

Let me hear it from  
the beginning, said  
inspector dulles



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“ Let me hear it from the beginning,” said Inspector Dulles, as he scanned the forensic evidence before him: a Glock 17, with one bullet fired; fingerprints on the handgun showing those of the victim, Robert Green, 52; the medico-legal report showing the victim had succumbed to irreversible shock due to gunshot wound on the frontal region. On the other seat was the victim’s widow, Laura Green, 32. She wore a black dress and high-heeled shoes. But her eyes were like a hawk’s, cold and piercing and fathomless.

“ My husband arrived on the usual hour,” she said, as if dictating to a stenographer. “ He took a shower, changed clothes, and settled down before the TV set with a glass of Jack Daniels. He refused to eat when I told him dinner was set. At about eight he went inside his study and I followed. He was incoherent, like he was angry with himself or something. Finally he took out his pistol from a drawer and shot himself.” Mrs. Green stopped as if collecting her thoughts, but she was motionless as a statue. “ I called 911. Then you came.” “ Pardon me for being blunt,” Dulles said, sipping from a glass of cold water, “ but I gather Mr. Green has been seen around with another woman,” Dulles said.

Mrs. Green assumed a pained expression, but said nothing. “ Do you quarrel about such things?” pursued the detective. “ No,” said the woman. “ He knew I would disapprove, so he had tried to keep it a secret. But I have ways of knowing.” “ Did you spy on him?” The woman shrugged and pursed her lips.

Dulles silently put down his glass. He liked interrogating suspects who flinched and cowered, but he could not penetrate this one. He has to try harder. “ So you found out, one way or another, and plotted your revenge.”  
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(No response). But you made sure all his insurance policies were good and to your name just in case something happened (still no response). And you kept nagging at him, humiliating him in the eyes of people, making his life miserable, until he thought of filing for divorce (Dulles thought he saw a gleam in the widow's eyes).

But you threatened to shame him by revealing all about all his philandering and kinky affairs if he persisted, and he became desperate and mad. (Here, the widow's eyes slowly shifted from gazing into emptiness, like a machine gun turning on its swivels to aim at a new target: the eyes of Inspector Dulles. He found it disturbing to look at it squarely, but he could not now stop). "Then you pestered him no end until he could take no more and so he took his own life."

"No!"

Inspector Dulles dodged as if to ward off a blow; at the same time he heard the sound of shattering glass. Turning to look, he saw tiny shards of what remained of his glass of water on the floor. He turned to look at the window, and was surprised to see it wide open. Faces appeared suddenly at the door, puzzled. He waved them off. "Some vandal threw a stone from the street."

He turned to look at Mrs. Green. But the malignant gleam he saw for one fleeting second was gone. She just sat there and stared at nothing. Dulles knew when a case led to nowhere: this was a case of plain suicide. "I'm sorry, Madam," he said, touching her hand, "I didn't mean to be rude or something. You can go."

The widow rose from her chair, like alighting from a throne, a queen about to address her admiring subjects. Dulles could not help noting her sensuousness, though little of her skin, ivory white and flawless, is revealed by the black satin dress. She had looked insignificant, but now he found herself admiring the delicate curve of her neck, her slender limbs, her wicked inviting lips. He felt her attractive; he was like moth drawn to a flame. Like a wraith, she walked gracefully to the door and vanished.

Two weeks later, Dulles found himself knocking at the door of her mansion.

At 48, he was unmarried. He loved hearing old Fagin's song in the musical *Oliver!* as he deliberated whether to take himself a wife: "The finger she will wag at me, the money she will take from me, the misery she'll make for me: I guess I have to think of it again!" But this evening he felt himself like a moth drawn to a flame. He had postponed this trip and scorned himself for being like a junior on his prom date. He had left the office early while Dave, his assistant, hunched low over the computer. Although embarrassed, he mentioned to Dave he was going to see the widow. He waited for Dave to laugh but was surprised to find the other in a sombre mood.

"Tell you what," Dave said. "I found something about her. She's not so pretty, but she has a way with men. You won't believe it, but she'd been previously married to three men." Dulles chuckled. "Well, I'm not the marrying type." Dave continued. "All her husbands had died, violently. One leaped off a cliff during a camping trip with the wife. Another drowned in a swimming pool for kids. And the last, as we know it, shot himself on the head." "Was there foul play?" Dulles asked.

“ There was no evidence to incriminate her, although she was always present in the scene of the tragedy. It was like she was always there to witness the unhappy end of a partner. I’m not superstitious, man,” Dave said, “ but I won’t try meddling with that woman.” Dulles was thoughtful as he pressed the door bell. He waited for a few minutes until the door opened. Laura was in black as usual, looking young and tempting and mysterious. She invited him inside. “ I have been expecting you,” she said.

“ Indeed?” Dulles said. She did not look surprised after all. She asked for leave to fetch a drink for them. Left alone, Dulles stood up and surveyed the room. His gaze focused on the books on the shelf. She returned and gave him his drink. They engaged in small talk. Dulles had found the woman unattractive this time, and he berated himself for having fallen easily for her charm. Then he turned to gaze at her eyes and once more he felt drawn to her.

“ I see you’re a witch,” Dulles said.

Laura’s eyes were cold but no change came in them. Dulles went on: “ I can see you’re into voodoo and the like, telekinesis and that stuff. You know, I remember that stunt of yours in the office. No vandal ever threw a stone inside the office. I knew the windows were closed, had been closed for years. Nobody had opened them. The glass shattered by themselves. You did it by your mind, didn’t you?” Laura was silent. “ All your husbands, they died by your will, the power of your mind over matter. I’ve looked into your husband’s records and nothing showed they were into some trouble. I suspect you did them in when they found out all about your witching stuff.”

Their eyes locked. Laura's were expressionless, then tears came into them. She cupped her hands on her face and wept inconsolably. " Hahahahahaha! Hehehehehe! Harharharhar" Dulles was convulsed with laughter. He embraced the weeping widow. " I got you that time, didn't I?" Laura looked up to the gay detective. " What do you mean?"

" It's all a joke. I made that up." Laura was crying and laughing at the same time. " You brute," she said.

Two hours later, Inspector Dulles was at the wheel of his orange Mustang, happily relishing his intimate moments with the young widow. But as he made a turn in the twisting mountain road, he felt sick, not knowing why. Then he saw a car zooming up in the rear: it was Laura on her convertible. Dulles slowed down. Dulles waited for her to come alongside and waved, but she did not smile.

She just stared at him, their cars racing into the winding skyway, the drone of their cars engines like a throbbing drum. Then Dulles felt the Mustang going airborne, heaved by an unseen power. He panics and grabs the wheel, but it would not budge, and he turns to look at Laura, the roar of the Mustang like thunder in his ears, and saw her eyes widen, fierce and commanding and terrible, and as the car leaped out to space, Dulles opened his mouth to scream.