

Green Glass Riches

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Until she turned twenty, Anna Lint lived a textbook type of life. Like one that's three-inch thick, corner-fringed, pictureless, coverless, with miniature black words scrawled on white onion-thin sheets, dusty and unreadable. But one with potential. Potential if you're vacationing in the bathroom with saturated bubble-bath-hair, immersed in a tub excreting the underneath emerging water, and there's a George Winston CD beckoning you to become familiar with the wind, the seasons, the world. Potential if you decide to explore, wander and discover, and don't have deadlines. But no one saw the potential or opened Anna Lint's hardback: the red-stitched, neatly-bound, diligently-written six-hundred-paged-or-so

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book to even take a glance. Until she turned twenty. Anna Lint. The name itself doesn't provoke interest; plain and simple, like white bread. But something happened to Anna Lint that transformed her into a butter-glazed croissant, all curved and twisted, bent and flipped up, served atop a china saucer. That something was Robert LeMur. Rob, Robby, Ra-bear, Ra-Bear, Robo: her love, her husband, the man who opened her book and wouldn't let it close.

She saw him and she knew they would be together. They married when she turned

twenty-four, exactly four years after their marriage was arranged. By Anna. Anna would say by fate. That “master plan” stuff doesn't really exist, her mother told Anna after she informed her parents of her future destination. Oh, Mommy, she responded, you'll see. Four years later her parents said they guessed they'd been wrong.

And that was that.

Anna liked Robert, grew to love Robert, because of what he did to her. Did *to* her, not for her. He did it to her on the ten-thousand-dollar Oriental crimson and gold rug in the living room, did it atop the sheets, clothes, and scattered scraps of papers strung along the mattress upstairs, did it to her against the walls in the dining room, the walls along the staircase. Her head pounding, banging, smacking not from the sex, from the wine. A bottle of it a day, once a week.

He'd give it to her on a Sunday, granting her the freedom to drink it whenever she wanted during the coming week. She picked Tuesday. Always. Tuesday was a blah day, worse than Wednesday, because it hadn't yet reached the hump. When she thought of Tuesday, Anna thought meatless chili. Tuesday had the beans and the noodles, the tomatoes, but something was missing: the meat and chili wasn't good at all, wasn't even worth eating, without brown hamburger to fill it up.

So to cover her blank-tape Tuesdays, she filled her body scarlet-red in the afternoons and Robert filled her body creamy-white during the nights. That was the only way she'd have it. And she never would have guessed *that* before she met Robert. Never would have guessed either the way she adored it when she finished the bottle and he flung it across the room, the

way she loved it when glass chips on the floor started scraping skin, piercing skin, as two moved violently together. Red body-juice cascading down limbs, colored to resemble the bottle's emptied contents.

And Robert didn't think it odd, not bizarre at all, the way Anna reacted after a bottle. They fit together like the top and bottom of a barrette: easy and exact.

And that was that.

Until the night Anna told her mother what they did, the way they were together.

Mother, I must tell you a secret, she said. One I've been keeping inside my brain for years, for four years, and the doors of my brain need to be opened. I feel the knocking, and I need to tell someone what is inside, show someone what has been happening. It is so wonderful.

Anna's mother watched her daughter, sitting diagonally from her in Anna's living room, as she thought about the way her daughter had changed in the last four years. And not all for the bad. Like an inexpensive vinyl purse turned into a Coach handbag, she had transformed herself. All because of Robert. Robert the doctor. The successful, very ambitious doctor, who took an interest in her one and only daughter. Oh, how nice. She thought as she spoke, asking only what Anna, what do you so desperately want to share?

Anna smiled as she stood and let her satin robe fall to the floor, the floor probably still enmeshed with green glass chips. She waited for a response, standing unclothed before her mother, but her mother could not speak and just sat looking at her daughter. The scrapes and cuts visibly, sporadically scattered her limbs, her chest and stomach.

What is it, dear, what happened, dear, was what she said when she finally spoke. Anna just smiled and answered, oh, Mother, Robert loves me so much!

And that was that.

Until Robert came home and Anna told him she had told her mother about their Tuesday night activity. She did somewhat regret telling her. After all, she didn't receive an exactly dramatic reaction: no

congratulations, no condemnations. Not much of a reaction at all. But she had told her, nonetheless, so she thought she'd let Robert know.

He became like a microwave; he was hot, hot and angry, but like a microwave compared to an oven, his fire wasn't visible. And like one can sense a microwave is working nevertheless, Anna could sense her husband's frustration. What is it, Robo, she asked, crawling to him. Nothing, my darling. Nothing. Of course he would say nothing; Robert never explained anything, wasn't his style, or something, that's what Anna supposed.

But inside his head were all kinds of goings ons. His mind like a five player euchre game; things were always moving, an inappropriate number of cards were always being played, and it was always as if there was just too much to grasp, too much to comprehend, and to attempt to explain any of it would be impossibly unbearable.

So he just looked at her that night. Just looked at her the way he always just looked at her when he had no idea whatsoever to say. And she looked back at him, thinking it was as if he were covered in plastic wrap: the thick, weather-resistant plastic people in cold climates sometimes attach to the outside of their windows in the winter. And Anna wanted to rip it apart, tear it off, shred it to fringes so she could touch what was inside. So like a bird pecking at the plastic, she began to kiss. Like a rat gnawing at the neatly fastened edges, she bit. She bit hard on his pink bottom lip and watched the blood form droplets and drip down the curve of his chin.

She waited for a scream, a yelp, a dramatic reaction, but he just laughed: a little half-laugh with a mumbled I love you and an it's not Tuesday. Oh I know, she said with a flick of her hair that night, but just what will I do when you're gone?

And that was that. On a Thursday night on the page of a day in the book of Anna LeMur, that was that.

Robert LeMur could read her so well, Anna LeMur always thought. Read her and flip the

leaves filled with ancient ideas about the way things should be, about the way her life would be. But she couldn't read him; she didn't even

“She felt them when his body pushed her buttons, like those on a hand-held kitchen mixer, and twirled her all up inside. It made her feel all gooey and sticky, all dizzy and lightheaded...”

see the words, just felt them sometimes.

She felt them on Tuesday nights when she had her emerald

green glass container on the table, cork popped, and a glass in her hand. She felt them when his body pushed her buttons, like those on a hand-held kitchen mixer, and twirled her all up inside. It made her feel all gooey and sticky, all dizzy and lightheaded, chocolately sweet, gushing out unintelligible words half-unknowingly.

When he's gone it'll be alright, she always thought, alright as long as I have my bottle. There's something of him in that bottle. That was what she thought at first, and then she thought yes, yes they'll say, that crazy woman thinks her dead husband is perfectly accessible, sitting on the kitchen table inside that bottle. I can see the mental guards now, laughing at the lunatic woman in bed eight who worships a green glass container because she thinks her used-to-be husband's going to float out of it. Crazy woman. Mentally marble-headed woman. That was what Anna's mind whispered every time she thought of Robert dying or leaving.

But they wouldn't laugh. They wouldn't laugh or smirk or say a syllable, the mental guards or the neighbors, they'd just wonder what that bottle was. Everyone'd just wonder what was so special, so unique about that inexpensive object, but she would never tell. Because it was their bottle, all green and red and fine or all empty and scattered and pieced apart, it was their bottle whether they were together or not.

And no one would ever understand. No one could ever understand that it gave her life, and whether she knew it or not, gave him life,

too. And they'd never comprehend that the bottle, each identically sized and filled bottle that somehow all mentally emerged into one bottle, Anna and Robert together gave it life. But that was how it was.

And that was that.□