

Matt led a pretty interesting life, but it had certainly never been this interesting. Until yesterday, he had not seen an automatic weapon up close. But now, in less than one normally tranquil, tropical night, his life had been threatened by two.

She stared at him over the muzzle of the Uzi and as he raised his hands, the last remnant of the torn shirt fell away and he stood naked before her.

Once I had thought to begin this report there. My editor had approved that lead when it was a Sunday, Feature piece. But before it got to print, the several smelly aspects that made up the larger hard news story caused everything to be safely snuffed out. With no explanation....

Sven, the yacht delivery captain, called it incident number two in his testimony before the Coast Guard Board of Inquiry. But it was actually number four as it related to GULL's delivery. And that series of events, however harrowing and terminal, paled almost to insignificance when placed in the larger context.

That context began to form in the 1963 meeting at the Chinese restaurant on I Street in D.C. But I have only Carlos' word about that parley. The official records of both sides, of course, make no mention of it. No surprise there. And Carlos has never surfaced since the shooting in the wee hours of that pivotal Miami night years later.

So, Leda's rescue is not the best place to begin now because Matt would never have been confronted by the Uzis except for errors and chance: Had the giant not mistaken her for his actual target, the power cruiser would not have been his victim, and if not for Diego's single wild shot disabling GULL's radio, Sven would never have risked stopping at the derelict.

Leda's entry into the affair, while dramatic and early, is not so significant as the pivotal role she played later, at what one Agency report referred to as the "Biscayne Incident".

As for the other women, Flash and the party girl, they are not starters either, for they flip into the deck--cards being shuffled--space and time separating them. And there they stay until all are dealt in the single hand played in the dark lower deck of the burning casino ship. That one of them was a trump card, impacts GULL's story only after the fact...she had no effect on the final moonlit confrontation in the Gulf Stream months later.

And Sybil. Sybil, the wildest of cards--one to be played or discarded—still to be decided.

Sven was bound, he felt, to relate to the Coast Guard Board Of Inquiry only what he, the Captain, had seen and heard, so he hadn't counted the incident that occurred in the morning before he and Matt arrived at GULL's anchorage.

In separate interviews both men started with the next one.