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EPISODE

Clarimonde - Part 1

BY **CURT ROSEWOOD** — 2024-10-02



Adapted from an original story[1] *by* Théophile Gautier[2]

Clarimonde - Part 1: Trapped

It was a sunny Easter morning in the year of our Lord 1836 when a young man named Romuald found himself stepping through the tall doors of the Cathedral. A handsome man, the kind that makes a lady take notice. But Romuald had no interest in romantic pursuits. His destiny was clear and right before him, for this day he would be ordained a priest of the Holy Church.

You can imagine his excitement, he'd been working so hard towards this day! All night he had spent in prayer, preparing his soul for the coming day. So sure was he in his steps, in his love for God and in his future. There was no questioning his piety or his devotion. But life is fickle and little did Romuald know this unwavering certainty was about to be shattered by a single glance.

[1] https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/22661/pg22661-images.html

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Théophile_Gautier

The long aisle was lined with people to the left and to the right, family and friends among them. They had all come to celebrate and bear witness to the ceremony: the benediction, the communion under both forms, the anointing of the palms of the hands with the Oil of Catechumens, and then the holy sacrifice offered in concert with the bishop. All these people, so dear to him. Pride in their eyes as he stepped past. Yet they were not the ones to catch his.



Half hidden in shadows, she stood. A face pale and beautiful beyond measure. Dark auburn curls framing her visage and cascading down onto the sensual swell of her bosom. Emerald eyes piercing into his very soul with but a single glance. A perfect incarnation of temptation, yet unnoticed by the religious crowd in front. How could they not see?

His step wavered. Her lips were unmoving but her voice sang clearly in his mind. It was a song of promise. Promise of a love more real than the unseen god could offer. Promise of pleasure beyond his wildest dreams. Promise of a life fulfilled as a man. Who was this strange siren? Had she been placed here to test his faith? The soundless words she formed were sharp as knives and cut the threads of certainty he had so carefully woven.

Like a sack of lead, doubt fell heavy on his shoulders. The aisle in front of him, just moments ago a path to salvation, now suddenly a road to prison. But it was too late. Romuald was ushered along. When he turned to catch another glimpse of that haunting face, it was gone. The ceremony started but the Bishop's voice sounded dull and far away. As in a dream. Or perhaps a nightmare.

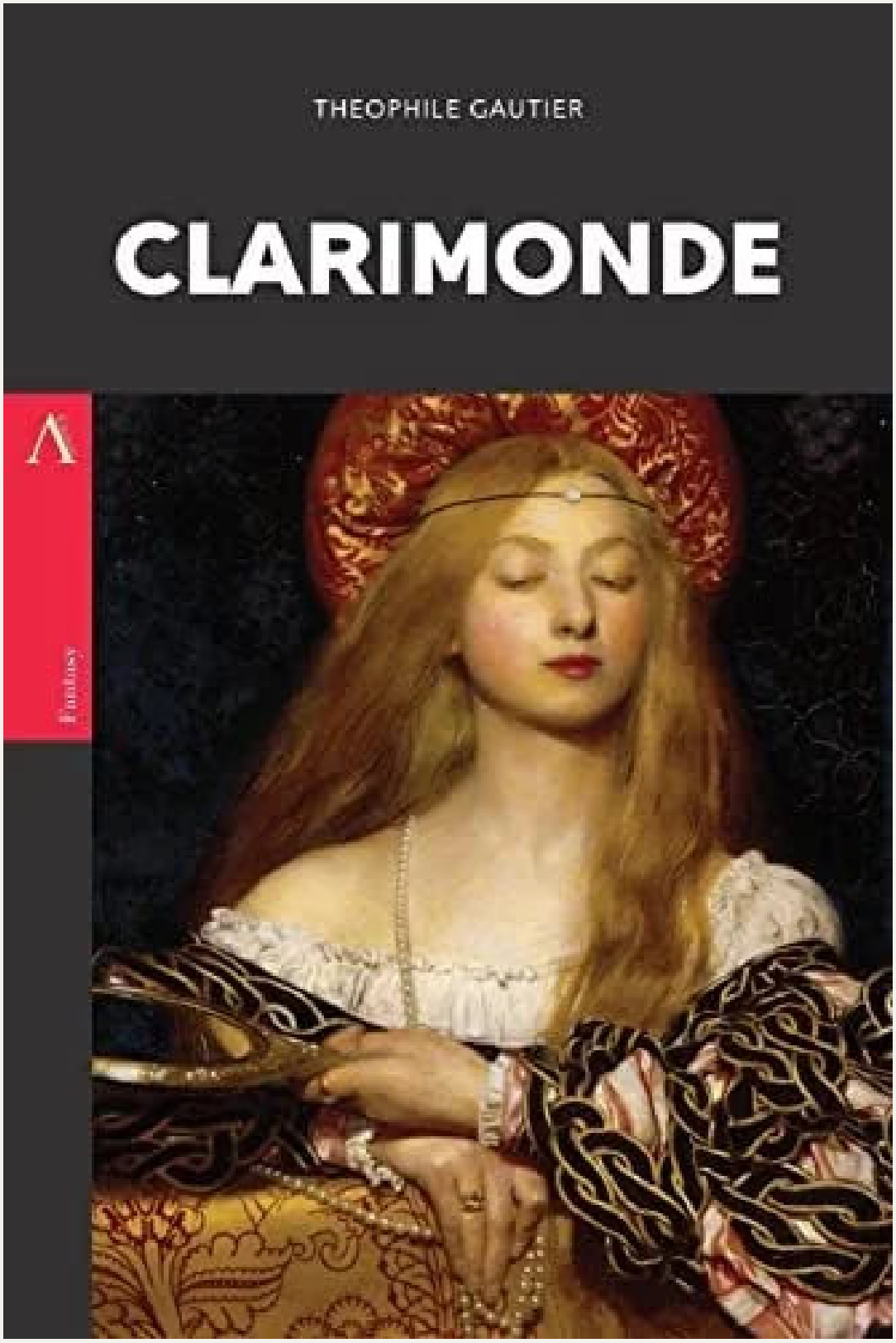
The day progressed without a sign of the mysterious woman. None he dared to inquire had seen anyone remotely resembling the auburn haired beauty. As evening approached he resigned himself to the fact she may just have been a figment of his imagination. Only after it was all done, back in his chambers and alone with his thoughts, did he find it: a piece of paper tucked away in his heavy cassock. A faint scent of Tulips lingered upon it. But a single word, a name:

Clarimonde

And he instantly knew, without a single doubt, it was her.

To be continued...[3]

[3]https://thehiddencircle.com/clarimonde-part-2/



My version of this story is a little bit different than the original, but I hope it retains the former's spirit and intention. For a story written in the 19th century, it is strangely prescient of today's virtual existences.

This is by all means a much abbreviated version and this was intentional. Attention spans are short in today's world of quick to digest social media. It is my hope that this version will make the reader curious about the original and perhaps even entice to pick up a book.

> This version originated many years ago as forum role play on the elliquiy[4] web site. I want to thank my then writing partner *JuliettaRossi* for introducing me to this story ~ Curt

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[4] https://elliquiy.com/forums/index.php