

# Beware of Jezebel!

ALLAN FLIGHT HAS A CAUTIONARY TALE

**I CAN PINPOINT THE EXACT DAY MY SHOOTING LIFE CHANGED. IN FACT I COULD, IF PRESSED, GIVE YOU THE EXACT HOUR.**

Finding myself between appointments, with time to kill, I wandered into my local gun shop. Neville, the shop owner, was standing behind the counter removing the wrapping from a box. As I moved closer he stopped unwrapping and looked up. "This one's a bit special Al" he said by way of greeting, nodding toward the box he was working on. I moved closer to try to glimpse the item he was referring to. I came to

a sudden halt, unable to speak, seemingly incapable of anything other than staring at the vision of beauty lying there before my eyes. My brain slowly took in her deep sheen, softly reflecting the dull overhead lighting. As I stared, I drank in her shape, her long length, her profile and her promise of lithe athleticism, accentuated by a slight widening of the shoulders. I noticed my hands shaking. "My God, she's beautiful," I stammered,

"she's perfect, just look at that figure".

Neville was looking at me with a half smile on his face. "She's certainly the best looking Beretta 682EELL I've seen in ages" he said. "Try her for size". As I took her into my hands I felt a tingle, as if a small charge of electricity had passed between us. From that first moment she felt good in my hands, as if she had been waiting just for me. As she snuggled into my shoulder and my eyes focused on her slender rib, I was filled with a premonition of many great days ahead. Little did I know!

As I moved, she moved also – both of us in perfect unison. "Not only a great looker" I thought, "she's a wicked mover as well, a real Jezebel!" I was hooked. I knew it, Neville knew it, in fact, he was already writing out the order! The only cloud on my horizon was that I already had a partner – a solid, dependable Lanber waiting for me at home. We'd been together for many years and although we'd had some very good times, none were what you'd call exceptional. In short, we were just comfortable with each other.

I'd already arranged that Lanber and I were going to an important competition at the weekend and I was now undecided as to who to take with me. Would it be fair of me to expect Jezebel to perform well straight away? Should I depend on Lanber one



*"The relationship with Jezabel was doomed from the start. It was a shotgun marriage."*

more time? In the end I decided to take Lanber as usual. With the benefit of hindsight I have to say that my decision was a mistake. The whole weekend was a disaster. We performed like total strangers, as if Lanber realized that this was our last shoot together. On the following Monday I took Lanber into Neville and left her at the shop. I didn't haggle over the price – I just turned my back and walked away.

At this point some readers might say that I was being cruel or foolish, but all I can say in my defence is that I had Jezebel. I was infatuated and that was all I could think about. From that point on I only had eyes for Jezebel, even though she was a hard mistress. She could reward me with some soaring performances, or send me to the depths of despair with behavior so sullen that I found it hard to believe that it could be the same Beretta.

It may just be coincidence that when she was giving me such a

hard time she would perform miracles for total strangers. So attractive was she, that if left in a gun rack she would become the center of attraction. Just being there amongst the boxy Krieghoffs and the thick waisted matrons from Browning, she would stand out so beautifully. The plain-Jane Perazzi's never got a second look when Jezebel was around, and because she was so eye catching, everyone wanted to hold her. I would just grit my teeth and nod whenever my permission was sought. Grit my teeth? Oh yes, because I knew what was going to happen next. Jezebel would be taken to the nearest practice station and reward her admirer with his only straight of the day! Jezebel always performed well for strangers.

As the months went by I noticed that our performances were deteriorating and that I was no longer getting any 'vibes' from Jezebel. What I *was* getting was a large bruise on my cheek. "*Have*

*her altered,*" said fellow shooters. I used to recoil in horror! How could anyone suggest such radical surgery on something so perfect? "Oh no," I would say, "It's not Jezebel, it's me. I'm not holding her properly". At that, people would give me an odd look, shake their heads and walk away. Things went from bad to worse to the extent that I stayed away from regular competitions and eventually didn't want to go out at all – but Jezebel was always there, insisting that we go, humiliating me when we did. Something had to give.

As I lay in bed one Sunday morning I decided to force the issue, I would take Jezebel out and subject her to an experience that would make or break our relationship. I suppose it was unforgivable to subject her to something so patently beneath her sporting pedigree, so hideously boring, but it had to be done. Yes! You've guessed – I subjected her to a round of skeet! She hated it with a vengeance, canting and muzzle

flipping in indignation.

I suppose that it was inevitable that our relationship would collapse after such humiliation and it was with mixed feelings that together we made the journey back to Neville's for the last time. He seemed to understand and gave me a good price for Jezebel, but it wasn't really the money I wanted settled, it was the conflict within me. How could something that looked so good treat me so bad?

I refused Neville's offer to loan me another gun as I was determined never to shoot again, but I'm afraid my desire to shoot was too strong. Trouble was, every gun I tried just didn't feel right for one reason or another. No matter how hard I tried I just couldn't give the damned sport up. I still shoot – and have learned to be content to just be one of the crowd, competitions mean nothing now.

Oh, by the way, did I tell you that I'm back with Lanber? Neville phoned to say that she had come back in to the shop and he would hold her for me. It was all very tentative at first but gradually we have settled into the old comfortable routine, and as I've already said, I'm content with that and will stray no more.

And Jezebel? It's all right. Honestly! I don't mind you asking. At my weekly counseling sessions I hardly flinch now when she is mentioned. She lives with a taxi driver. I see them now and then and I've seen the telltale signs – pride and happiness followed by confusion and, no doubt, in time, frustration followed by humiliation. I suppose he will wake up one morning, feel the same as I did and Jezebel will find herself back on the rack in the gun shop.

So if you're unhappy with your present gun and think you could do with a change, just remember, Jezebel may still be out there waiting. You've been warned! ■