



"Death Of The Mad Man": Design by Delora D. Klugh. Artwork by Tammy J. Mair. © 1994
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THE GLASS BAR

DEATH OF THE MAD MAN (PART 4)

By Timothy S. Klugh

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I just buried my grandmother today. This may sound strange, but I'm not sad. She was never happy in life. She was mostly deaf and blind; it was hard to understand her speech; she lived at a nursing home and was confined to a wheelchair. Her body was weak and small. Any clothing she had was too large and would easily fall off of her when she was moved from the wheelchair. Yet, all this, no matter how morbid it seems, was not as melancholy as her emotions and personality. Her love for her first husband was still strong, even though forty-one years had passed since he died. She never gave it a chance to fade. Her memories of him were just as real as the experiences that made them. Because of it, her loneliness was strong and nothing the world could offer her would overcome it. It was just two Sundays ago that she came over to our house for Easter dinner. She didn't seem interested in much that was going on around her. Not even the delicious dinner enticed her, that is, except for the bottle of Cabaret Red which was to be opened for the meal. Yes, as I recall now, she was very content to indulge her palate on it. But, as for everything else, she didn't desire to be a part of any of the holiday activities. Unfortunately, through dinner and the rest of the evening, the bottle of Cabaret Red was never opened. It was merely forgotten as the evening progressed. However, grandmother was not disappointed. In fact, she seemed kind of happy just sitting there. She told me about death and how it wasn't anything to be afraid of. Her husband L.B., as she said, was waiting for her. As we drove back to the nursing home, she continued about the comforting experience of knowing that soon she will be with L.B. again. When we reached the nursing home, I placed my scarf around her neck to keep it dry from the rain drizzling outside. We then took her inside. While there, she hugged and kissed me a few times and continued to smile. Dad, her son, hugged her good-bye. She looked at him and said "See you soon." I removed my scarf from around her neck and returned her hug and kiss. It was time to leave. She had talked of death before, both in pessimistic and optimistic ways, but this time it was different. This time, I felt that it would be the last time we'd talk. She died last Saturday.

Just this morning, I learned something about grandmother that I never knew before. She wrote poetry. I looked through her books of poems and found that most of what she discussed was death, God and lost love. These are the same topics that I write in my own works. This talent had passed on to me, and I never knew where it came from. I

found one which caught the feeling of her sadness. It was written in September, 1959.

*I lay upon my lonely bed
And there pretended I was dead
The mirror well reflected me--
I was not breathing I could see.*

*The poll of death hung over me--
My flesh was white as it could be.
My hands lay folded on my breast
And in pink satin I was dressed.*

*So that is how I'll look one day
When Death's Chill voice calls me away?
Goodbye, my friends, goodbye, my all--
I rush to answer Death's soft call....*

In my loneliness, I had a place to go to in my dreams. It was right on the corner of Aurora (the road to Heaven) and Amora (the road to love.) The place is called "The Glass Bar". Anyone can come in without reservation, but no one can leave unless with a reservation to Heaven or love, depending on which road they want to take. Inside the bar is a mix of folks who have passed on and those who have never found love and wish that they had passed on. The bar is completely made of glass so that patrons inside can see the roads that they can't gain access to. You can recognize the ones who can, for they are allowed to dance before leaving. The rest of us just sit at the tables and the bar counter and drink. One of my favorite drinks is the "Double Lonely". It is divided into two levels. At the top is a clear liquid that fills the heart with emptiness. The second is a blue liquid that enhances the sorrow and loneliness. At the extreme bottom is a red liquid that will fill the mind with anger. But, it is rare to make it down that far. Usually, the upper two levels leave one too depressed to finish the drink. Thus, the first two levels give it its name, "Double Lonely". Besides, the red liquid leaves a bad aftertaste.

Now, that I think about it, I should have looked around the bar once or twice to see if grandmother was there. I'm sure she knew that place well and has been there for a long time. Probably, she drank a lot of "Double Lonelies", too. I can't go back to "The Glass Bar" anymore. You see, I have already found love. I really understand what it is to love and be loved. I met my love at a table drinking a "Hopeless Fate". I asked her to dance. We danced to a musical piece I wrote called "Evening". We were then allowed to leave and travel the road Amora. Our one month anniversary of our relationship is today.

Grandmother had a smile on her face as she rested in the coffin. I felt she was now much happier. As I looked at her for the last time, I thanked her for giving me her talent in writing. Her husband L.B. gave me his talent in music. I thanked him, as well. He died long before I was born. It is nice to know that their legacy lives in me. I carried grandmother's coffin to the burial site from the hearse along with my brother, father, two uncles and cousin. I was carrying grandmother to the place where her body may rest alongside L.B.'s forever.

Tonight is going to be a celebration at "The Glass Bar". For, grandmother will be dancing with L.B. for the first time in forty-one years. They will then leave and travel the road Aurora to Heaven (for they already traveled Amora long before.) But, before they leave, they will open that bottle of Cabaret Red and drink to the love that has held them together for all these years. I only wish that I could be there to toast their reunion and see them off on their way. Cheers, grandma!