

# Certainty

Sadly, as he regarded her, he realized this was probably the last time he'll see her.

So, just what *is* it you're trying to do?

He paused, hardened his look; she turned away. He hesitated, pulled out a packet of cigarettes, lit one and offered the pack, reaching and touching her shoulder with the packet. She shrugged it off, walked to the window and stood, immobile, watching the late afternoon traffic hum.

He took a long drag, savoring the mix of gases, and sat on the bed watching her. She turned, leaned against the glass, looking down at him and murmured.

I don't *know* what the doctor will say....

Sighing, she waved a hand, as though to find the next word, but gave up. Folding her arms, she straightened her body, stiffening her blouse so that her breasts ballooned, accentuating her nipples. Then, absently, one hand began rubbing her stomach, still flat.

I mean, I have to know that I still have some time left.

What do you mean, *you* gotta know ... what time left? He exhaled, long and hard, so that the smoke formed a cloud between them, drifting inexorably towards her. Hey, Linda, I'm the one who's gotta know how to find a way out of this for you.

She held up a hand. Just stop, will you, how many times do we have to argue?

Impatiently, he stood and went to the door, and put a hand on the knob. Do you want me to get the doc now? He opened the door a crack, looked down the corridor, then back at her.

No! I need you to stay, you know, and tell me I'll be okay. All r....

He cut her off, shaking his head, slowly but firmly. I think I've listened more than I need, and I still don't.... Look, how can I do that? You know I've got troubles at home.

She raised her arms, as though pleading, but perhaps only trying to please. Is it my fault you have a wife who won't let you visit me here? Her voice choked with emotion, her eyes misted over. Her arms dropped, as she slumped back against the glass, eyes down.

He closed the door, stepped towards her, a hand extended. Hey, Linda, look, I mean, we, you *got* to know I understand how you feel.

She looked up, met his gaze. Got to? What's that supposed to mean? She stopped, her eyes widening. What are you try ... driving at?

Hey, now, just cool it, I wasn't meaning.... He took a last drag on the cigarette, and ground out the butt while he kept his eyes locked on hers. Look, you said you didn't want any more talk about, well, you know - the doctor's prognosis.

She cut him off. Things change – I've changed, so I need to know if you will stick by me to the end.

Forget it, we've been through all this too many times already.

I don't care, you just can't go away and not see me again.

I know, I know – so, what're you thinking of ... what're you asking of me?

Well, I'm no *longer* thinking of suicide, if that's what you mean.

Okay, okay, I got it, so what else do you, for fuck's sake, have in mind?

She looked at him, the color slowly draining from her face. He stared back, unwilling to drop his gaze, willing her to face the truth.

He shrugged, lit another cigarette, grateful for the nicotine hit. Aah, fuck it. Just what the hell is it you're *trying* to get me to do, Sis? He raised his eyebrows as smoke again drifted from his mouth.

Sadly, as she regarded him, she realized this was the first time she'd really seen him.

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