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About 900 Words

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## Don't Tap The Glass

By Carlos Stanfield

"When, though? When can I go home?" Karen said. She sat sniffing with her face buried in her hands. Her short red hair was combed straight and pulled into a ponytail. She had awoken with it already arranged and dressed in a black blouse and a bright pink poodle skirt.

Ron yawned as he walked over to the table, a plate of eggs and bacon in each hand. He was dressed in a tan tweed jacket and matching slacks with a green sweater vest, white shirt, and red bowtie. His large round spectacles shone almost to the point of obscuring his small blue eyes.

"Excuse me," Ron said. He set one plate before Karen before taking a seat. The gleam of the silverware was spotless, as always. His hand was trembling. He rested it on the solid oak table, which was draped in a checkerboard tablecloth. A thin vase was placed in the center of the table, filled with a bouquet of anthurium and anemone. His eyes drifted over the checkerboard pattern as he took a deep breath and cleared his throat.

"I understand this is hard. It is always hard at first. When I first arrived, I was tearing at the walls and tossing chairs, believe you me," Ron said. He gave a small chuckle as he sliced his

sunny side up egg, watching the yolk run gently. He mixed it with a bit of bacon, fried crisp and smoky, before he placed it in his mouth. He chewed the crisp bacon crunching and crackling beneath his teeth. Ron sat there his eyes shut, fingers laced, chewing and chewing and chewing, before speaking up. "This really isn't so bad after you get used to it. We have all the food and drink we could want, there is a home gym, every modern amenity. I know it's not perfect. The décor could use a bit of work," he said with a chuckle, "but one must learn to make the most of things."

The floral print on the walls looked as if it had been plucked straight from a nineteen fifties catalog. It was perfectly clean, no peeling, no stains, not even a speck of dust. The two king-sized beds had crisp neat corners, with sheets as flat as paper and pillows as fluffy as marshmallows. The TV was so thin that from the side it nearly disappeared, and longer across than Karen's arm twice over. Outside was a pool, crystal clear; and exercise equipment, oiled and shined. The table they were eating on seemed smoother than a cue ball yet solid, with the warmth and strength of well-worn wood.

"The décor isn't the issue here!" Karen said

"Then what?"

"What? You know what! We aren't free! We're just pets in some zoo!"

Ron exhaled slowly before taking another bite of his meal. He added three sugars to his cup of coffee and gave a slow sip as the steam covered his glasses. "Free? Free to do what? Work a job as a faceless nobody building a legacy for someone else? Free to spend money on

things you don't need and don't make you happy? Free to watch tv and surf the web? You can do all those things here," Ron said.

"There's more to life than just that," Karen said. She opened her mouth to continue but didn't get the chance.

"Oh, maybe you meant free to run in fields and feel the grass between your toes? Romantic, but let's be honest; is that what you really want? You had, what, thirty years to do that. Did you ever really want to or was it just some idea that looked nice on a poster?" Rob said

"I just didn't have the time," Karen said. "I had a life to live, a life that I've been plucked out of by who knows what and dropped down into some motel from hell." Karen gritted her teeth as she stared Rob down.

"Your food is getting cold," Rob said.

Karen walked over to the plate, glancing down at it. The eggs were sunny side up with three strips of bacon arranged beneath them to form a smiling face. Her mother used to make eggs the same way. She picked up the plate and tossed it against the wall with all her might. As it shattered she felt goosebumps. She tossed the vase next, then the sheets.

Rob rubbed his temples, letting out a short huff. As he got up to stop her, he almost ended up falling flat on his face. The whole room was reverberating. With a groan, he walked over to the far wall, its door as flat as the wallpaper it was printed on. He stared up at the floral print and pointed to the left. His former roommate had done the trick many times. Of course,

he could not be sure what was on the other side. However, he imagined it was a large sign reading "Please Do Not Tap The Glass"