

De Clérambault

Novelette by Bissan Rafe

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Prologue:

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*"The tragic victim certainly would have been a hero
If he was not left alone with the captive killer"*

In light of this poetic revelation which attacked my mind so suddenly, I laughed out loud; the sort of laugh adorned with childish shrieks and comical sounds.

When did I become the wise tenor of verse?

And when did I ever use the word 'tenor' in a sentence?

Good questions, the sort to ponder upon for hours and hours, hours which I did not have; for in a couple minutes I have to get ready. Still in plain boxer shorts and nothing else despite the freezing weather, I opened my eyes, got off the wooden floor to get ready for my big night.

My minuscule studio of an apartment felt emptier than usual. Maybe it is the lack of furniture or maybe that one bare-naked window which gave it a remote feeling. The piles of my clothes scattered around the room were not helping either, I keep putting off the folding and hanging for later.

"Routines, routines – !"

I did all the routines yet for this special night everything seemed innovative. For instance, when I brush my teeth my gums bleed, I usually try to spit out the seep so fast so not to taste the vulgar fluid; but tonight I tasted it, and it was not that bad. I smiled at the reflection in the mirror grinning back with satisfaction.

"Not bad at all"

I fished my pants out of the sea of clothes and put my prized oval metal possession in my right pocket. I held the metal tight for a few seconds, closing my eyes, I imagined the wonderful sparks of colors this little metal will produce around me tonight.

Dressing in the utter most care, although nothing to conjure, I headed for the door. The moment the door opened I was hit by a freezing wave of a hundred below zero degrees or at least that is what my poor nose told me. I went back inside and put on my thick exceptionally unique brown overcoat atop of my regular one, suffocating myself with layered collars and a thick woolen gray scarf. The coat held many moments for me, a third layer of my bare skin that held me tight throughout my Diaspora.

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walked the streets my head leveled but not seeing any passing walker in particular.

Everyone seemed the same to me, I am the only one who stood out, and the only one people sneaked curious glance at. I was the only one with a purpose, or so it seemed. I have been told before that there is a certain aura around me that attracts people, but then attraction is not all that matters. All that mattered was that this cold day was perfect for my big night.

I ran down Samiryia Street, turning three corners and then coming to a halt near an old bus station. A woman and a young girl waited there in the drenching dry weather. I did not pay attention to the women, just the girl who kept on inspecting my figure with focused eyes. Although her left eye was slightly deformed, the girl had a natural beauty. No more than seventeen, I guessed, old enough to be infatuated with men. Her face was streaked with clear dirt, unkempt auburn hair, a misshapen left eye and she probably spent a couple of nights without food.

I started to paint all sort of portraits for her life story. I do that sometimes; I characterize and group random individuals into fiction. A refugee, I guessed, probably a recent one too from the camp near the road that smelled of olives. My neighbor is

there now, he got his house of eighty or so years demolished to make way for the infamous wall.

Before I could muster her compelling story, a horrid sound broke my trance as the bus came to a halt. I motioned to the woman to go in first.

"Ladies", I mused

I waited for the girl to follow but she did not.


"Go ahead" I said.

She shook her head and stood there, an impatient small man with a circumference the size of the Mediterranean arrived in a hurry behind me almost knocking me over; I moved to the side and let him into the bus. I gave the girl another imploring look but still she stood there.

"Suit your-self" I whispered half to myself.

I have no time for strange girls with ulterior motives. I moved inside the not so warm bus, the girl followed behind. I kept going until the end of the bus, sat on the cheap rigid leather like seat, and then I leaned my head backward closing my eyes. I did not open my eyes even for that peculiar person who sat beside me leaving all those billion and one empty seats.

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 must have dozed off, for when I came to, I was halfway my destination. Suddenly a soft small hand brushed past my fingers. I turned my head, and there she was, sleeping next to me, that peculiar person who ignored the billion seats and sat beside mine. Her face was small; her closed eyes seemed tired and strained. I scanned the bus for the woman who was with her; she was nowhere to be found. I turned back to the girl and shook her in an unpleasant manner. She woke up with a start but regained her composure quickly.

"Your mother is gone, why didn't you sit with her?"

"She is not my mother" spoken very delicately as to emphasize the fact.

I am sure I had this dismayed look on my face, for she smiled at me and quickly said,

"I just don't like riding the bus by myself this late, and that woman wasn't nice to me".

I leaned back onto my seat, already not liking the situation.

"You shouldn't be alone this hour".

"I had to go somewhere, tonight is a big night". She shrugged

I had no idea what she meant by that, but I did not like it. I did not like it one bit. She stood quickly in front of me, stretching her plain jacket from side to side.

"Can you give me yours, I am freezing and this thing is useless".

I was caught off guard for a second, then looking at my ridiculous two coat set up, I felt ashamed for some reason. I took off my scarf first and gave it to her, she looked disappointed but her face quickly lit as I took my upper coat off and gave her the smaller one underneath it. She stood there, in front of me, adjusting on my small oversized jacket. She was struggling with the zipper when the bus suddenly moved knocking her forward. I caught her with both arms as she stumbled onto me. Indeed she was very cold, her nose brushed my face and her warm breath gave me an eerie intimate feeling. She was thinner than I expected for my thumb and forth finger encompassed her wrist easily. And then it happened, a metallic thud, a roll then a frantic girl trying to hide what fell from her pocket. Unfortunately I saw the rolling metal before she managed to salvage it.

"Sit down!" I whirled her to the side seat.

She sat dignified on the seat then turned back to me and said,

"You saw?"

"I saw"

She readjusted herself on the seat and whispered in my ear.

"If you don't tell anyone about mine, I will tell no one about the one in your right pocket"

I did not want to ask how she knew what I had in my pocket; I had no time for girls with ulterior motives, especially this one in particular. I was thinking too hard of a way to retaliate, no words came out, and then her voice startled me.

"How much are they?"

"What, the jacket and scarf?" I said amused.

"Yes".

I considered her for a while, her face although disfigured by her left eye was very beautiful, and I wondered what is wrong with her. Actually I had a pretty good idea what.

"How old are you?"

"I am twenty two" she said rising ten fingers and quickly blinking ten more.

Way off, I thought, she couldn't have looked past seventeen years old.

"You want to pay me for my coat? How? You look like you don't have a dime on you."

She leaned over quickly and gave me a kiss on the cheek. I would not say I was shocked, for I will admit I expected that move. Still a man of twenty seven, this simple seductive purity gave me a heartbeat.

"Where are you going with that thing?"

I said rejecting her proposal pointing instead to the metal in her pocket that dropped a few minutes ago on the floor.


"Somewhere very important" she said

"Are you delivering this to someone, you could get hurt if you are caught"

"Don't worry, beside it is a one time delivery. So do we have a deal?"

If it was any other night, I would have cared enough to peruse this subject longer. I could have asked her name, about her family, or simply if she needed any help. Tonight I did not care; I was determined to not let anything or anyone ruin my special night; my big night.

"Yes, I won't tell anyone." I answered and with that, I leaned back, closed my eyes and waited

 was drifting in and out for what it seemed forever, when I came to, the bus has long passed my stop and the girl was gone. I asked the bus driver if he saw where the girl who sat next to me went. He told me she headed toward the western wall.

I sat back closing my eyes again for the whole thirty minutes or so it took to reach my missed stop. My eyelids drew mosaic contours of everything fantastic. Every slivery hair line jeweled the inside of my eyelids drew her face, her eyes and her hair. The brilliant mosaic of her face clashed together to nothingness and things again. I thought, I just thought, what if life was this smooth and fantastic; frankly I think I would be a little bored.

When I finally reached my stop, I plodded heavily out of the bus toward the western wall. As I arrived, I was welcomed by silhouettes of smokes playing the cold breeze. Sparks of brilliance burned the night that smelled of olives, burned my night; someone beat me here and stole my glory.

People gathered around the 'oh so familiar' scene of smoke and fire. Whispers and loud cries mixed with testimonies of what happened. I look at the wall and I see a huge opening along with many torn pieces of segmented fragments covering the ground. This was supposed to be my night, my glory. The things I had to go through to get my prized metal possession to light this sky tonight. Those sparks were supposed to be worshiping me, not that mysterious tragic hero. All that mattered was that this cold day was perfect for my big night and now it had been sabotaged; I was supposed to be the hero, not the victim of hero confliction.

A mother with her two small boys turned to me

"So young..." her voice was strained with grief.

"Look at the size of that hole" One of the little boys pointed with excitement.

I said a long prayer for the mysterious martyr who stole my night and turned back to head for my empty apartment.

"Young man, are these yours?" waved an old man of about eighty or so

I didn't recognize the man yet I recognized what he had. I ran back to him breathless. I was breathless, not because I ran, but because I felt this pain in my chest, the pain of guilt. He handed me my gray scarf and jacket. I asked him how he knew that they were mine, tears already gathering around my unblinking eyes.

"A young girl told me to give them to a handsome man with the huge peculiar brown overcoat, they are yours, yes?"

"Yes, they are mine".

This moment of violent uprising deciphered the dirges of reality; breaking the mirror between happiness and unhappiness, the tainted glass reflects my image no more. To my first self I was dead, to my second I was asleep, but to my third I was neither asleep nor dead. To my third self I was a captive.

Chapter One:

1

"Leave the shoes by the door, come into the teahouse.

A teacup filled with rain is all I have".

Last night I dreamt I went back to Yusra. The path to my house followed the edge of a small hill before turning inland toward the top where a vast water-dam rested. The dam was once part of some an old Byzantine ruins refurbished to collect the rain water. This dam was the only thing that put Yusra on the map, otherwise no one would have ever heard of the little village. The dirt road was violent with rocks yet I ran barefoot until my house came into view. The house is as I remember. The gray coarse walls, the blue iron door, the huge Iron Gate and the white-rock fortified fence, all were untouched by time. The familiar scenery jeweled with apple and orange trees set in a background of a garden stacked with olive trees all thickened into a distant memory.

The Grape twists around the water well and the Jasmine tree underneath the kitchen window played a delicious aroma that I could smell immensely in my sleep. The only unfamiliar terrain was the sea; my house was never near any sea. I have never been to the sea, yet of all places, I could see the Dead Sea here in Yusra.

For a while I could not hear the water, I was standing near the shore yet the sound was barred to me. There was no sound even when it started to rain. The rain was dark and cloudy, it felt unnaturally hot. I called in my dream to the vast azure, and had no answer; peering closer to the glossy water I saw that the bottom was uninhabited. I could see the bottom very clearly and I was surprised that the vision in my left eye was working marvelously.

Suddenly I felt very thirsty, unbearably shriveled. I stuck out my tongue to harvest the rain-water. Little beads of drops hit my face. No water came from the rain, instead it was hot tea and it burned my tongue. Steam started to build in the air and I was very thirsty. The wind clouded, dark and uncontrolled and I was still thirsty. The sand with white naked limbs leant closer to the sea in a strange embrace, making a vault above the reeves like the arc of a teacup. My tongue stretched out like a pink straw enticing the tea-water as if weaved from the breast of a lover. Steamy fog clouded my vision, and I was still oh so very thirsty.

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The sea retracted in front of me, twisting and turning, but as I focused my eyes I was aware that change had come; the sea was there no longer, instead I was setting inside of my house completely soaked with hot tea. A man; a faceless man was setting opposite of me, and I was no longer thirsty.

I found myself in the middle of pouring a cup of tea for the man when he mentioned that he had something very special for me.

"What is it?" I asked, my heartbeat throbbing in my ears.

His face went through the most remarkable series of unseen changes. He drank the cup I poured in one gulp. I wondered how he could possibly bear it when the tea was very hot.

"Give me your hand" he said "the right one"

I long ago developed a very seductive tool of my hands. My hands were soft, small and lean. Their features are frozen in a beautiful patrician painting. Their advantage is that men can interpret it however they want; a touch of flesh that is not so forbidden yet it gives the pleasure of sin.

I decided I would better use it just right then, for some unknown reason I wanted this stranger to desire me.

He let out his breath and put down the cup of tea before taking my hand.

"Before I give it to you" he said, with a stern distant voice. "You have to give me something".

I was watching this scenario as if it was a movie and my head was rambling with sarcastic remarks the likes of *'how cliché'* and *'I can't believe my mind is about to weave such unsavory romantic panorama'*.

"What do you want me to give you?" I said genially, feeling his unseen gaze.

A rueful laugh greeted that remark, it made me shrink back and lose confidence.

In my dreams there is usually much force but little law. Even if I weave those fantastical tales out of my fantasies, they always end with something fearful, something I did not account for.

I could hear my heartbeats beating faster, I felt anxious. I remember thinking *'I want to wake up, I don't like this dream anymore'* but as usual I had little control over my unconscious delirium.

"What do you want me to give you?" I tried again, embarrassed.

He kept on holding my hand.

"What do you want me to give you?" I shook his hand slightly, still no answer.

I started to feel cold as the tea-moist clinging to my damp clothes started to dry. I shook his hand again, this time adding a little force.

"You can tell me, is it something indecent?" I tried again, feeling cold and very mischievous.

It is funny, even in dreams my personality splits and plays tricks on me. Finally! This dream is getting interesting; I might not want to wake up after all.

"hm... indecent?" his voice low and mocking.

"Yes" I answered frankly as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

Kiss me, kiss me, kiss me; I was coming up with all kind of indecencies and fantasizing inside of my own fantasy.

"No, it is not anything like that, I just can't remember" he mused. *"My mind went all blank suddenly. Can I have more tea?"* he grabbed the teacup at his side and onto my face.

A little annoyed I grabbed the tea-pot and started pouring into the cup. I kept filling the cup and could not stop even when the tea started to trail down his fingers.

"Is it too hot?" I asked

"No it is alright".

It was not alright, his hand turned red scourged by the hot liquid. I kept on pouring and pouring the tea, steam filled the room. I was breathless and the mixture of steam and fog swallowed his silhouette.

"Are you sure it's not too hot, there is all this steam and I cannot see you anymore" I said in a panic.

"You couldn't see me to begin with, don't worry it's not too hot"

"I cannot see you anymore, tell me to stop!" I pleaded, my voice cracking unable to stop pouring the tea.

"It is alright"

"It is not alright, tell me to stop!" I screamed.

The moments of hopelessness when time collapses between realities, in those moments I retreat in unison, with a clash of thought to a place where someone loved me. Is it human nature to have such psychological discrepancies?

I am waiting for him to come and save me. But why can't I save myself? Am I too lazy or is it just easier and more romantic to be saved by the notorious knight?

Cut

This was a review of the first 12 pages of the book, to purchase a copy please place an order using the contact from.

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Bissan