

Glass
Nemesis

John Russell Fearn

1938

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GLASS NEMESIS

John Russell Fearn

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I arrived in New York's Hotel Europa in a crate with straw wrapped around me. Once I was yanked into the daylight I took my place amidst hundreds of other short, transparent cylinders like myself.

Then, after a period of being filled with all manner of spirits, after being caressed by the lips of men and women alike, I found myself in Room 402 on the third floor.

One evening, about nine o'clock, a man and woman came in, both in evening dress. I liked the look of the woman; she was young and pretty—but the man was a grim piece of work. Lean face, dark, with a voice like caustic soda.

Anyhow they got around to talking. I figured they were husband and wife. As the man talked he picked me and my fellow up from the tray and started to pour spirit into both of us. But he did something kind of different to me. Turning a little, he poured powder into me and handed me over to the girl.

Her hand closed around me. She drank my contents and relaxed in the armchair. The man started talking again.

'There's only one thing to do with people like you, Mary, and I've done it! Since you won't give me grounds for divorce, I've made my own grounds. I'll marry Claire Blake in spite of you!'

The woman's voice was low and bitter. 'You know, Barry, you are a rotten beast! The rottenest I've ever known! What's more, I'm going to put Claire Blake wise to the fact before you start in to two-time her, as you have me . . . You're only after her seven million dollars, so you may as well admit it. That's why you want to be rid of me!'

She stopped talking and put me back on the tray. Picking me up, Barry started to polish my outside with a handkerchief. When he was through he polished my companion both inside and out and left it as clean as a new window.

'Turning waiter?' questioned the woman, laconically.

'No, my dear. Just a little preparation, that's all . . . I'm meeting Claire tonight at the West Fork Road-house at ten o'clock. That gives me very little time to finish things off here first . . .'

He put his handkerchief in his pocket and studied the cloying dregs in my base.

Suddenly the woman tried to get to her feet, but she fell back. Holding her white throat, she shouted, hoarsely:

'Barry! Barry, what have you done to me? I'm—I'm choking—'

'That poison's pretty fast,' he answered, and his voice, reminded me of steel blades rubbing together. 'I've polished my own glass inside and out and your glass on the outside only. That leaves it clear for this . . .' Taking her quivering hand he clamped her fingers around me, then let her go. Grinning viciously, he said: 'Evidence for suicide, my dear . . .'

The woman just couldn't do anything but gasp and gulp hoarsely. Barry went out and locked the door from the outside . . . For a moment nothing happened, then driven by the frantic urge for air, for relief, the woman suddenly writhed out of the chair and dropped to her knees.

She tried to reach the window, but just couldn't make it. Instead she clutched hold of me and hurled me base-foremost at the window, breaking the glass. Her weak, strangled cry of 'Help! Air!' followed me—then I thudded down on leather.

I didn't break. I'm pretty tough. I was in the car park back of the hotel. The car park attendant was bawling a little distance off.

Then his voice came close to the open two-seater in which I'd landed. Silks started rustling and suddenly a smartly dressed young woman clambered into the driving-seat beside me. Since it was pretty dark she didn't see me, of course. Pursing up her painted lips she started to whistle.

Something bounded out of the gloom and plumped almost on top of me. A dog of sorts: Great Dane, I think it was. A real hefty brute, anyway . . . The girl made him lie down, then had her bags fixed in the rumble seat. She looked at her watch, then started up the engine. The car went smoothly into the High Street and headed out of town at a spanking pace.

Now and again she looked at the dog and said: 'Take it easy, Kong; don't be so darned affectionate! I've got a wheel to look after.'

We were on the main country road, heading west when something sharp started pulling at me. It was Kong's hefty paw. He raked me over then thrust his huge, wet tongue in my insides, started licking and licking until he'd taken up all that sediment. Then I rolled into the corner and stopped there. The dame was doing sixty-five and kept looking at the dashboard clock.

'I'll only just make it for ten if I step on it,' she muttered, then she pressed her foot harder on the accelerator and sent the car screaming through the dark down that ribbon of country road.

All of a sudden Kong started to move uneasily. His paws kneaded up and down like engine pistons. He let out the most horrible wail, as though he'd heard music being played somewhere.

The girl looked at him momentarily, startled. Then she snapped out: 'Kong! Sit down! Sit down—!'

Half her sentence was drowned out by the roar and hoot of a car trying to overtake not half a mile behind. It couldn't have been doing less than seventy.

Kong howled again and leapt up entreatingly. In trying to draw the girl's attention to himself he struck her in the face with his paw . . . She screamed wildly, jammed her feet down helplessly on clutch and brake pedals, then let go of the steering-wheel with the sudden shock.

The car slewed round giddily and went shooting diagonally across the road. The overtaking auto stood no chance—Steel, rubber, glass and leather compressed into a triangular hell of destruction. Bags initialed 'C. B.' vomited from the rumble seat . . .

I rolled out to the side of the road. Some time after the woman dragged herself free, blood running down her face, her clothes torn and ripped. She looked for her dog and couldn't find him.

Then she staggered across to where a figure lay in the road, the head bent at an unnatural angle. There was a pause filled with the crackling of flames, then she screamed frantically:

'Dead! Oh, God—! *Barry!*'

[The end of *Glass Nemesis* by John Russell Fearn]