony P. as usual came through in a massive way. Starting with Tiffany, he was able to learn that she had attended the event with friends. These friends were then linked with other acquaintances who had also attended. You get

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<sup>9</sup> Me.

the picture. By contacting the growing list of potential witnesses, identifying through trial and a bit of luck many other fans who had been there, he was now able to provide us with gobs of incriminating videos and snapshots, witness testimonies, and enhanced audio; much of it blurry or grainy, garbled but decipherable, but all of it adding up to a very strong argument regarding my innocence!<sup>10</sup> Miraculously, Anthony had even come into possession of some very clear newscast video from a local New York station that, when slowed down to one-quarter speed, showed all of the major players as they sidled their ways into position, made eye contact together, signaled, and fell into their individual roles up to and including the backward half gainer I did over Joe's back!<sup>11</sup>

Even better, thanks to all the assorted footage, he was actually able to track down a couple of the gays who had knocked me over!

In England, no less!

It turned out that none of the crew were gay in the first place. Just British.<sup>12</sup> According to Anthony, the 'gays' had simply been a loose assortment of young backpackers who claimed that they'd been approached and hired off the street by a bearded and behatted little gentleman wearing large round coke-bottle glasses that made his eyes ogle and a large-brimmed fedora that sat low on his head. At first, the trekkers had assumed they were about to be 'flushed' by the odd little character, but he quickly made it clear that he had a lucrative job offer for them. You can imagine the rest: Feather boas and pink triangle buttons and a thousand bucks each, then an appointment outside Radio City the following evening. Upon returning from the theatre to their hostel, the young

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<sup>10</sup> Kids, like I've said before, when it comes to lawyers and P.I.s, always pay top dollar!

<sup>11</sup> When asked why no one at the news station had brought the activities on the tape to light, it was claimed all the focus of the event had been on the fall and my verbal rampage. No one had considered the two or three minutes leading to my fall of any import, much less did anyone consider slowing the video down and analyzing closely what was going on. I submit that video showing the humiliating downfall of an – until then – beloved celebrity was ratings gold and the blinders of greed were worn by all concerned. It'll be a cold day in Hades before I ever provide those hacks with another interview!

<sup>12</sup> God knows, it's hard to tell the difference sometimes.

travelers were presented at the front desk with an envelope (left by an “anonymous stranger”) containing the balances for the thousand buck ‘completion bonus’ each had been promised.

Hmmmm.

Once Anthony pointed out that the “wee goof” they had committed was tantamount to conspiracy and assault, and that England shared very liberal extradition laws with the United States, and that the criminal and civil penalties the young miscreants would face would very likely make the quality of their future lives less than ideal, the kids agreed to sing like sopranos. Their testimonies rested on the table right before me. Tony was still working on tracking down the so-called “Zhus” (Jews) and “Blacks,” then, hopefully, Mr. Trench Coat.

But my dick (dick!) wasn’t finished yet. And what he provided me next did more injury to my heart than any of the lacerations my husband had inflicted upon my body. Consequent to taking on this particular job, Mr. Pellicano did quite a lot of research into Joe Delgado the man, which included his furthest past as well as his every move since meeting and marrying me. And, boy, was that information a yowzah! Yet another reem of documents proved that my blue-blooded betrothed had been nothing more than a lowdown, no-good Latin con man! Sure, he came from royal Spanish blood. In fact, his family line could be traced back to the fifteenth century, at which time a certain degenerate noble ancestor who rubbed elbows with Ferdinand and Isabella became a passionate member of the Inquisition. The many-greats grandfather had bought his way into the church, apparently not so much out of a love of God, but an affection for flaying.<sup>13</sup> His more recent ancestors in the late 1930’s had been ruinous adherents to Spain’s fascist dictator, Generalissimo Francisco Franco (through marriage to Francisco’s brother Ramon), and had been intimately involved in innumerable executions and flat-out murders of Spanish citizens that included the planning and implementation of the notorious attack on the citizens of Guernica in 1937. The action was so murderous

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<sup>13</sup> Skinning a person alive.



that Pablo Picasso painted his most infamous painting based upon the event, which now hangs at the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid.

In more recent decades, Joe's family emigrated to Argentina and became collaborators with Jorge Rafael Videla, head of Argentina's military and dictator of the country during the 1970's and 1980's. Apparently, his father was an ace helicopter pilot known for transporting antigovernment activists high over the deep ocean and booting the poor souls into shark-infested waters.<sup>14</sup> Judge that as you will, but according to state records, shortly after Videla was deposed in 1981, the family fell out of government favor and, typical of those disfavored by the Argentine government, became dirt poor. I'll allow you to make your own assumptions regarding Joe's genetic predispositions (sins of the fathers and all that).

According to court records, lover boy had been arrested for everything from pickpocketing to human trafficking as a Rio Grande coyote. He had been arrested for working as a drug mule for Pablo Escobar but was released after the drug lord's death in the early nineties. After that, he apparently hit bottom by becoming an Amway rep for a number of years, then disappeared from notice until shortly before I met him at that unlucky Christmas party at Brad Pitt's place.

Yet what really hurt was learning via receipts and such that the Escalade and necklace and even that ferocious cat were paid for by me! The news was also broken to yours that our honeymoon had been paid for by, yes... ME AGAIN!!!

Sure, paying off the church and getting myself an annulment, I own that. I had just assumed that, my hubby being a rich Spanish royal, he'd paid for that expensive fest. First of all, I didn't remember dropping a credit card to pay for the trip, and the subject just hadn't come up for discussion beyond him telling me he had it all "taken care of." I know I sound like a silly fool, and I guess I am, but I've never been one to pay much attention to my monthly financial statements. That's the kind of thing we Hollywood celebs leave to our financial

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<sup>14</sup> Seems to run in the family!

people.<sup>15</sup> When you and your spouse are (supposedly) fabulously wealthy, you just don't think about such things. Those issues are dealt with by well-paid financial lackies. I fully admit that I should have been more on the ball regarding my (our!) monetary workings, but, unless somebody called me with a security alert, my M.O. generally involved nothing more than whipping out an American Express Black Card and letting the folks at Miller Kaplan Arase do the rest. I simply assumed that all my money dealings were secured. But surely you know the old saying about making assumptions.

It got worse. According to MKA records, I – and only I – had paid for everything from our toilet paper to the most expensive of our outlays, including every little gift Joe ‘gave’ me, every expensive dinner we shared at Michelin star restaurants, every piece of gold he wore on his fingers and wrists and around his neck. I had paid for his every Armani suit, every Prada loafer, and every five-hundred-dollar haircut. I'd paid for his weekly spa treatments at ‘Thai Happy Time Massage!’ But worst of the worst, I especially didn't remember making him a co-signer on every single one of my checking and savings accounts! I'll admit that the documents showing that I had done so were signed in my own hand, but I had a sneaky suspicion that I had done so during a particularly major vodka-induced blackout on our first night back in L.A. after our trip to Rome. Come to think of it, now finally being aware of the situation, I did seem to remember having foggy visions of a man entering our boudoir who sported a briefcase, paperwork, and notary public stamp, but I'd just chalked it up to the effects of Tito's and Ketamine. The bottom line was that Joe had been sucking me dry since the first day we met, and it was now ridiculously certain that since Joe couldn't instigate my untimely death, then he had settled for my professional and reputational destruction. Our guess, such a move was all the better for him because it would allow him to divorce me on very valid grounds and finally win an obscenely generous divorce settlement that would keep him flush for the rest of his life.

My chest grew tight and my left arm went momentarily numb. It shames me not one bit to admit to you that I forewent the glass and the ice and started

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<sup>15</sup> And as we're already well aware, he had done an end run around them right from the beginning.

guzzling directly from the nearest vodka bottle. In fact, I was reaching for a second bottle when Gloria placed her hand gently but firmly upon my arm and, giving Anthony and her cronies a nod of the head toward the front door, suggested that everyone call it a night.

By that point, I wasn't in any condition to argue (or even stand), so Tony and a pair of paralegals muscled me up to my bedroom, where I remained incommunicado for the next thirty-six hours.

When I finally dragged myself out from beneath the sweaty sheets of the old bassinets, showered and took a bit of sustenance (Bloody Mary), I learned that Joe's body had been released by the coroner and it was time to make plans for disposal of the remains. Actually, disposal seemed about right in the literal sense. I don't think I could have gotten any more satisfaction than by personally stuffing significant chunks of his body down the sink. Gratifying as the idea was, I knew doing so would succeed only in destroying the pipes, and who needs plumbing problems? Cremation offered the easiest, quickest, and cleanest option, but that idea lacked aesthetic appeal, and it was suggested to me that a ceremony at which I demonstrated a modicum of heartbreak might aid in the public's – and a jury's – opinions of me. My late husband's send-off needed something much more camera-friendly for the people, not to mention emotionally rewarding for me.

So it was that on the following weekend, Count Jose Delgado got a send-off worthy of Hollywood and front-page coverage worldwide. You may recall that I'd spent some of my most enjoyable early days in Los Angeles working for a high-end funeral home and had learned quite a few creative and moving ways to unload the dearly departed.

Respectful of Joe's Catholic upbringing, I had booked Our Lady of the Angels cathedral in the downtown district. I pulled out all the stops; full mass with three – count 'em THREE – choirs and special performances like *Ave Maria* (as sung by Wynnona Judd) to *Hallelujah* (Jennifer Hudson) to *Celebration* (Kool and the Gang) as an upbeat and rousing inspirational finale.<sup>16</sup> There were so many flowers in the sanctuary it smelled like a Hindu

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<sup>16</sup> That last had just the right kind of double meaning of which only the most cynical could have caught on.

whorehouse. There were altar boys out the wazoo and I had hired the very finest of West Hollywood's gay male strippers to act as (tuxedoed) ushers. It was the funeral of the season!

Oh! I nearly forgot to mention my outfit. I was dressed to *thrill!*

I showed up in a dusty black Donna Karen shift with matching elbow-length gloves. My shoes were ebony Stewart Weismann pumps to simply give your life for. I wore my hair unpretentiously in a tight bun at the nape of my neck and covered with the sheerest black Spanish lace veil. I kept the makeup understatedly minimal (which I, of course, hated) out of respect for the ceremony and to ward off any catty comments from the style critics out there looking to take a swipe on their blogs. On my arm hung a delicious obsidian Issey Miyake bag stuffed to the clasp with tissues, a flask of Grey Goose, and another little goody I'll say more about shortly. My one nod to flash was that I wore the over-the-top wildcat-design canary-yellow and chocolate diamond necklace Joe (I!!!) gave me on our anniversary. I feared it would be interpreted as much too garish for the proceedings, but Gloria and my newly rehired publicity people insisted it was just the right touch, symbolizing the love between Joe and me (ha!) and providing those in the public who follow such things something to drool over.

Regarding my participation in the ceremony, I was, of course, scheduled to deliver my husband's eulogy. But if you think that was going to happen, I've got a condominium in Trump Tower I can sell you cheap.

I'd spent most of the service laying it on thick with the wailing and boo-hooing, Gloria sitting beside me, one arm around my shoulder and a hand patting my knee. Whenever the crowd seemed distracted by the performances up front, I'd occasionally dip my face into my bag, ostensibly to dig around for a clean hanky but actually to nip from my flask. Those nearby might have even heard the occasional sniff and snort that had nothing to do with a runny nose. When it was time for me to give the dreaded speech, I rose and made my way to the stairs. But upon reaching the first step to the dais I gave a melodramatic wail and swooned to the floor. It was the performance of a lifetime and the handpicked journalists my people had allowed to attend the event started scribbling notes like their lives were on the line. The church was in an uproar! Hunky ushers fell upon me and lifted me back to my seat, where I gave an

operatic performance of such dismal inconsolability as to put Cecilia Bartoli to shame. In my stead, Sir Ian McKellen graciously stepped up to the podium and gave a reading from my prepared notes of such pathos and sympathy to set the Bard weeping in his grave. There wasn't a dry eye in the house.

Services concluded, Gloria and a phalanx of my PR peeps escorted me out of the cathedral as we followed Joe's casket to the hearse. As I exited and stepped beneath the golden relief of Our Lady suspended above the portico, a great roar of voices greeted me. Not much of a surprise, as I'd been warned that a swarm of demonstrators were likely to show up and give their vent to my first public appearance since I'd left the courthouse. I wish I could say it was all in support of me, but the opinions of those in attendance were decidedly mixed. For every person holding a sign saying, "WE BELIEVE YOU, AIDA!" and "AIDA FOREVER!" there were three or four whose signs that read "BURN LIBIDO BURN!" or "LETHAL INJECTION AIN'T GOOD ENOUGH!" I wasn't put off though. I figured it was a good first step that at least a few people were starting to buy Gloria's well-publicized version of the truth and no one of the opposing opinion actually threw any poo. We made it to the limo unaccosted.

So, it was off to Forest Lawn in Glendale for the burial. I had chosen Joe's plot carefully. It was located in the Resurrection Slope section, just about as remote and removed as one could ask for at Forest Lawn. I had chosen a relatively barren spot, nowhere near the shade of a tree, but instead snug up against the perimeter wall. Such a peaceful, *lonely* little spot.

This was a much more private and sedate affair than the memorial had been, but I succeeded in giving those few in attendance their money's worth. I wept and sniffed and snorted into a black lace hanky as the priest droned the old Dearly Beloved thing. Gloria sat to my left, Sir Ian to my right. Lorenzo, my makeup guru, was in attendance, as were Prudencia my maid, dearest Jesus, and the rest of the staff. Mama-san sat in back scowling as always, her face mostly hidden beneath a ridiculously wide-brimmed hat. Beside her sat my business manager, Guido, looking exceptionally bored; according to him this wasn't by any measure his first funeral. Even Tangerine showed up, of course wearing one of her god-awful floral housedresses. Her only nod to mourning was that the peonies splashed across that rag were printed on a field

of black, as was her baseball hat. Her shoes were patent leather loafers (pennies included). And would you be surprised to know that throughout the entire proceedings she kept rifling through her bag, retrieving Pez dispensers, and offering them to anybody within arm's reach. One of my agents sat to one side, constantly checking his watch, and taking business calls.

Guests from the public arena included Arianna Huffington, Christiane Amanpour, Rachel Maddow, Jon Stewart, Eliot Spitzer (yes, he was still in the public eye then). Even Larry King skipped his naptime to attend.<sup>17</sup> Not many of my Hollywood cronies had yet popped their heads up from beneath their rocks to show up at the cathedral or there at the burial. I wasn't yet adored enough by the public for them to start showing support. Trust me, I was taking names. I'm talking to you, Emma Thompson!

Anyway, the service finally ended and my fellow 'grievers' made their ways to their cars.

I stayed behind. There was something I yet needed to do.

Catching the eye of one of the funeral directors in attendance, I called him over and instructed him to open the casket so that I could share one last goodbye with my husband.

He immediately – though gently – demurred, color draining from his face. “Ms. Libido... uh... given that you declined our suggestion of embalming your late husband, his condition at this point isn't –”

“I don't care about that,” I stated firmly. “This is my last chance to say goodbye to Joe, I insist you open the casket and leave me alone with him for a few minutes. I won't be long.”

His forehead broke out in a generous sweat. “But –”

“*Sir!*” I snapped. Then more gently, “I insist.”

At last the gentleman relented. With a deep sigh he faced the coffin and turned the latches. I believe I saw him take a deep breath and hold it just before he opened the lid. After doing so, he stepped away (far away) without my even bidding him to do so.

There lay Joe. Not so bad to look at – the mortuary had washed him up

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<sup>17</sup> Easy odds on how many of those newsmakers were only there on the outside chance of earning an 'exclusive.'

at least – and they had placed him in one of his favorite deep blue suits, in fact his complexion had taken on an indigo hue that matched it perfectly. His lips were slightly parted and cracked, and one of his eyes lolled half open. The police report hadn't lied about the smell either. My husband would have benefitted from a few good squirts of Febreze.

After just a moment, I leaned in closer and addressed my faithless consort. “Joe, you were everything to me. How could you not know everything I had was already yours?” I swallowed a growing lump in my throat.

“Did... did you really hate me so much?”

Then, the words having barely escaped my lips, a horrible miracle happened. Joe's own lips parted ever so slightly wider and from within the depths of his throat, he spoke!

“Ssssssssiiiiuiiiiiiii...”

Now, a number of spoilsports of my intimate acquaintance have insisted that what I took to be an affirmative answer in Spanish, was nothing more than pent up gasses expectorating from Joe's rotting belly. But in my heart, I know – and I insist – that my husband said, “*Si!*” if not from *beyond* the grave, but definitely *in* it. I tell you, my husband's corpse was trying to win one last argument!

Well, I wasn't about to give him the satisfaction. Instead, I opened my purse, reached inside and – making sure the funeral guy was still looking off into space – I removed a metal item about the size of a one-pint deli container. I opened it and poured the contents onto Joe's chest.

A can of worms.