

WCI  
Tom Kropp 193345

Po Box 351  
Waupun, WI, 53963

Burglary and Perjury  
By Tom Kropp

Linda entered my life looking like Pat Benatar or Joan Jett in skin tight jeans and leather coat. The weird vibration energy and hormone imbalance that people call love hit us right away. She was also the kind of bad girl I gravitated towards. She'd been a hooker, stripper, and girlfriend of drug dealers. She'd never called the cops on anyone, not even the guys that hit her. In addition I'd done time with both her brothers and was still friends with them. They approved of me. Linda and I were constantly all over each other with marathons of wild sex. She had two daughters and even they really liked me. We were a couple for about nine months before the law entered our association.

Linda was an alcoholic and former coke addict. Her mom died leaving her eight grand. Linda was supposed to take her daughters shopping when the check cleared. Instead she abandoned her daughters and me and went on a coke binge, or rather crack binge.

I continued working my job during her 11 day disappearance. My phone broke and my boss told me Linda had called him wanting to speak with me. I was clueless to what she was doing, but suspected it was a crack binge somewhere.

Then her little brother Aiden came to me. He said that he found out Linda was in a crackhouse with some ex cons using her for money to party. Aiden said he was going over there and asked if I would back him up if the dudes tried attacking him. He said the guys had arrest warrants out for them, so they couldn't call the cops. I agreed to go with Aiden. His brother was in jail and wasn't around to help in the family tragedy occurring.

No one was there when we arrived. I was at the front door while Aiden went around to the backdoor. He didn't tell me what he was doing because his skinny little ass popped a very narrow basement window and squeezed inside. He suddenly opened the front door where I was. He had Linda's leather coat.

"She's still here." He pointed out. "This is her coat. I left a message for her to call me. They're probably on a dope run. But she'll call when she sees my note."

"We can stop back later." I agreed.

That was our game plan. We stopped back over there, but no one

was home. We only ran into one dope user. He wasn't a long term crack user. He was an ex con, still in real impressive shape and about a head taller than me. He rushed with punches in a boxer's stance, trying to use his longer reach and height against me. I feinted a low kick at his shin and that made him look down while moving back. I shuffled and slugged the thug hard in the head before my left arm clotheslined his neck. I had to hop up some to do so. That clotheline maneuver turned into a side headlock, yanking his face near my waist. He furiously fought for freedom. I snaked my right arm under his chin and secured a guillotine choke on his throat. I cut off the carotid artery pulsing blood to his brain while also pinching his breathing airway as well. He slowed in the hold and sagged down to the ground on his knees. I told him to tap out if he was done fighting. He tapped. But he couldn't tell us where Linda was at the moment. It appeared he'd been bribed by one of the crackheads to confront us. He was a known scrapper.

After that Linda called the cops on her brother and me. We were the first men she ever called the cops on. None of the other crackheads could call cops because they had arrest warrants. They convinced her to do so. Then the cops kicked in my door and took my Berman's leather jacket in a Men's large size. They claimed that it was Linda's jacket. But Linda's coat was actually a different name brand in a Women's small.

I thought someone had broke in and left my place because I didn't notice anything missing that night. I went to work the next morning. After work I found out through the grapevine that Linda heard a rumor I had thrown out all her stuff. To prove the rumor wrong, I packed up all of Linda's stuff to take to her Aunt's house. I was just leaving when an unmarked cop car stopped beside me. A detective was pointing his pistol at me from his passenger seat through both our open windows.

"Put up your hands!" He ordered.

I looked in the barrel and hesitated. That dark, morbid side of me entertained the thoughts of moving fast to make him shoot me and end my miserable existence. But the negative, pessimistic side of me thought that with my luck he would likely wound me with a face shot that left me deformed and brain damaged.

"What are you arresting me for?" I questioned.

"We just want to ask you some quick questions." He lied.

"Now put up your hands."

I raised my hands. Both detectives got out and one covered me with the gun while the other used two pairs of cuffs to secure my hands behind my back. "What's this about?" I wondered again.

"Burglary." He finally admitted.

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I was booked and discovered that there was a PO hold on me because my PO was in Illinois. But Wisconsin had let me move there on parole. Now that I was arrested in Wisconsin, they wanted to revoke me in Wisconsin.

I read the police complaint the next morning before intake court. The cops were claiming my coat was Linda's. They knew I likely couldn't fit through the narrow window Aiden used. The cops wanted me to snitch out Aiden and plead guilty for a reduced sentence. I demanded a lawyer. Then I wrote Linda at her brother Aiden's apt. I explained the cops had taken my Men's large Berman's leather claiming it was Linda's, despite Linda clearly telling cops her missing coat was a Women's small from another company. I asked her to straighten it out.

Unfortunately Linda was still running around with the same crackheads and one of them stole the four letters I sent her at Aiden's apt. That crackhead had arrest warrants already. Then he committed a crime stealing her mail. But the DA's office didn't arrest or charge him. Instead they charged me with four counts of Solicitation to commit perjury. That's when you ask someone to lie in court. Each charge carried up to five years prison. So I was facing twenty years for the four letters and ten years for the burglary. 30 years in prison.

About a month after I was locked up, Linda called my mom crying that she'd blown all her cash on crack and wanted to get me out of jail. Linda then spoke to the DA's office repeatedly explaining the coat in evidence was my coat, not hers. She even had her coat back from her brother. But the DA's office wouldn't drop the charges. She explained my four letters to her were stolen by a ex con with warrants and that I wasn't asking her to lie. I was just asking her to explain she had her coat and it was my coat cops had taken when they broke in my home.

The DA refused to drop the charges.

Then my old Wisconsin PO named Dick visited me at the jail. He

told me that since I was originally on parole in Wisconsin and had come back, the state of Wisconsin was now revoking my parole. He smirked with pleasure.

I called him every name in the book. I was in a belly chain attached to my cuffs. It left my arms little free movement. I grabbed the door, which was a heavy swinging door, as he came behind me. In a fit of fury and thoughts that I had nothing to lose, I put all my power and torque spinning and leaping while lashing the door back at his face. He blocked it with his hand. The impact fractured and bruised his hand.

I was going to be charged with a new felony battery to a PO. When I added the 30 years to the new felony battery, and my 4 year revocation, I was facing 39 years in prison.

It was pure hell in jail. I was facing forever while Linda was out partying and screwing dudes. It was brutal to live with. My family hired me a decent attorney. But the court cases and revocation dragged out almost six months. I went to the House of Correction where there was 80 guys per dorm full of asshole inmates. The few guards and cameras couldn't see most of the dorms. I was 27 years old and in amazing shape from my life-long hobby weightlifting. But even I got tested. There was some black Gangster Disciples talking racist shit near me in the TV room and I got sick of it.

"Dude, shut up with your racist bullshit! I can't hear TV!" I snapped at him. He jumped up and so did I. He was a burly black dude and stepped in with his fists up. I sledged his head with a right cross punch. My left arm clotheslined his neck and yanked his face near my waist in a side headlock. My right fist flew in his face with short hooks. But a blow bashed my head. I tripped with the dude I was strangling and socking. A mob of men surged overhead. One of the gangsters had hit me while I was drilling their burly buddy. Now a bunch rushed over my fallen form. I bounded up, flinging fists that made the mob scramble back from my attack. My fallen foe was back in my path. This time I snatched him in a Guillotine choke and put my back to the wall, so any of his buddies that wanted to help him had to come straight at me. None tried it. He tried a groin grab at me that missed before his knees went wobbly as my throat choke made him black out.

Guards rushed in and I let him drop dazed. I had to get seven

stitches above my left eye. I was stuck in the hole for a week. Then I was moved back into population in another dorm.

Shortly after that my lawyer was offered a deal. I was already being revoked for four years in prison. If I pled to one charge of Solicitation to commit perjury the DA would drop all the other charges and recommend five years concurrent with my revocation. Under the circumstances my guilt or innocence didn't matter, There was no way of winning, only degrees of losing. If I lost at trial the DA would recommend a lot of time and the judge was a strict one. I took the deal. Even then it was scary because the judge could have ran the time consecutive to my four years. At sentencing the judge actually gave me four years running with my revocation. It was one of the rare times a judge went easy on me.

After court I was in the booking area with a big, black dude just arrested on major charges. He was pacing and cursing. I sat down. He walked over, telling me to get out of his chair.

"That's not your chair man. Don't come at me like that." I replied. He telegraphed his attack. He started to turn away before he whipped a wicked overhand punch at my face. I shuffled back and his swing sailed wide, missing the mark. The missed hit staggered him and brought him into a hail of hammerfists I rained down. I lambasted him with five of my hardest hits to his head. But he broke through my blurred bombardment of blows and chopped my cheek with a fist like a maul. I wrapped him in a side headlock while stinging him with several more strikes. He grabbed my leg and upended us on the floor. He stuck my face with another ham sized hand. Then I had him in a Anaconda choke hold. But he was so big and strong flopping and flailing for freedom that I couldn't quite choke him out and he couldn't quite break free of me. A good ten guards showed up to separate us.

I was shipped to Dodge prison the next morning. I felt nauseas being back in prison a second time. But it was much cleaner, easier time than I'd done at the county jail. I had come quite close to cutting my throat or hanging myself in the county on many occasions as I faced forever in prison over a woman I loved that had locked me up for disturbing her crack binge. I felt so stupid and regretful that I'd let myself be put there. My manic depression almost killed me. But now I had the cases resolved and my release was a little over two years away. I vowed I'd survive it and live a good life. Unfortunately, I was wrong about

many things back then.

My six months back in the Milwaukee County jail and its sister institution the House of Correction had really been grim. In the Milwaukee County jail my assaultive history, along with my build, had kept me celled alone without roommates. Most of the jail predators, even the gangs, were savvy enough to largely steer clear of me and pick easier prey. The few times I was tested I challenged my opponets to fight me in one of the rooms or gym corner out of obvious view of the cameras and cops. None of the assholes wanted to go that far with me. But there was nothing to do there constructively. In my cell I'd read books and write letters. We'd be let out a few hours now and then to use phones, shower, watch TV, and pick out books. There was a gym with no weights. The food was atrocious, even for jail food. Fungus grew in the showers and grease from hair gel was slimed all over. Nasty living. There was plenty fights between prisoners, some staff assaults, a couple sexual assaults of lady guards, and a few suicide attempts with guys hanging themselves with bedsheets off the tier or cutting themselves with razors. I almost did the same thing.

At the House of Correction I was in big dorms where I would walk around listening to a radio I bought. I watched some TV. Read a lot. The high point of my days was the hour of weightlifting we got on free weights. It helped my mind and soul, along with strengthening my heart working out that hour a day.

Dodge prison was state run, so of course it was great compared to Milwaukee county institutions. There's no bugs, fungus, or other unsanitary conditions at Dodge and the food is good. There's a wide range canteen list at reasonable prices if you have money. The rough part of Dodge is the fact that you're stuck in your room constantly. You only come out to eat at meals, to shower, and to go to rec for an hour five days a week. If you're lucky you get to the library once a week to get books to read in your room. There's no TV or radios at Dodge for intake prisoners. You're stuck staring at the walls of your cage and you better enjoy reading and writing while you rot there.

But Dodge is just a brief intake prison where newly sentenced prisoners go to and are evaluated to decide what prison they will go to. In my case, Dodge decided within three weeks that they were sending me right back to Waupun Correctional, WCI. I'd gone

home from WCI almost three years earlier. I was back in prison on a non violent perjury charge with only four years. I should have gone to a medium or minimum security camp. Instead they sent me to my former max custody prison. I was 28 when I arrived at WCI again. I was once again red tagged (no roommates due to assaultive history). Many of the same prisoners and guards were there that remembered me. Shockingly I didnt get into any fights with prisoners or rebellion with the guards. I even got a job in the prison wood shop. WCI received a lot of old: wood pallets and other junk wood that we would tear apart and build furniture and cabinets with. I had my own work table. I was allowed to pretty much dream up and build whatever i wanted because my stuff all sold pretty fast. I became known for the huge, round top chests I built.

One of my huge, round top chests was bought by my mom for only seventy five bucks. She had to drag it by one wood ring handle through the snow for a block before reaching her truck, where a passer-by helped her get it in her truckbed. My mom took the chest inside her house and put her saddle on it. Her dog Jake laid down by the chest. Then she took a photo, which she sent to Woodworker's Journal magazine and they published the photo with a short article. They also sent me a detail sander. It was pretty cool.

The five hours a day I spent in the wood shop building beautiful furniture and cabinets out of junk wood helped me forget I was in prison for a little while.

During the 26 months I did at WCI it was a steady routine. I woke up and usually went to work. A few times a week I was able to lift weights. I got to library about once a week. I could go to chow and showers. I had visits from my family. But most of the time I was stuck in my cage. That's how it is in Max custody in Wisconsin.

During my years in, there was some idiots that tested me occasionally. But whenever I challenged them to fight in a cell or other spot out of obvious camera or cops view, they chose not to do it. I was relieved they bowed out. Also during that time Linda did try writing me and contacting my family. She even had her daughters color me pictures like they used to do. It was heartbreaking stuff. But there was no way I could be with her again. I had some hate and some unresolved love regarding her. But I was afraid

that things could result in violence if we ever met again. During our relationship I never hit or hurt Linda in any physical ways. I never tried to mentally or emotionally make her think less of herself. The kids never even saw us seriously argue. I had very low self esteem myself, due to the six years I'd done in prison. I'd done a lot of that time in the holes of numerous prisons and the time had damaged my mind. I was already diagnosed as manic depressive before prison, and while in they diagnosed me as bipolar.

The point is, with Linda, I did my best to have a healthy relationship between two people with very dark past lives. Linda could have easily broke up with me and we'd have parted good friends because I was already semi-family with her brothers and kids. There was just no way to forgive her using cops on me and her brother.

I had even protected her brother when the law took me down. Rather than ratting Aiden out, I stayed quiet.

My carpentry work in prison opened a new door of employment for me. I'd become really good at woodworking. It was a new skill that could serve me well, in addition to all the construction I'd done during my 2½ years free working.

It reminded me of my childhood friend, Andy. When I got out of prison after six years, Andy owned his own construction company and gave me a job. He died while driving drunk shortly before I met Linda. During my parole he had to deal with my PO calling, trying to cause problems with my job. Many POs possess an evil side, they like to try messing with parolees jobs, if the parolee is making impressive money, like in construction.

On one of my jobs, I was caulking the gutter along a Federal judges roof and a bunch of sparrows landed in the caulk. They were stuck. I used rags to wipe the birds dry and stuck them in my coat to warm up. Then I continued working. Later that day when I opened my coat, five sparrows flew away. Andy, along with my coworkers, wanted to know how the hell I had five sparrows fly out of my coat. I wouldn't tell them.

On the next job, I was high on a roof when I spotted an old woman laying in a half frozen puddle. I climbed down and helped the elderly lady out of the puddle and put her in the work truck with the heat on. She was confused, unsure where she was or where home was. Andy came back and we discussed what to do. Then I spotted several adults walking nearby, calling out the name, "Grace". I asked



them if they were looking for an elderly woman. They yelped in eager assents. I waved them over and opened up the truck revealing the wet woman drying off. It turned out that she had Alzheimers and had wandered off on her family. They were very grateful.

Andy smiled at me and said, "Now if your PO had seen that he likely would have given you an early release."

"No. He'd say I pushed her in the puddle." I ruefully replied.

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Andy died driving drunk soon after that.

I served 2 years and ten months in prison and did 14 months of parole off the 4 years and some days dual sentences. I went back into construction work with plans of building a successful life doing a trade I took some satisfaction in.

But more dark years lay ahead for me.

End