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EPISODE

Clarimonde - Part 4

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

Clarimonde - Part 4: Surrender

Just a dream!

It was just a dream, he told himself. But knowing that didn't abate the war that was erupting inside. A struggle of morals between the part of him that was outraged and disappointed by his weakness, the part that wanted to give his life to god and god only, and that other part that yearned for this mysterious woman. That last part of him wanted to love, not an unreachable god but a person of flesh and blood. That part wanted to hold and kiss and...NO!

There was only one thing for him to do to douse these sinful desires. Father Romuald sank down on the small praying bench and gazed upon the crucifix on the wall in front of it. Desperately he began praying, a litany or repeated words. Devotion slowly chasing away the ghosts, quenching the fires inside and returning some semblance of peace. By the

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

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

time the sun finally climbed above the horizon to cast her still feeble rays of light over the land, the dream of Clarimonde seemed like a distant memory.

The day went by without much incident. There was morning mass off course. Only a handful of devout souls showed up, but he didn't want to disappoint them. Then there were the daily chores to do. Firewood needed chopping to put some heat into the ancient building, a battle that seemed a lost cause. But at least he managed to keep his room warm. After that he had to make his rounds to visit the elderly and the sick and of course the obligatory small talk with the village folk. They were a though bunch to win over, still showing some distrust at the newly arrived cleric. It would need time, he knew.

As the afternoon drew to a close he withdrew to his quarters to prepare for evening mass. This was usually better attended and he planned to prepare a sermon that would touch upon the topics of faith and sacrifice. He was quite progressive in his beliefs about liturgy, preferring to do much of his services in the local dialect rather than in the customary Latin. He just didn't see the point if only a handful of the better educated could understand. So he sat about with pen and paper to prepare his words for today.

The words flowed slowly however and his eyelids grew heavier and heavier. He hadn't had much sleep tonight and the winter day had proven hard. Involuntary he found himself laying his head down on the still mostly blank piece of paper and closing his eyes. The last thing that registered on his conscious mind was the faint smell of tulips as he slipped back into sleep. Back into dream.

Where Clarimonde was waiting for him!

She was wearing the same gown, doing nothing to disguise the fact she was nearly bare skinned: just those black silks to fruitlessly protect her body from his gaze. Despite her beauty she still looked fragile and weak. Alive yes, but still tethering to death's doorstep. Her voice was soft and breaking as she asked:

Are you upset with me?

She spoke with that air of sensuality that seemed to wrap around her like a blanket. It was perhaps not so much a question as more of a taunt. Father Romuald stood frozen, unable to move a muscle as Clarimonde seductively drew closer. She did not stop until her lips almost touched his, holding there as her eyes lingered in his. The tension between them made the hairs on his arms stand on end.

Embracing the undeniable attraction between them, she pressed a kiss to his lips, her head tilting slightly as she inhaled his breath. With the kiss deepening, colour seemed to flow back into her skin. Frailty and weakness fled her body. As if she drew youth and new life from his desire. Like a flower blooming in the sun her body restored to health and vigour.

Father Romuald stood torn. How could treason to everything he stood for, everything he had worked for, feel this good? The faces of the Bishop, his friends, his family and all others that had so praised his piety passed before him. Accusingly! Disappointed and disapproving stares intruding on his newly discovered bliss. Confused, he stammered:

Who are you? Why are you doing this to me?

He got no reply from her, instead she kept kissing. Soft little touches, caresses of her lips along his and a simple smile in between. The young priest fought to resist the ache that was welling up inside him. Was this not what he had dreamed about? Was this not what he had longed for all those cold lonely nights?

Unable to resist the temptation any longer, he pulled her to him. She did not fight that embrace in the least. No, she melted into it, just as the snow on his clothing in the warmth of the room, her own arms wrapped around his neck, fingers moving through his hair slowly, gripping gently as she moaned into their lusty little exchange. The black silk like water against her skin, a soft rustling of fabric sliding against smooth skin, quite the contrast to the feel of his own wear.

How sweet this first conquering kiss felt to her, this denial of his teachings, his faith, his life. It brought life back into her, feeling renewed with every passing moment in his arms as he confessed to her - to her! She wanted to bring him back into her bed, peel those heavy layers away, peel back his tentativeness along with it, his apprehension, his faith, and leave only the man. Her skin tingled with his touch, the press of her full breasts against his chest.

Yes, Romuald...yes....

It was the counterpoint to the voice within his own head screaming at him, but her voice was pleasant, honeyed, dripping with desire for him, yet...they did not speak. They kissed! Oh, how Clarimonde knew him and knew him well! And now it was his turn to know her.

With a tug of her hand the gown fell free and she stood naked before him, her cinnamon coloured nipples hardening at his lustful stare. What little remained of the priest inside Romuald was swept aside by the lascivious smile on Clarimonde's face. Victory was hers and she knew it, as if she could hear the shackles of the church fall away to leave him free. And fearful. There was understanding in her voice when she said:

Come!

Willingly, the young man let her take his hand and lead him back to her chambers. As the night grew deeper the sensuous seductress of the Palace Concini made good on the promise she had made that day at the cathedral: pleasure beyond his wildest dreams. Pleasure that was mutual as evidenced by the lusty cries provoked from her lips. Again and again they ascended that mountain of pleasure and basked in ecstasy at its peak. The bishop, the church and all the vows made to god evaporated bit by bit. Until in the end, nothing was left.

Nothing...but a dream!

To be continued...[3]



[3] https://thehiddencircle.com/clarimonde-part-5/