

The Strength of Glass

by Terry DeHart

They sit across from each other and she smiles as if they were in a normal place.

“So. How's life?” she asks.

“Really?”

“No. Not really. Don't tell me how it really is. I'm already depressed.”

“Okay,” he says. “I'm shitting in tall cotton. If things were any better, I'd be jamming with Hendrix in heaven.”

“Give me more, sunshine,” she says.

“Pearly gates?”

“If that's the best you can do.”

“No. I can do better than harps and clouds and shit. Listen, baby: Imagine we're on vacation, see. Not the usual tropical island crap, though. We're on vacation wherever we go.”

“And what will we do?”

“Ah. That's the question, isn't it? That's my favorite question in the whole world of questions. Ask it again.”

She bats her eyelashes. “So—what do you want to do, now?”

“Yeah. That's the question. Because you know and I know and the whole damn world knows what I want to do. And listen, we're both free and we have stacks of tens and twenties, all unmarked bills. We fly to Vegas and there's a limo waiting for us at the airport.”

“Now you're talking, big daddy.”

“Yeah. We're both out free in the world. We're high because there's no glass between us. We don't have to use these goddam phones. We can hold each other. Kiss. God I want to kiss you.”

“Stick to the story, baby,” she says.

“Right. So we tell the driver to take us to the Bellagio. You've made us a reservation. The anticipation hurts like hell and

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our legs are touching and we're squirming around because the waiting is almost over. We're together and we don't have any baggage, except for the money. We can always shop later, right?"

"And do I laugh then?"

"Yeah. You laugh like none of that other shit happened. And it didn't, because it's all behind us. And I'm behind you, now. My hands are on your hips and I'm nibbling your ear and the elevator stops. We go inside the room. My heart is going like an AK-47 and you sigh in that horny way you used to have and it's like a soft, wild cheer. The penthouse has windows that hold the city in them. We can see it all. We can even see this faraway place, and I look down at it and, from inside here, I also look up at us. Because I can be in two places at once, baby. It's the one trick I've learned in here."

"Aren't you getting sick of doing this?"

"Not yet."

"Then take me through it again," she says. "Take me all the way, lover boy. But let's start at the beginning, shall we?" She presses her hand to the glass. "Where's the money, now?"

He winks, hangs up the phone, blows her a kiss and shuffles back through his iron door.

