

Literary page

# The Girl Who Shot Lee Morgan

by Neil Scotten

Lee wasn't a bad man. Sure, he'd chase after other women. A young girl'd walk into the joint and he'd make those eyes at her, never failed. The music'd change too. It sounded to me like he was playin' flat all of a sudden but Marie'd say it felt kinda bluesy. And this girl, she'd just take it all in, with a dumb expression and her mouth nearly drippin' an all. Lee'd take her home after the last set then a few days later he'd show up at my place again.

Marie, that's my friend from high school days, she'd always be sayin', "girl, the way that man's treatin' you, how can you stand it?" Fact of the matter is it was hard. I been feelin' old just lately and the sight of him with those young things — well I'll tell you it made me mad.

Bunny, that's what he called the last one. Bunny this, Bunny that — didn't he know I got feelins too? Bought her a mink stole and these pink sandals with littl' flowers and gold buckles. Made me sick. Only the night before I told him, "you cut her out or we're through," but he just did that funny laugh he does and drove off to meet her. I'll tell you I would've done it there.

Anyway, that night I got to broodin' and broodin' — feelin' awful low an all. I would've got loaded but I only had whisky and whisky makes me sick.

I thought of the gun in the drawer, an old thing I got left when my father died. Twenty five years service unbroken as a city cop. I thought how it would be if I was to take it along and make a scene inside 'Slugs', that's the club he was playin' in. I thought I'd scare the drawers off that Bunny and Lee'd see sense.

I tried phonin' Marie then but it was off the hook or broke. She might've stopped

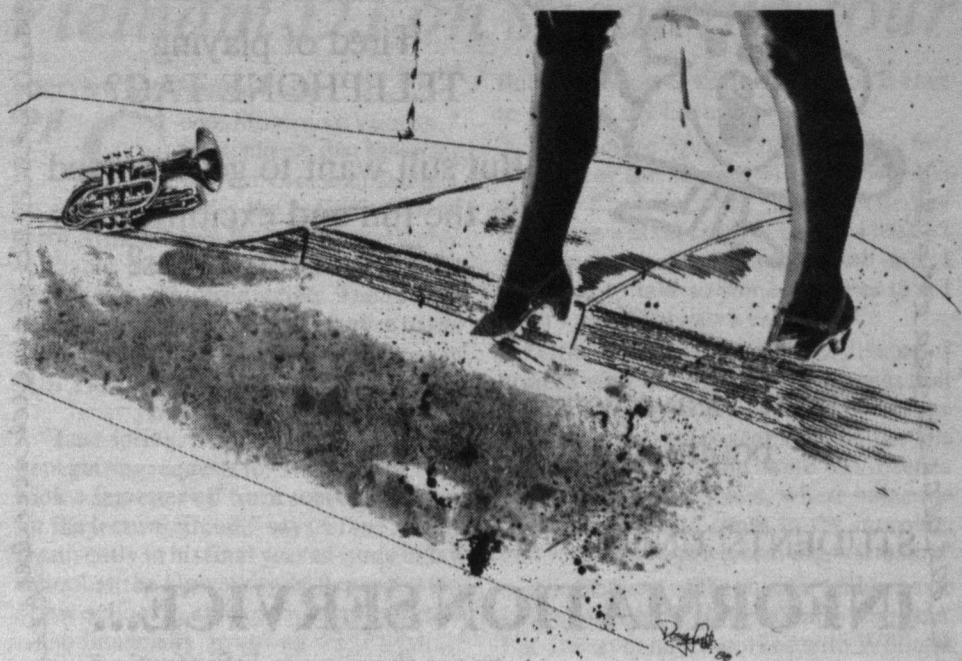
me but not the way I was feelin'. I turned on the TV and paced round and round, still broodin'. I sat down and read a magazine about some dumb movie star — I forget the name. Anyway, next thing I know it was one thirty and the TV's just a mist and makin' an awful noise.

I got up and put on my dress with the sequins, the dark blue one, matching shoes, my hat and my best coat. I didn't know then that Dad's gun was in the pocket. Must've put it there earlier.

I took a cab to 'Slugs'. They were just turnin' the lights out as I pulled up. I knew Lee was there cos' I could see his car parked in the lot. People were just hangin' round outside of the entrance. I seed Dennis come out, that's the bass player in the band, a girl on his arms.

I waited. It was awful cold and I got to shiverin'. I walked about and felt that damn thing in my pocket, bangin' against my leg. After what felt a long time there was Lee carryin' his trumpet. He'd take it with him everywhere since the last one got stole — never seen him so mad. That girl was followin' behind. Well I stepped into the road and faced him. Boy, did he smell of liquor. He kinda looked sideways at me then did his laugh — Bunny laughed too. I shouted, "stay outa this bitch!" My voice sounded funny and kinda loud. Lee gave her one of those smiles, you know those ones that shut'ya out.

They turned to go and I was fumblin' for the gun. I shouted again, I can't remember what. Lee looked scared for an instant but then he came toward me, still hollerin'. Then I fired. One, two, three, four. Terrible noise, almost split ya head open with the sound. Lee he fell over on his side, makin' a howl like Marie's dog when its' hindparts was run over. I remember his case dropped



and split open and there was that shinin' new trumpet in the gutter.

I stood there, then there was that girl screamin' and more screamin' from someplace else. I'd dropped the gun. Then there was hands everywhere pawin' at me then ambulances and police. Lee'd died already though.

I bin here two months now. They chopped my hair off first thing and I cried like a baby, first time in months. The light bothers me most; told them about it too. It gets to hummin' so loud it drives me crazy and I can't sleep. There's a madwoman in the next cell and she talks all day just to herself, sayin' stuff like, "my pretty canary, Momma's wearing her new dress." Always some weird rubbish like that.

Anyway, I got to thinkin' about Lee in here. When he used to play, well I just smiled, couldn't help it. Everybody said he was the best. When we first met he'd just been a year with Dizzy and was strikin' out with a band of his own. Used to follow him round everywhere, anyplace he'd play

then I'd show up.

I never heard anyone blow the horn the way he did. The band'd be wailin' and he'd be wailin' even harder. I'll tell you it made my head spin. The last time I heard him play, four months back or thereabouts, I'll swear the damn roof near lifted off. The slow ones was my favourites though. He'd make that horn cry and sing and everybody'd just stop what they were doin' and listen. I don't know how he learned that stuff but it was the best thing you ever heard. I got all his records at home, leastways I did have, 'The Sidewinder', 'The Rumproller', funny names ain't they?

He used to look so smart too. Dressed in his white suit an all with his gold shoes and his hair all nice. I used to feel so full of pride when we'd go out. And that horn, gold plated, cost him two thousand bucks. Anyway, it's gettin' late, the light's buzzin' and I got a headache that's just awful. Most times I dream of nothin' but tonight I want to dream about Lee. He wasn't a bad man.

★ ENTERTAINMENT ★

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& SATURDAY OCTOBER 1

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<p><b>Golden Bears</b> vs <b>Victoria</b> (Defending CIAU Champions) 2:00 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Golden Bears</b> vs <b>UBC</b> 2:00 p.m.</p>
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\*\*\* CWUAA TOURNAMENT \*\*\*  
Friday, September 30, 1988

<p><b>Pandas</b> vs <b>University of Saskatchewan</b> 10:00 a.m.</p>	<p><b>Pandas</b> vs <b>University of Lethbridge</b> 4:00 p.m.</p>
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Saturday, October 1, 1988

<p><b>Pandas</b> vs <b>University of Calgary</b> 10:00 a.m.</p>	<p><b>Pandas</b> vs <b>University of Lethbridge</b> 4:00 p.m.</p>
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Sunday, October 2, 1988

<p><b>Pandas</b> vs <b>UBC</b></p>	
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