



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

## THE BUILDING OF MY GREAT FORTRESS

### DEATH OF THE MAD MAN (PART 5)

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It was always their fault. Perhaps, it still is. They've been a great support in helping me to create a complex inside me that now has become a hindrance. Love was never to be mine. This was made very clear to me through the experiences of life. I was too open and had no defenses for the blows that I was to receive. I looked for love in so many, yet somehow they could not see my need. Perhaps, they did but were not interested. They had convinced me that my presence made little difference. Perhaps, it didn't.

There came a time, I cannot now remember when that I started to build my great fortress. It started when I had grown tired of the downfalls that I'd been through. I built walls around me and fortified them as time went on. Soon, no one could penetrate. I could never let them down--not for anyone. Letting them down even once would allow others to hurt me again. I built the walls tall so that no one could see inside. The walls were impenetrable to all that came against it. To open the gate once would create vulnerability, so I could never let anyone inside.

For years my fortress had stood and continued to be reinforced. With each attack that those outside would make, I would build new walls to handle it. The walls would only reinforce more as those outside would try to hurt me. It came to a point where I wouldn't trust anyone who tried to know me. I would place walls up before they had a chance to hurt me. The gate, the only entrance into the fortress, overtime, rusted permanently shut due to lack of use.

Years ago, I had heard voices outside the walls of those who seemed close to me. They stayed and persisted that I tear down the mighty structure around me. However, I knew that opening up the gate to even the closest of people would be a mistake. I would depend on them instead of the walls that had protected me so well. My dependence upon them would leave me vulnerable once more to attack. For they had their lives and wouldn't always be there to protect me. No, I would never destroy the fortress. Perhaps, it was love that they claimed to feel for me and that was reason enough to force open the sealed gate, but love was never to be mine. She, the woman that I longed for, didn't exist. She was only an apparition who would appear to me in my dreams or in my moments of deep loneliness, but she wasn't real. And, the love that she felt for me wasn't real.

In my loneliness, I often thought that if I looked over the walls right at that moment, I would see her waiting at the gate. She would look directly up at me knowing exactly where I would be watching from. I did not know what she would look like, but it didn't seem to matter. Her face and body would change form as I thought about her, for it wasn't physical beauty that I was wanting, it was love. It was that love that I had wanted so strongly that my loneliness plagued me obsessively. She would smile and I would know just from that gesture that all my pain was over. There were times when I actually did look over the wall, but no one stood waiting.

It is strange how the mind can convince you into such foolishness. When you want something so profoundly, you may want to look away from rationality and believe dreams are real. However, reality cannot be changed. No one knew the way I felt because no one was capable of feeling my emotions. No one was there to comfort my insecurity that I had gained so abundantly through my past. No one was there to give me the love and time that I needed and needed more of as time had passed. No one could feel what I felt and yearned for for so long. No one would be waiting for me at the gate.

More time had passed and the fortress was becoming cold and dark. The voices beyond the walls of those who had tried to convince me to leave were silent, for they left long ago. I often thought about my decision to remain in the fortress for all those years alone. I wondered if it had been a mistake. Perhaps, the fantasy I wanted was too much for others to provide, but how could this be true if I was fully capable of giving all that I asked for back myself? If I had left the fortress years ago and trusted in those who called to me, maybe I would have become a stronger individual and my heart would have become colder. Then, what others did to me would be of minor concern. The love that I needed would have disappeared over time as I gained more knowledge of those around me. The meek individual I am would have become callous to feelings. However, that choice was long ago and my soul had become too weak to withstand even the most minor suffering. I would remain in the fortress and patiently await death.

One evening, I felt a presence just outside the gate. My dreams and wishing for the fantasy woman had long faded into the dark shadows blotched on the grounds from the mighty walls. The woman that I waited to see outside the gate never came and my longing for her had become but a passing thought. Still, the presence was there. Finally, I climbed the walls to look over, and there I saw her resting against the foot of the gate. Her legs were curled under her body and her hands were on the ground next to them. Her face was nearly lifeless as her eyes stared toward the ground. I could see that she was but a victim of those outside. She herself had a fortress, but was convinced, either by others or herself, to destroy it. Then they hurt her. She no longer had walls to defend her. Her trust in others had led to her loss of confidence. She now rested against the gate of my great fortress waiting, weak from the misfortunes done to her.

I continued to watch her. The expression on her face never changed. Perhaps, she was thinking about all that had happened to her. Maybe the acts upon her were more horrible than any that had happened to me, for I never saw a soul more deadened before. I had never experienced this. I had saved myself by never opening the gate, for her fate would have been mine. Yet, she still waited. Maybe she herself had dreams similar to mine. Perchance, she too had dreams about seeing the man who would give her the love she wanted, and he would be waiting outside the gate of her fortress. One day a man may have convinced her of this and she let him inside. Once inside, he showed his true character and destroyed all that she knew and all that she was. Why would she make such a mistake? Why would she trust anyone outside? Loneliness can become strong enough to make me believe things that I know are not probable, but I believe them anyway. For, not believing would be accepting hopelessness. She might have grown tired of being alone and was willing to believe the words of the stranger. She possibly knew the consequences as well, but was willing to accept them because they were still more favorable than her solitude.

She probably found the structure of my fortress strong enough to support her for a while. My walls have stood

through many battles, surely they would support her. Still, she was vulnerable to others out there. It seemed to me that she was not intending on hurting me, for she had had enough pain to know what it does to the soul. However, once inside, I would be very weak to any attack. It would require great trust to let her in. It would require strength to help her. Did I have enough of either left to give? She was unknowing of what was inside the fortress. Would she have enough of either left to give me? I required so much. What would happen to my fortress if I did let her in? What would she do to it? What would she do to me?

Then, without one of these questions answered, I forced the gate open. As the seals of rust crumbled and the gate started to move, the walls of the fortress started to splinter and fall. All the memories of why the fortress was built and what others had done to me before it echoed through my mind. I thought about the voices that had called outside the walls for me to leave and join them. I thought of the woman in my dreams who smiled and waited for me to open the gate for her. I thought of the woman who waited out there now and what she had been through, and she was all that seemed to matter. It didn't matter what she would turn out to be, it only mattered what had happened to her. I trusted her enough that, without any convincing, I opened the gate.