



• **Pittsburg (AP)**—Creeping around outside his North Side home with his .357 Magnum pistol still smoking, Ralph Zelik bumped into two policemen. He figured the best thing to do was confess. "I just killed my motorcycle," Zelik, 34, admitted. Nearby lay the cycle, with five slugs in it. At a hearing, Zelik told the magistrate the shooting followed an argument with his wife over the motorcycle. The charges were dismissed. The magistrate said Zelik had inflicted no harm.

This heart-warming little domestic drama would make a nice episode for an afternoon TV soaper, that is, if the scripters were hip enough to realize that plugging a Honda with a .357 Magnum (which by the way is quite a piece of artillery) is just the sort of thing that tears apart many modern marriages. Gone are the days of *The Other Woman*. Today's average walking-around male is often more in love with his machine than anything else in his life. Mrs. Zelik has won for the time being, but the future is cloudy and now that the Honda is dead, who knows what sort of machine is going to get Zelik on the rebound?

Zelik's decision to execute his bike instead of, say, selling it or giving it to his friend Heinie is highly significant. It is an act of true love. The annals of crime are bulging with eternal triangles that ended with repeated lethal gunfire. Practically any edition of *The Daily News* has an identical story on page three: *Frustrated Husband Nabbed After Shooting "Other Woman."* "My wife told me I had to get rid of my girlfriend or she'd kick me out. I couldn't leave the kids." Asked why he shot his girlfriend, he explained: "I couldn't stand nobody else having her if I couldn't."

Obviously, Zelik's wife had laid down the law: "It's either that damn motorcycle or me." And Zelik, sitting in the kitchen brooding over several beers, finally grabbed his .357 Magnum and rooty-toot-toot, he plugged the poor bastard right in the cylinder head. Here, really, is a great idea for a

play truly modern in its clean delineation of the contemporary war between Man and Machine, or better yet Woman and Machine—the Frankie And Johnny legend updated. How many hollow-eyed-men stalk the streets haunted by dreams of lost mechanical loves brought on by the insistent demands of the female in their lives will never be known. But if I have heard it once, I have heard it a thousand times:

**HOLLOW-EYED MAN:** Geez, that's a great looking Morgan. I had a Plus Four once, but . . . (His voice trails off as he walks around the machine, examining it lustfully yet with a touch of pathetic *deja vu*.)

**ME:** Yep. She rides like a barrel of rocks going over a cliff, but there's something about the bastard that I dig.

**H.E.M.:** Yeah, I know. I sure do know. Can I sit in it for a while?

**ME** (magnanimously): Go ahead. But watch the door. She's got a wood frame, and. . .

**H.E.M.:** You don't have to tell me about Morgans. Boy, that '52 Plus Four of mine had a case of termites you wouldn't believe. Gee, this sure feels good. It feels just like old times to me.

**ME:** You had a '52? Had a Standard Vanguard motor, and. . .

**H.E.M.:** Yep. Never forget the time. . . (Again his voice trails off. I sense some lurking tragedy and prod him on.)

**ME:** Well, what happened?

**H.E.M.** (Slowly disentangling himself from the cockpit with the practiced grace of an old Morgan zealot. Getting in and out of a

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Morgan is not a trick that is learned overnight. He pats the drophead's bonnet affectionately and continues in a faraway voice): Yep, she was British Racing Green and the day I had to get rid of her she was in better condition than when she left the Malvern Works. Even now sometimes I dream about her. There I am, going flat out, the wind blowing over the screen. And then I wake up, lying there next to Marge, in a cold sweat, wondering if I done right.

**ME:** Done what? What did you do? Did you sell it to somebody?

**H.E.M.** (giving me a sharp, horrified look): Sell it? Sell my Morgan? Are you out of your mind? That's the last thing in the world I'd do. My God, I'd just as soon sell my kid, or even Marge for that matter!

**ME:** Well, what happened? You can't just leave me hanging here.

**H.E.M.:** At first Marge seemed to like the Morgan. In fact, I think it was the Morgan that really got her the night I met her at that drive-in. I tooled in, blipped the engine a couple of times and sat there waiting for the carhop to take my order. There I was, surrounded by chopped Fords and '49 Chevys. She walked over and said, "What'll it be, Buddy?" But I could tell she was really eyeing the car. It was Marge, of course. That night I picked her up after work. We drove out to a place I knew on the beach, and naturally one thing led to the next, and. . .

**ME:** You married her.

**H.E.M.:** For the first few months it was okay. But then, one night she told me she was pregnant. Well, you know how the Morgan takes potholes and street car tracks. After that she took to asking me if we could borrow my mother's Buick when we went out. After the kid came we went back to the Morgan for a while. But then she started to complain that it didn't have a heater and finally she began to nag about putting the top up, and who the hell ever puts the top up on a Morgan? She really got mad after what happened to Stanley.

**ME:** Stanley?

**H.E.M.:** Yeah, the kid. We had him back in the luggage carrier behind the seats one night and I hit a railroad track going maybe 75. It was too dark to see it coming. The kid left the car going straight up like a rocket, like he was shot out of a gun.

**ME:** Great Scott!

**H.E.M.:** It wouldn't have happened if the little bastard had listened to me. I told him to hang on. No, he's layin' there in the back like a dumbhead, suckin' on a rattle, when off he went. Served him right.

**ME:** What happened to him?

**H.E.M.:** He went straight up and disappeared in the dark. It took us forty minutes to find him. He was hung in a tree, about eighty feet up. I ripped my new pants climbing up to get him down. Stupid little bugger. He was just hanging there like a Christmas tree ornament. You might have thought he'd at least holler to let us know where he was.

**ME:** That must have really tore it!

**H.E.M.:** Almost, but not quite. I sweet-talked her for a while and got a parachute safety harness for Stanley that bolted to the frame and that quieted her down some, at least for a while. Then, a couple of months later it was all over.

**ME:** Something else happened?

**H.E.M.:** Well, you know Morgans. But this time there was no more sweet-talking Marge. We were all dressed up going to a dance down at the high school that the PTA was throwing. We were just tooling along. The old Morgan never sounded sweeter. When all of a sudden, out of nowhere, the son of a bitch let go.

**ME:** Let go? You mean your engine blew?

**H.E.M.:** Hell no. It was nothing as simple as that. For a minute I didn't know what had happened. I just heard this loud explosion and I thought maybe one of the tires had

popped. I looked around and I saw that Marge was gone. Just disappeared. One minute she was sitting in the seat next to me, and the next—Poof!—gone.

ME: Another pothole?

H.E.M.: Nope. That's what I thought at first too. But what happened was that she was wearing her fancy gold lamé evening dress, made out of these little prickly wires, and one of those wires punctured the bladder in the seat she was sitting on and it blew her right out of the car.

ME: My God, no!

H.E.M.: Yep. 'Til that time I guess Marge never even knew that the Morgan didn't have regular seat cushions like other cars. It has bladders you blow up inside that thin little leather cushion, just like a beachball. Well, she really popped one. Found her in the weeds. She took a cab home and didn't talk to me for three weeks. Then one night I drove in the driveway. She came out on the back porch and said either the Morgan had to go or she was taking Stanley and heading for Reno that night.

ME: You can't blame her, in a way.

H.E.M.: Oh, let's face it, we were both at fault. There's no right or wrong in the love game. Anyway, I went down in the basement to think it over. Must have drunk at least a half a quart of Jim Beam. I could hear her upstairs, sobbing and calling her mother every ten minutes. Finally I knew what I had to do, and that night I did it.

ME: This is terrible. Poor Marge.

H.E.M.: Oh, she won out. No doubt about it. I went out and sat in the Morgan for a couple of hours and then dug a big hole back of the garage. Took me 'til damn near morning. And I buried her there.

ME: Good Lord! You mean, you took Marge behind the garage and...!

H.E.M.: Sometimes I wish I had. No, I pushed the Morgan into that hole and buried her. Six feet deep, forever.

ME: Buried the Morgan alive? I don't know how you could do it.

H.E.M.: Don't be silly. I'd never do that to her. I took my twelve gauge Remington full-choke and gave her both barrels in the crankcase. She never knew what hit her.

ME: That took a lotta guts, Mister, but I can see that you had to do it.

H.E.M.: I'd rather see that Morgan dead than to have some unfeeling bastard kicking her around and maybe selling her to some kid who'd chop her up and use aerosol paint all over her, or maybe worse. Nope, I killed her. Nobody else'll ever have her. She's lying there tonight, and one day when I go, I hope we'll meet in Heaven. Then I'll drive her forever, just like the old days.

(There wasn't much I could say, and after patting the Morgan badge one last time he wandered down the street, lost in his own mysterious reverie.)

Yes, there are countless souls right now, perhaps some even reading this, who have been part of the modern eternal triangle: Man, Girl and Machine.

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