

The Strongman Used To Weep

by Darryl Price

The Strongman used to weep alone in his single dusty tent at night, all of us could hear him, sobbing, thinking about the one incredible time in his mostly miserable life he accidentally brushed his thick arm skin against the soft backside of the Invisible Girl's sweet bobbled head as she turned in mid-laugh. It made him so weak in the knees to think about. It punched the entire reserves of air out of his lungs over and over again. He worshiped that invisible spot on his very visible arm, constantly looking at it, touching it with swollen fingers. He could find it in the dark. It was always there. Sometimes he would wake in a cold enough panic wondering if in the middle of the last stars it had somehow finally worn off, disappearing into thin air, leaving him nothing but his own rough skin in its place, his fields of wheat-colored arm hair to welcome the burst of a new day with, only to discover that yes it was, thank God, still there, as ever, melting him in ways he wasn't really used to , but that he really couldn't go on living without ever knowing once

more, he was sure, either. Of this he was absolutely adamant. He was trapped, tightly wound, like a dumbfounded beetle bug in a jar, seeing ahead only the world in which she so casually lived and played, but not being able of course to join her in any way out of it all. It warped his view of everything he had to live for. He pumped his iron junk without another thought entering his head for days at a time. She was supposed to be marrying some little faggot hippie juggler type guy from another faraway circus troupe anyway. A questionable Russian whom some people had said was a stinking robber Gypsy fellow simply hiding out from the law in plain sight and using the good old sweet-hearted folks at the circus to do it with. Didn't matter, nothing did. He knew that much. He didn't care one way or the other about those kinds of flat facts and full figures. He didn't deserve her. He was fooling her. What she took for love was just a con game probably played out on many an innocent woman before her. He hated everything about that stinking commie from his rotten, peeling bowling pins to his incredibly lame stupid looking long braid of jet black hair.

The Strongman always kept his own hair cut bristle short and to the point. Once he thought about letting his hair grow out just for her and then calling himself Hercules, the Most Powerful Being in the wholeblasted

Universe, but he could never stand the long growing it out period, so he grew a nice big mustache instead. A great big bruiser that, simply stated, always said, "Don't ever mess with me if you want to live to talk about it," in about a dozen different wiry ways. At least that's what the mirror kept telling him as he dried his eyes with the backs of his enormous fingers.

Now one day the Invisible Girl, who was only ever partly there on the best of days, overheard a couple of new clowns, Chuckles-A-Lot and one Douche Bag Donny, talking about the gossip that everyone else now knew by heart but her. How the thinnest of bare chances within the briefest of moments with her own dull brown head had brought him down, like some kind of heavy metal space junk, crashing to the ground like a giant redwood forest tree and reduced him to a gently fallen over meal for termites and other overpopulated crawling insect societies. She blushed and blushed and blushed some more at the very thought of it-- that only made a little bit of her left shoulder visible to the ground around her. One huge nosed clown, the only seventh level in the whole sad daffy joint, went on to say, "Did you know he even went so far as to leave her a toothpaste poem written on the bath room mirror, before he, you know?" She could not bear to hear any more of this, this

utter, crapable nonsense. What did the poem say? It couldn't be true. It just couldn't. She didn't want to believe that her stupid hair had been capable of such deceit without first gaining her own consent to comply. She'd always loved the Strongman, as a good, and loyal, friend, a someone she could trust in the craziest, worst times of her life to always have her back. He was sometimes fun to be around, to flirt with, in a pal to pal kind of grumpy old man sort of way, and well his skimpy Fred Flintstone costumes always made her laugh out loud, even so many hours later in the day. He'd always been the perfect gentleman around her, pulling out her chair at lunchtime, opening tent flaps so she could make her professional grand entrance unnoticed by the crowd, and bringing her glasses of ice water on all of the hottest days of working in the warm summer weather. Her soft trail of unforgiving tears rained down on the room and pooled out, one by one.

No one saw much of her hair or the rest of her body after that, even though not many had ever seen much of it to begin with. She and the juggler had had a bouncing baby boy, I am told, that easily steals from all the other babies without ever having been seen or caught once in the act and is at least seven times as strong as any baby elephant up

and walking around looking for some new fun to be had.

