



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

THE REALM BEFORE ME

DEATH OF THE MAD MAN (PART 7)

By Timothy S. Klugh

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I looked over the ruins of my great fortress thinking about my life that I was about to destroy. I felt that I had been punished with a fate that I should have never had to suffer through, for I trusted a woman enough to place her before myself and the fortress that protected me. I discovered that opening the gate to her led to a constant torment of my soul. I gave her all that I could and found that it still was not enough to quench her thirst for love. For, she had been without it for so long that she could only take and sacrifice nothing in return. However, this alone could not justify her cause, she plagued me with guilt and insecurity that I might give more to her in order to gain her affection and loyalty. She continued to take until gaining all the confidence lost to her. She saw my misery but was not ready to give nor would she gain anything more by staying with me longer. She left me without support or self-worth.

Death surely seemed the answer, for I was, in my mind, still in the wrong. I had been convinced by her over and over that I was the reason for the agony I felt, and I truly believed it was my fault. Death was not only a solution but an escape to the dispirit I felt. I wanted to die among the place where I knew salvation. I returned to the remnants of my great fortress.

The sun had long since vanished. The clouds had become thicker over time, and the winds had grown strong and cold. The darkness had gradually devoured the outer walls of the fortress ruins. It would eventually take over all the fortress and me within it. I feared looking ahead into the future. I did not want to see what might further happen. It was more comfortable to remain in the past, blinded by the darkness of things forgotten, that someday I would be abandoned in the minds of those who would remember me and my great fortress. Yet, what type of ending was this for me? Why should I go on punishing myself for a wrong that I had never done? The only mistake I made was placing trust into another person, but I had never corrupted myself or been immoral to anyone else. I had placed someone before me. Such compassion as this should be rewarded, not punished. Still, I was... but not by anyone else. I was punishing myself by dwelling over my past and the pain inflicted upon me.

I realized that what happened was not my fault and I should never let such thoughts trial my mind again. Death surely would be an unjust consequence for my actions. It was time to venture away from the ruins and my past to search for what I had been missing. I had dreamed many times that I might find the woman who would give me the love that I was willing to give myself. She would understand my thoughts and fears. So long, I had squandered my life upon trying to find this dream only to discover that it was merely an apparition of my desolate yearnings. I had proven to myself that that woman and those feelings I desired were shadows cast upon the walls of my thoughts. I believed so strongly in the dream that I accepted these images to be what they appeared, yet I never looked to see what cast these shadows out of fear that I was being deceived. I saw the dream as a falsehood and realized that it

was not worth pursuing any longer. It was time to leave the ruins of my fortress: a monument of me and the prevarication I believed for so long.

I ventured for many days with the fortress long behind as I went further into the realm before me. The darkness was consuming all that was behind me and I never looked back. I longed to be in the sun far beyond me. All that I felt was the coldness of the thick grey clouds that hovered above. I wanted to be in the sun and suffocate in its light and heat. I couldn't comprehend why this yearning was so intense in me. I'm not sure why it was so important that I be in the sun once more. Perhaps, the sun, like my lost hopes, I had been deprived of and now I was obsessed by the thought of being in it, a part of it, having once more what I had forfeited for another.

Finally, I closed the distance and stepped into the light. It was brighter than I had ever known it to be. I could once more see everything around me for what it was. The warmth filled my entire body and soul. I danced in rejoice until my weakened legs could no longer support my enthusiasm, and I fell to the ground upon my back looking into the illumination above. I closed my eyes and concentrated upon the radiance as it became a part of me. For the first time in my life I was truly happy. I had not noticed that my body was too weak to stand back up and that it was becoming harder for me to breathe. I had covered a great length to be once more in the sun that I never considered my body and its extremes that had been overwhelmed. I was dying, yet not in sadness and not alone.

I opened my eyes and saw her bending over me. Her hand was gently embracing mine and her other hand caressed my arm. Her long dark hair, I could feel along my face, and it was softer than anything I had ever felt. Her brown eyes were so enchanting that I could not resist the temptation to stare into them and lose myself. I could release my pain and the coldness I'd acquired and be completely vulnerable to her without fear of being hurt. She smiled and placed a hand behind my head. I could not hold the emotions back any longer, and I let the tears fall. She was to me an angel waiting to take me from the misery of my life. I was more than ready to join her for eternity. I closed my eyes.