

What's the Story?
Taken from/ Inspired by
His Girl Friday, 1940

INT. PRESS ROOM - DAY CLOSE SHOT - HILDY

REPORTER
I thought you'd gone.

HILDY
I thought so too.

Hildy, alone at last, picks up the phone.

HILDY
(into the phone)
Get me Walter Burns, quick!

She lays down the telephone receiver and crosses to the door which she closes, then returns to the phone.

HILDY
(picking up the phone)
Walter. Walter, listen. I've got the whole story on how Williams got that gun and escaped and I got his exclusive. Yeah, that's right, and it's a pip. It cost me four hundred and fifty bucks to tear it out of Cooley.

INT. WALTER BURNS' OFFICE - DAY CLOSE SHOT - BURNS at his desk, telephone to his ear.

BURNS
Nevermind that. What's the story?

HILDY
Well, just a minute and I'll give you the story. But I'm telling you first I had to give him all the money I had on me and it wasn't exactly mine. It was Bruce's money and I want it back.

BURNS
Bruce's money? Sure, sure, sure, you'll get it. Now, what's the

story? I'll send the money right down to you. I swear it on my mother's grave.

HILDY

Alright, here's the... Wait a minute, your mother's alive!

BURNS

My grandmother's grave. Don't be technical, Hildy. What's the story?

HILDY

Well, you get that money down here. All right, here's your story. Williams got the gun from his co-star on his latest film. A co-star Albert Hayhurst owed over \$8,000 in gambling debts.

BURNS

Errol Flynn?

HILDY

Let me finish...

BURNS

Clark Gable?

HILDY

No, you buffoon. It was a female co-star.

BURNS

Well, my word, Hildy, why didn't you say so?

HILDY

It gets better, Burns. Williams was involved in a secret romance with this leading lady since they began filming together last September. Williams had even planned to propose to her at the gala before the murder took place. He had a diamond ring in his coat pocket and everything.

BURNS

Who's the co-star?

HILDY

Claudia Landis.

BURNS

Miss Claudia Landis? She's not exactly the type of starlet I imagine owning a gun or gambling.

HILDY

Or being romanced by a thug like Raymond Williams? Well, It's Claudia Landis, I tell you. She's messed up in the whole thing. It was her pistol Williams shot Stevens with. And according to Williams, her idea too.

BURNS

According to Williams?

HILDY

According to Williams. He was waiting in The Daily Star parking lot for Cooley this morning, looking to make a deal to get the police off his tracks.

BURNS

How did he imagine he would do that? And how have the police not caught up to him by now?

HILDY

I guess Williams thought giving the Daily Star dirt on America's Sweetheart, Miss Landis, was worth enough money for Cooley's protection.

BURNS

And was it?

HILDY

Cooley didn't turn him into the police.

BURNS

Unbelievable. *(Pause)* Looks like Williams is not particularly romantic after all.

HILDY

Not particularly. But it's also not particularly surprising.

BURNS

Tell me more about the gambling debts.

HILDY

From the picture Williams painted, it sounds like Landis was a regular at all of the high-end gin joints in Hollywood and that she would play poker late into the night...

BURNS

...And Hayhurst owed her \$8,000?

HILDY

That's r—...

BURNS

I can't possibly imagine Miss Landis ordering her "sweetheart" to take out a top Hollywood producer over \$8,000...

HILDY

...If you'd let me finish, Walter, I could explain everything Cooley told me.

BURNS

Alright, I'm listening Hildy. But get to the motive.

HILDY

Hayhurst racked up the \$8,000 debt last weekend at a studio party. Landis and Hayhurst were reunited at the gala last night. When Landis spotted Hayhurst, she approached him and told him she

would let the debt slide if he agreed to cast her as Marie Antoinette in an upcoming feature film his studio was producing. Hayhurst roared with laughter at the suggestion, claiming she didn't possess the air of "virtue" or "regality" necessary for the character.

BURNS

I don't know if virtue is what I associate with Marie Antoinette.

HILDY

Regardless, Landis took great offence to this and demanded an explanation. Hayhurst responded by threatening to expose her affinity for gambling and "undoubtedly loose morals" to every studio executive in town before pouring out his full champagne flute over her shoes. Landis ran to Williams and told him what had happened. She wanted Williams to demand an apology from Hayhurst and demand that he pay the debt immediately. She also insisted that Williams hold on to her mink coat, which she had tucked away a pistol in one of the pockets. She told him that Hayhurst was a raging alcoholic and to take it out if Hayhurst got "violent." Williams found Hayhurst and demanded they speak in Grover's study. Williams said he did not intend to shoot Hayhurst. When they entered the study, Williams told Hayhurst that he was wrong to cast judgment on Landis. But Hayhurst threatened Williams, claiming he would expose his own dark and stormy past to everyone in Hollywood. Hayhurst then picked up an ottoman and threw it at Williams. Williams reached for the gun in Landis' pocket to get Hayhurst to back

down. But Hayhurst picked up a lamp and smashed it against the wall. He started charging toward Williams with the broken lamp and that's when Williams shot him.

BURNS

Well?

HILDY

He says he didn't mean to shoot. That he panicked when Hayhurst came running toward him with the lamp.

BURNS

And you believe that?

HILDY

I don't believe anything one way or another. But it's an exclusive.

BURNS

How did Williams escape, Hildy? After he shot Hayhurst at the gala?

HILDY

After the shot, he ran right out of the mansion while some guests and guards chased after him into the courtyard. An automobile pulled up at the end of the driveway. Williams jumped inside and the vehicle roared toward the highway.

BURNS

How convenient. Who was driving?

HILDY

Claudia.

BURNS

Of course.

HILDY

And Claudia's husband.

BURNS

Well, now that's a story!

HILDY

They drove Williams to a wooded area just off of the highway. Claudia told Williams that she was going to leave Hollywood with her husband and that this would be the last time they would see each other. And then they drove off without him. Williams had no idea there was a Mr. Landis.

BURNS

Now I can see why he went to Cooley.

HILDY

Walter, you need to come down here right away. We have to track down Williams. We can't let Cooley and the boys at the Star run away with this thing.

BURNS

I'll be right down, Hildy.

HILDY

Oh— Walter! Don't forget to bring the money.

BURNS

Yes, yes. (*Hangs up*) (*To himself*)
on my mother's grave.