



the
Glass
HOUSE
lizbeth dusseau

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The Glass House
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Dedication
To Art

Chapter One

The Return

These woods sparkle in the early morning light with dew still clinging to the trees, the grass, and even the air. I see it now after so many years away and understand why a piece of this place remains inside me like a treasure I carry in my pocket wherever I go. I hardly think of it most days. But on some days, when the scent of rich earth rises from the ground of a city park or the breeze of the season wafts through the air, I'm taken back. Sometimes, it's the fleeting glimpse of a man who reminds of the ones I knew here that triggers my memories – and then off I go, flung back into that former life. The memories are mostly sweet, filled with a passionate longing for the best of times. I tend to forget how it ended. I tend to romanticize the life I spent here, even though I know that my years in these woods were a lot more complicated and deeply layered than I tend to remember them during brief moments of recollection.

The glass house beyond Damon's remarkable Lodge appears so much smaller than I remember it being. Perhaps because it's been boarded up, its glass walls covered with weather-stained plywood, ugly now but so beautiful then, when my little house was open to the world, appearing like a beautiful jewel tucked in amongst the trees. When I lived inside its tiny confines, the large windows reflected back the light – the sun, the trees, the snow in winter, the bright new leaves of spring, and the radiant ones bursting with orange, scarlet and yellow in autumn. In the evenings when the light receded from the woods, the lights from inside the house shined out to the world, and I, going about my business inside appeared like a moving picture show before an audience of viewers there to watch the drama unfold.

I think of all the days I spent in the glass house. There were drab ones I hated when the gray shades of winter varied little. They seemed to go on forever. In winter the

glass house felt cold, even when the fireplace blazed and the air was warm. I was often naked, even during those cold winters. Damon never exactly told me to spend my time without my clothes, but once he'd installed the telescope at his bedroom window, a wicked little side of me enjoyed teasing him from afar. I suppose it became our foreplay. By the end of the day, the rising arousal between us made sex late in the evening a spectacular event. At least for the first couple of years. Those were the good times.

Damon wasn't the only one to witness my naughty exhibitions. Should someone walk the grounds surrounding Lodge, I could be seen moving about inside in all my naked glory. I knew there were men looking in on me. Along with his current tribe of best friends, there were the workmen, the gardener, postman, USP driver, buddies from the Gulf War, and men dating as far back as his childhood. He never discarded a friend and all were welcome. Even the rivals and adversaries he gathered along the way. He would have denied he had detractors, but I imagine there were a few. The way he lived his life, there were certain to be a few discarded and disgruntled souls left behind in the wake of his fast-paced life.

When I was aware of a man watching me, I'd find their response to me quite interesting to note. When I was in the mood for it, I'd catch their eye and grin slyly. I was their wet dream locked in a gilded cage. Appalling to some but wonderful to me.

I liked to think that I was the pretty, blond-haired, blue-eyed princess trapped inside those glass walls with no means of escape.

It was not just erotic desire that arose inside me as I displayed my body to the world, but a desire for all of life, which was to me a deeply passionate, even spiritual feeling. I opened to everything the world threw at me, even on those depressing winter days. Sometimes I wrote best when

my body shivered. The stark reality of the season seemed to fuel some of the darkest desires I would know.

What a terrible and wonderful domain I enjoyed! I knew that Damon had diminished me to some degree when he built that house. It held me, contained me and left me exposed. But it also freed me. In stripping down to simple essentials that I myself defined, I was free to pursue what I loved. The writing flowed so easily when inspired by an unfettered soul. For a while, the glass house was all I dreamed it would be and I lived a life I loved.

But by its very nature, life is impermanent. Dreams shatter. Our known worlds fall apart with the broken pieces scattering themselves in a messy disarray. To rebuild becomes an undertaking requiring new dreams and a fearless sense of courage.

I like to think I found a new dream when my life with Damon fell apart. Although I'm not sure it was courage or just desperation that moved me back to Minneapolis. I was born there. My parents lived there still. It was the easiest most expedient move I could make when my life exploded.

I tried to remember the good times. With a wistful tear in my eye, sometimes a laugh, I'd think of Rudy and me playing cribbage into the wee hours as we sipped beer and whiskey on long snowy nights. I'd recall Jerry's exuberant sense of celebration and all his sexual gymnastics. I'd even think of Damon wandering outside the little house catching glimpses of me naked. How I loved winking back at him.

How glad I am to have those happy recollections, which are still so poignant and lovely. They tend to soften the wound in my heart that rises when recalling the day Damon, ruthless with his hammer and nails, boarded up the place. It had been an act of vengeance. "No one will enter here again!" he said, anger pouring out from him steamy and hot.

I don't know why he didn't just dismantle the house piece by piece. Rip it from its foundations. Erase it from our

memories as if it never existed. I do know that I couldn't remain on the property after he turned that little beauty into an ugly blot on a pristine landscape. I no longer wanted to be anywhere near Damon's domain once all his secrets were revealed to me. Perhaps the fact that he left the glass house there at all was the worst of his crimes. It would have been better if he'd allowed the forest to swallow it up. But no. That would not have been Damon's style. He wanted those that might stumble onto his property to see what remained. What he'd left abandoned to the elements in a fit of rage.

Damon was the kind of man to make a statement. A man who needed to be heard. He was rash and impulsive. Egotistical and brilliant. An Irishman with a hard soul, stunning blue eyes, blue like the sky in the high mountains, and chestnut hair that always looked a little unkempt. He had guts and brawn and a spirit that rose far above any of the company he kept. He was known as a latter day Ernest Hemmingway, a man's man. Adventurer, mountain climber, surfer, bi-plane pilot; snowboarding, windsurfing and hang gliding his way across the globe. In his down time he wrote of his expeditions, penning NY Times bestsellers, which became inspiration for a series of popular Netflix documentaries. Think the Anthony Bourdain of the Adventure world.

Damon did damn-well anything he pleased and was the best at everything he tried. I learned that first hand when at thirty-three, still struggling to make it in my career, I interviewed him for a magazine article for which I earned a great deal of praise and several awards, all of which propelled my career as a journalist to heights I never imagined – at least for a season or two; until I got caught up in Damon's life.

Our chemistry clicked. I adored him and his life. And he? He swept me into his world, another adventure to grab and celebrate while I was still fresh and new to him. We ended up married. Odd for a man who conquered women the same

way he conquered the rest of his life. I knew he wouldn't be faithful. But he did faithfully attend to me when I was with him. He loved the kind of sex I loved, knocked down my inhibitions, and made me a slave to his simple desires, which I was more than happy to be.

At least until it was over.

We never did divorce. Which I'm sure he used to his advantage whenever another of his female conquests got too close to his heart and threatened, as I had, the independence he required to be the man he was.

Ten years hence - I didn't quite know what to feel on walking the property with Damon's attorney, Tony Capella, by my side. For a time, he kindly left me to stroll about alone. I appreciated that. It was hard enough to be physically close to the handsome Italian, with his dark hair, dark complexion, and compact muscled body. He projected authority - a quiet, inner authority. And though his manner was steady, stern and uncompromising, beyond his outward behavior, there was a wise, kind and sensitive man. A good friend whenever I needed him in the past. And a good friend now; the only person I would have called on to help me navigate the legal as well as the personal issues surrounding the unexpected death of my estranged husband and the estate he left to me.

At one point that afternoon, I broke down, falling into Tony's arms weeping, overcome by the conflicting emotions that hit so hard that I could barely remain on my feet. It was all too much at once. My brain was racing, my nerves on edge, my heart thumping in my chest, which made the warmth of Tony's body against mine a settling force. He surrounded me with a display of gentleness and calm that, at least for a few minutes, swept my anxiety aside.

"It's okay, Carrie. It really is okay," came the only words of comfort he could think to say. Acts of kind compassion are not the strong suit of a man who is so black and white in his

dealings with the world. But those simple words and his embrace were all I needed to put my tears away.

At last we turned away from the glass house and headed back to the Lodge to go over the legal matters involved with my inheritance. I did not look forward to the night ahead. Legal mumbo jumbo gives me a headache. I get bored, distracted and eventually resentful of what I always think of as a monumental waste of time. But some things have to be done. And this affected my future in ways I had yet to learn.

Damon's grand Lodge was a formidable, spectacular structure of wood stone and impressive design, perched at the top of a rise. It contained within its expansive log walls a host of memories - some good, some bad, and some deserving to be forgotten altogether. I'd always felt a degree of intimidation inside what seemed to me too massive and too grand a place to call home. It had been built in the 1920's and reflected the time in its architecture. The rustic logs were juxtaposed with Craftsman's style details, stained glass lamps, finely woven carpets and chandeliers made of Elk horn. There were five large bedrooms upstairs; downstairs an enormous great room with a massive stone fireplace and a dining hall that looked out on the lake below. The kitchen was as massive as the rest of the rooms and always spotless. When Damon wanted to cook he wanted his kitchen perfectly in order. Like the rest of the Lodge, it was a show piece of period design. The cabinetry and appliances had been well-maintained and never updated. With the exception of a large walk-in refrigerator, the 1920's kitchen was exactly as it was installed when the Lodge was built.

With the first whiff of pine scent on entering the Lodge, a feeling of melancholy rose up through my body. It would soon pass on, but it already had a profound effect on my mood.

This was clearly Damon's home. Even as Tony and I entered through the back door, I could feel the man's

personality envelop me – he was in the air I breathed, clinging to everything I touched and a piece of everything my eyes gazed on. His scent came out so strongly, I would have thought he might suddenly appear in the doorway as grand as ever, welcoming me home.

Home. Humm.

Hard to believe the place had ever been my home.

I was shaking, almost on the verge of collapsing as the past swept through me in one single gust of remembrance. Whether Tony was actually aware of my fragile condition, I don't know. But I was grateful when he led me by the arm through the kitchen and the dining room, then into the Lodge's main room.

He motioned me to one of the smaller leather arm chairs that were sitting before the fireplace – I believe it was the one I claimed when I lived there. Cozy, but not so massive that it swallowed me whole, as the other overstuffed easy chairs would do. He poured us each a glass of whiskey and after handing me my drink, he sat in the chair to my right. On the table before us was a large folder of paperwork. I shuddered at the sight of it and what it meant, dreading the hours ahead.

I would have rather spent the evening getting a little drunk and sharing stories of our shared past. That I could have dealt with. Though that was definitely a bad idea. Tony might not have admitted it, but I could feel within the generous hug he offered me outside, the same delicious arousal that had made us lovers for a time. A familiar burning sensation rose up through me. With very little effort, I could have shed my clothes and crawled to him on hands and knees, then run my hungry hands over his lean and muscled body. I imagined taking Tony's hand and rising from the floor, pulling him with me. I would lead him up the staircase to the first available mattress where, within in minutes, he would have fucked me as hard and dirty as he had before.

“Carrie...” I heard my name and suddenly sat upright, shaking the fantasy from my mind. The chemistry between Tony and me always leapt beyond what was prudent, and it was doing so now. I knew with a fair degree of certainty that he would have joined me if I’d made a move.

I took a breath. I took several breaths.

“You’re nervous,” he observed. “Drink your whiskey and settle yourself. This is just paperwork.”

Oh, what he didn’t realize... was my response to that. But I said nothing.

“You know, the glass house need not remain,” he said. Hearing the comment, I jerked in my seat and turned to meet his eyes.

“Why would you say that?”

“I can sense what you’re thinking.”

Really? Was it possible he sensed my arousal?

“Yes, well, it is a bit of an eyesore now. But there’s no reason it needs to stay that way. I have money now. Right? I could restore it.”

“That you could,” he agreed, though he sounded doubtful. “But let’s not get ahead of ourselves. We need to get this business settled first.”

“Sure. You’re perfectly right.” I sat back, took a sip of whiskey and settled in for the long and boring discussion of finances.

Over the next two hours, I found it difficult to keep my mind on business. Images of Tony and me from the past continued to come to mind, causing a flutter in my belly that was distinctly sexual. The flirtation. The meaningful eye contact. The private joke, the suggestive body language. Just like old times. Thankfully, I was smart enough to stop myself from acting on the urge to be with him. This was not thirteen years ago. Times had changed. Tony had a wife he loved at home. I had the man I lived with back in Minneapolis. Tony and I would not be reliving those naughty, sexual episodes. They might be a fine fantasy for bedtime

masturbation, but the circumstances of our lives were far different from those days, when Damon's robust vitality and inclination toward sexual perversity caught fire amongst his odd company of close friends. For me, that wild sex life turned my idea of marriage on end. Damon and I tossed aside the traditional rules for that holy institution. We made up our marriage as we went along, allowing our hedonistic desires to lead us into pleasures only few adventurous sorts would dare attempt.

I was caught up in a world that thumbed its nose at convention and normalcy. That world was a little bit bad. A little bit wicked. And utterly entertaining.

The Orgy

My scandalous, naughty, imprudent sex life began with an orgy ...

We were all a little drunk and a little stoned...in the great room of Damon's Lodge celebrating the success of his latest adventure. A cozy fire blazed in the fireplace - that beautiful monstrosity of a fireplace. The usual crowd was there: Tony, Liam Rudy and even Jerry, who had flown in from Dallas that morning. I'd met them all shortly after Damon and I married, and we'd entertained them at the Lodge, either singly or as a group, on several occasions.

Damon brought out his specialty homemade pizza from the 700 degree brick oven. He was in his element now, the room fixing intently on him, as was the custom during these impromptu gatherings. He was as charming as ever that night. The story of his latest adventure would be told in a way that had us laughing or in awe. Sometimes both. However, on that particular night, his zealous energy seemed to wane toward the eleventh hour. I'd seen it coming on earlier in the day. Although we'd only been together two years, I knew the signs of his fatigue far sooner than most. Irritation. Weariness. The pregnant sigh. However, if I should mention that maybe it was time to go