

Hidden Voices

Part 1

by Rosemary Cully

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Seventh of October in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

It has been 17 years since my father passed away. Carlotta sings again tonight as I lay in my room wasting away. I have nothing left. Why did god take everything from me? Every night since his death I write in my journal waiting for a sign. There is no heaven – there is no GOD!!!!

Eight of October in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

I dreamt of father again. Carlotta drones on and on as I think back to him. My fondest memory was his stories of the Angel.

One day while listening to his story I asked, “Have you heard the Angel of Music?” daddy shook his head sadly, and said, “No I have not but you will hear him one day my child! When I am in Heaven, I will send him to you.”

The Angel of Music played a part in all of daddy’s tales. He maintained that every great musician and artist receives a visit from the Angel at least once in their life. Sometimes the Angel leans over their cradle and sometimes he comes much later when the children were naughty or didn’t learn their lessons or practice their scales. I sighed thinking of this, why was I not visited? I studied and learned my lessons. I was neither naughty nor cross when I practiced my scales hour after hour. Why had I not been chosen, yet Carlotta with her toad like voice graced the stage nightly to thunderous applause she had no business receiving. I begin singing her words as the music played – I sit here and pretend that her applause are my applause.

I feel discouraged and dead inside. God has taken my mother at my birth and my father before his time and now I have been banished from hearing the Angel’s voice.

Fifteenth of October in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

I woke in a cold sweat again this morning. I dreamt of my father. I dreamt of his death. I dreamt of the death of my voice. When my father died I lost with him my voice, my soul and my genius. I retained just enough of this to enter the conservatoire, where I did not distinguish myself at all, attending the classes without enthusiasm and taking a prize only to please old Valeria with whom I lived with after his death.

Today there is talk of an “Opera Ghost” a Phantom they say. I laughed when those silly girls in the ballet told me.

Twentieth of October in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

This incessant chatter of The Phantom is driving me mad. I do not wish to be disturbed with this nonsense yet every chorus girl feels the need to enter my room and tell me about him.

Carlotta has not missed a single performance this year. All I do is sit practicing in my dressing room. I write to pass the time. I sing to live, yet I die more each day when I do not.

Thirty-first of October in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

Tonight the oddest thing happened. I was sitting here like every other night, singing, writing, and waiting when I heard a voice singing. It started out low almost a non-distinguishable sound but soon it filled my ears and my mind and I cannot remove it from my being. It is like he has invaded my very soul.

There is still talk of an Opera Ghost and whispered rumors that the managers are leaving because of him.

Sixth of November in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

It was true what my father told me. “No one sees the Angel but he is heard by those who are meant to hear him. He often comes when they least expect him, when they are sad and disheartened. Then only their ears suddenly perceive his celestial harmonies, a divine voice, which we will remember all our lives.” I was at my lowest when the Angel arrived.

My faith is restored.

Seventeenth of November in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

He continues to meet me each night in my dressing room. He infiltrates my every thought, desire and dream. There is not a second when I do not hear his voice and yet I have not seen him. I feel an unsurpassed joy when I am in his presence even from a far. I wake from dreams with him on my mind. “Now as I sing I can sense him and I know he’s here. Here in this room he calls me softly somewhere inside hiding, somehow I know he’s always with me, he is the unseen genius”.¹

I am tired again. I feel weak and I’ve fainted in the hall of the Opera house on more than one occasion.

Twenty-ninth of November in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

It was the evening on which Monsieur Debiegne and Monsieur Poligny, the managers of the Opera were giving a last gala performance to mark their retirement. Suddenly the dressing room of La Sorelli (our principal dancer) was invaded by half a dozen young ballet dancers who had come up from the stage in cries of terror. Little Jammes gave the explanation in a trembling voice, “It’s the Phantom of the Opera, he is with us he is here!” locking the door behind her. Sorelli was very superstitious and the first to believe in ghosts in general and the Opera ghost in particular. She shuttered when she heard little Jammes speak of the ghost, called her a “silly little fool” and than, she asked for details. “Have you seen him?”

“As plainly as I see you now!” and little Jammes legs gave way beneath her and she dropped with a moan into a chair.

Giry added, “If that’s the ghost he’s very ugly!”

I chuckled to myself. My voice was their ghost. I listened in amusement to them.

“Oh yes!” cried the chorus of girls as they all began to speak in unison. The ghost had appeared to them in the shape of a gentleman in dress clothes, who suddenly stood before them in a passage without their knowing where he came from; he seemed to have come straight through the wall.

For several months, there had been nothing discussed at the Opera house but the ghost in dress-clothes who stalked about the building from top to bottom like a shadow who spoke to no one and to whom no one ever dared speak and who vanished as soon as he was seen no one knowing where or how.

People began by laughing and making fun of this specter dressed like a man of fashion, but the Phantom’s legend soon swelled to enormous proportions among the ballet and the people who came to see the Opera. All the girls pretended to have met this supernatural being more or less often. Which were lies; even I had never seen him.

¹ Quoted from Andrew Lloyd Weber’s Phantom of the Opera

Joseph the chorus master had said that he was a ghost with death's head, Giry said that he better hold his tongue. Her mother said the ghost didn't like being seen much less talked about. Apparently the ghost held a private box here – Box Five. Meg's mother was in charge of it and the Phantom had given orders that the box office never sell that seat. "My mother gives him his programs she blurted out." Of course no one believed Meg but indeed she told the truth.

I am still not feeling well. I am very tired and felt ill all day.

Thirtieth of November in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

Apparently Meg's warning to old Joseph were not heeded for tonight Joseph was found dead – hanging in the third floor cellar. By the time I rushed down the staircase and Jacob's ladder, the man was no longer hanging from his rope!

First of December in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

Armond Moncharmin & Firmin Richards bought the opera house. When Monsieur Debieenne and Monsieur Poligny the former managers told them of the story of the Opera ghost at first they laughed and then there was an air of someone who bitterly regretted having taken over the opera, now that he knew that there was a ghost mixed up in the business.

"This joke is becoming a little tedious" said Richards, then asking half seriously, half in jest, "What does this ghost of yours want?"

I could not hear it all but I hear Monsieur Debieenne and Monsieur Poligny tell the new owners that the ghost had requested a monthly allowance of twenty thousand francs.

"Is this all?" requested Richards

Hesitantly, Monsieur Debieenne and Monsieur Poligny continued, no he reserved a private box. Box Five in the grand tier shall be placed at his disposal at all times for his personal use at every performance.

Fourth of December in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

The first few days which the partners spent at the Opera were given over to the delight of finding themselves the head of so magnificent an enterprise and they had forgotten all about that curious fantastic story of the ghost, when an incident occurred that proved them that the joke – was not over. A letter arrived marked private for Monsieur Richards, when he opened it - it read:

Dear Managers:

I am sorry to have to trouble you at a time when you must be so very busy renewing important engagements, signing fresh ones and generally displaying your excellent taste. I know what you have done for Carlotta, Sorelli and little Jammes and for a few others whose admirable qualities of talent or genius you have suspected.

Of course, when I used these words, I do not mean them to La Carlotta, who sings like a toad and who ought never to have been allowed to leave the Ambassadeurs. Nor to La Sorelli who owes her success mainly to the coach builders; nor little Jammes, who dances like a calf in a field.

All the same, I should like you to take advantage of the fact that you have not turned to Christine Daaé. I will ask you not to dispose of my box today or the following days for I can not end this letter without telling you how disagreeably surprised I have been on arriving at the Opera and finding my box had been sold. I did not protest first because I dislike scandal and second because I thought that your predecessors, Monsieur Debieenne

and Monsieur Poligny, who were always charming to me had neglected before leaving to mention my little fads to you. I have received a reply from those gentlemen to my letter asking for an explanation and their reply proves that you know all about the rules and the consequences that will come when you treat me with outrageous contempt. If you wish to live in peace, you must not begin taking away my private box.

Believe me to be, dear Managers without prejudice to this little observations.

Your Most Humble and Obedient Servant.

Monsieur Richards first response was that they (Monsieur Debiegne and Monsieur Poligny) were keeping up the joke and he didn't find it funny. He did however leave the box open that evening.

Tenth of December in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

40 nights have passed since I first heard his voice. I remember wondering when I first heard him where that amazing singing was coming from. I went out of my room and looked everywhere but I was very much alone and I could not find the voice.

Tonight he not only sang but spoke to me and agreed to answer any questions I might have. It was like a real man's voice but so unlike a man – it was beautiful just like you would expect an angel to sound like and although I did dare not think it, before I could stop myself I blurted out, "Are you the Angel of Music?" How silly of me to believe in childhood stories but than he replied "You should be expecting me, after all your dear father had promised didn't he?" I lit up immediately with wonder, so much so that I forgot to ask him all the other questions I had.

From that second onward we became friends and he gave me singing lessons daily. We agreed to never miss an appointment. The hours during which the voice taught me have been spent in a divine frenzy. You have no idea what these lessons are like. I feel ecstasy when I hear his voice. I did all he has instructed and he assures me that we shall astonish Paris.

Fifteenth of December in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

Today the voice came to me and exclaimed, "Christine Daaé, tonight you will give to men a little taste of the music of heaven." I do not know how it came to pass but this evening Carlotta did not come to the theater and I, being her understudy was called to fill the role. I sang that night for the first time in a rapture I had never known before and my heart was warm like it had been so many years before my father had passed away. I had never before known what life meant until I felt it for the first time in those moments as I stood on the stage. It felt as though my soul had left my body rising to heaven and that I had been touched by the hand of god himself. I was told that after the curtain fell I collapsed to the floor of the stage, I was pale and my body felt weak. I felt better not long after this occurred and in my dressing room I called to the voice to visit me.

He can hear me whenever I call to him. He has told me so. You must not think that he is simply a man who amuses himself by living underground. He does things that no other man could ever do. He knows things which no one else in the world knows and in the dark I heard his whisper,

"Christine, you must love me!"

"I sing only for you!"

"Are you tired?" he inquired

"Tonight I gave you my soul and I am dead!" I replied

"I thank you, no Emperor ever received so fair a gift. The angels wept tonight."

"Why do you hide from me still?"

"You will see me tonight. Dress and attend the reception. There I will make myself known to you."

Dressing quickly I made my way with the other girls to the party. There were many paper writers in attendance and my portrait was even captured a few times along with the new managers.

I scanned the room in search of my Angel and then, there he stood atop of a tall staircase. He seemed huge to me. Dressed all in scarlet, a large hat adorned with feathers which topped off a wonderfully sculpted body. From his shoulders hung an immense red velvet cloak, which trailed along the floor like a king's train and on this cloak was gold embroidery. He had an eccentric air about him that caused sensations. I knew him immediately and I made my way toward him. His face encased in a mask which many wore to these types of affairs. Before I managed to reach him I was snatched away to speak with more paper writers and when I looked to find him alas he was gone.

Sixteenth of December in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

Yesterday's evening print ran the following story about me:

“The real triumph was reserved for Christine Daaé, who had begun by singing a few passages from Romeo and Juliet. Those who heard her say that her voice in these passages was seraphic and nothing to the superhuman notes that she gave forth in the prison scene and final trio. Christine Daaé had always played a good understudy to Carlotta, but tonight she really spread her wings and has become a stirring sensation over night. Oddly enough she is not known to have a professor at that moment. She has often said she practices alone.”

Meanwhile, after my performance the Managers received this note:

Dear Managers:

Thanks! Charming evening. Daaé exquisite. Will write to you for the 240,000 francs.

Kind regards

Furious they called for Madam Giry who was said to be in contact with the Opera ghost. They questioned her knowledge of the ghost to which she replied:

“At the end of the performance he always gives me 2 francs, sometimes 5 even 10 when he has been many days without coming. Only since you people have begun to annoy him has not given me anything at all.

They called her a conspirator and released her from her duties immediately.

I am gaining strength and have been feeling better this fourth night.

Seventeenth of December in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

A very angry message arrived from my Angel. It read:

Dear Managers:

So it is to be war between us? If you still care for peace, here is my ultimatum. It consists of the four following conditions:

1. You must give me back my private box and I wish it to be at my free disposal from hence forward.
2. The part of Margarita shall now be sung by Christine Daaé. Never mind about Carlotta she will be ill.

3. I absolutely insist upon the good and loyal service of Madam Giry, my box keeper, whom you will reinstate in her functions forthwith.
4. Let me know by a letter handed to Madam Giry, who will see that it reaches me, that you accept as your predecessors did the conditions in my memorandum book relating to my monthly allowance. I will inform you later how you are to pay it to me.

If you refuse, you will give Faust tonight in a house with a curse upon it. Take my advice and be warned in time.

Carlotta received a similar note it read:

“If you appear tonight, you must be prepared for a great misfortune at the moment when you open your mouth to sing... a misfortune worse than death.”

If the truth were known it was Carlotta who was the cabal that led herself against me. Carlotta never forgave me for the triumph I achieved when taking her place at a moments notice when she fell ill. From that time on Carlotta worked with all her might to smother me and persuaded the managers NOT to give me any further opportunities.

Certain papers had already begun to extol my talent prior to her condemnation of me. Carlotta and certain theater friends even made scandalous remarks publicly about me and the Count Vicomte de Chagny.

That night Carlotta insisted on singing even though she received a second notice in her dressing room which read: “You have a bad cold. If you are wise you will see to this and not sing this eve.”

The famous baritone Carlos Fonta had hardly finished when the managers snuck up to the ghost’s box, where they giggled like school-girls loudly enough to be heard.

Carlotta began singing 1 line, 2 lines and with each line she gained confidence, but than she opened her mouth and she croaked like a toad “Co-ack!” I smiled an evil smile for I knew my Angel was keeping his promise.

Meanwhile in Box Five they felt his breathe and the hairs on the back of their necks stood up and Richards wiped perspiration from his brow. Oh the ghost was there and all around them, behind them, next to them and they heard his breath ever close to them. They were sure there were 3 people in that box. They trembled but dare not move and at last they distinctly heard him, “She is singing tonight to bring the chandelier down!”

With one more cord they both raised their eyes to the ceiling and uttered a terrible cry. The chandelier which was immense and massive was slipping down toward them. Released from its hook it plunged from the ceiling and came smashing into the middle of the stalls, amid a thousand shouts of terror. A wild rush for the doors followed.

After things settled down I went back to my dressing room and began to write, filling two, three, four sheets. Suddenly I raised my head and held the sheets to my bodice. I began to sing “Angel of Music guide and guardian grant to me your glory. Angel of Music hide no longer come to me strange Angel”².

When I stopped singing I heard a sound, than a distant rhythm. A faint singing seemed to issue from the walls; it was as though the walls themselves were singing. The song became clearer, the words more distinguishable and than the voice, his very beautiful voice, very soft, very captivating. The voice came near, and nearer still as it came through the wall, it approaches and now it fills the room. “I am here I called out.” as a smile of

² Quoted from Andrew Lloyd Weber’s Phantom of the Opera

happiness appeared upon my bloodless lips, a smile like that of sick people when they receive the first hope of recovery. The voice continued to sing and I had never in all my life heard anything more absolutely sweet, more gloriously insidious, more delicate, more powerful or more irresistible. I stretched out my arms as I moved around the room. The walls were occupied with mirrors that reflected my image but not his. He was around me and covered me entirely but I could not see him I could only feel him. I walked toward my image in the glass and my image came toward me, and as the two of us met, one real, one reflected I stepped through the mirror and there he stood on the other side. Finally I emerged into his world.

I stood in a dark passageway and although I should have felt frightened I did not. It was quite dark but a faint red light glimmered at the distant corner of one of the walls. Suddenly his hand laid on mine. He was rather cold but I held on tightly and did not let go. We walked toward the red light and he was wrapped in a large cloak and a mask hid his face. Thinking back the mask was odd but in his presence I did not question it. In fact I did not question anything I just followed where he took me as though I had no will of my own. At the end of the tiny red light was a lake and on that lake a boat floated upon it. I stepped onto the boat feeling curious and peaceful. I made no effort to ask or inquire where he was taking me. I had full command of my senses and my eyes had finally adjusted to the darkness. I calculated that we were in a narrow circular gallery, probably running directly under and all around the Opera house, but this seem to be an immense underground which I could not comprehend. I could not see the edge of this lake whose leaden waters stretched out far into the distance and darkness. He rowed quickly and with powerful strokes and his eyes under his mask never left me. We slipped across the noiseless water in dim light till finally we touched the shore. He picked me up and carried me to land and there a house appeared. A beautiful house right on the lake, one of which you cannot imagine. We entered into a ballroom size hallway. The large round marble greeting table was surrounded with fresh cut flowers.

Removing his cape a cloaked figure came and fetched it, funny now that I think of it I could not tell you one thing of the servant, it is as if his presence has left my mind.

The Voice than grabbed my wrists and it hurt. I tried to pull away but his strength surpassed mine. His tone stern and as he spoke I had never heard his voice in this manor before. He said “Christine Daaé you are not in any danger so long as you never touch this mask. Do you understand?” I shook my head in agreement and he released me gently into a chair and knelt down before me.

Looking around, the room was filled with furniture, hangings, candles, vases and every flower you could imagine. I could not calculate the cost of what I saw. I estimated we were 5 stores below the Opera house but there was no way for me to be sure. And the voice who I recognized in spite of his mask was a man and I began to cry. And the voice understanding my tears cried along with me and said, “It is true Christine, I am not the Angel of Music, nor a ghost, nor a genius.... I am Erik.” I wanted to feel rage at being lied to and taken advantage of but I could not because no matter if he merely was a man and not the Angel of Music, it was too late for I loved him and my anger melted away like my tears and in the darkness of that room I embraced him for the first time.

In that darkness as I embrace him, Erik cursed himself, accused himself and implored my forgiveness as he confessed his lies. He loves me and as he lay at my feet I understand that he lied because of his love. No matter who he was he remained my voice. He was the man who brought me back to life when I lay on the shores of despair and wished for death to take me. That night we did not exchange words but he sang me to sleep. Erik spoke through his music. When I woke I was alone in a beautifully furnished bedroom. On the dresser I found a note which read:

“My Dear Christine, you need have no concerns as to your fate. You have no better nor more respectful friend in this word than myself. You are alone at present in this home, which is now yours. I am going out shopping to fetch you all the things that you can need.

Erik

I wondered around the huge estate for some time and finally I heard noises from the kitchen. When I entered Erik was putting away groceries. We spent most of that day practicing and I learned the layout of the house. That night he fixed me prawns and wings of chicken and I drank a glass of Tokay, which he had gotten in Königsberg. After dinner he asked if I wished to see his room, "If you care to" he whispered. I couldn't wait and I accepted but not too eagerly of course. I was curious more than I led him to believe. His words, his manors, his attitude was without flaw, but when he opened the door to his room I felt like I had entered the room of a dead person not that of an aristocrat. The walls were all hung with black, but in stead of the usual white trimmings of a funeral home in there place were huge hanging staves of music. Notes of the Dies Iræ many times repeated across the walls. In the middle of the room was a canopy from which curtains of red velvet hung and under the canopy an open coffin. "That is where I sleep he said. One needs to get used to everything in life, even eternity." For the first time since I met him this upset me so much I had to turn my head. I could not look upon this; it caused a fear in me I hadn't known since I saw my dear father lying in his coffin.

When I looked away I saw the keyboard of an organ which filled an entire wall. On his desk was a music book covered with red notes. I asked to look at it and read Don Juan Trumphant, "Yes, he said, I compose sometimes. I began it well over 20 years ago. When I am done I shall take it away with me into that coffin and never wake again." I looked at him and said, "You must work on it seldom" and he replied "Sometimes I work at it for 14 days and 14 nights during which I live only on music and than I rest for years at a time."

I asked him to play me some of it but he refused. He told me, "You see Christine, there is some music that is so terrible that it consumes all of you. Fortunately you have not come to that music yet for you would lose all your pretty coloring and no one would know you when you returned to Paris."

Nineteenth of December in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

I did not feel well today, I am too tired to write. I wonder why night after night he would come to Box 5, cloaked in the shadows to listen to me sing? I never understood why Erik chose me, when there were many to choose from. I've never asked and he has never offered an explanation.

Twenty-first of December in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

I "disappeared" and after a fourth night when people came to inquire the managers were anything but cordial. They merely said that I was taking a holiday for an unlimited period.

The papers quoted a few wounded in the tragedy of the chandelier accident and one woman killed. Ironically it was the woman who was to replace Madame Giry.

It was then I came to realize that like the mask he wore so he wore his personality, kind, loving and sensual, yet dark, destructive and sometimes cruel.

The inquest ended with a verdict of accidental death, caused by the wear and tear of the chains by which the chandelier was hung but it was the duty of the managers to have discovered this and remedied it in time. They were penalized and made to pay a large sum of money to the family of the woman killed.

Twenty-third of December in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

When I returned the managers were angry but relieved that I had come back. I performed throughout the holiday and each night Erik and I met in secret. When New Year approaches the Opera house will close for 3 evenings and I will be spending that time on the lake with Erik.

Erik asked me what gift I wanted but he will not grant me my wish. Though it is the only request he will not indulge.

Twenty-fifth of December in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

Erik surprised me with a house full of gifts tonight. Anything imaginable – jewelry, coats of the finest furs even a horse drawn carriage with a private driver, but I am restless to know his face. He gives me a simple band of gold but does not request my hand. He confuses me at times.

I acquired a new music pad and quill for his music along with a gentlemen's cloak. He seemed to love my gifts.

Thirtieth of December in the year of our lord Eighteen hundred and eighty

Today is my 28th birthday. Erik has taken me to the lake house again and it once again is filled with many presents. Erik indulges my every desire and after dinner we adjourned to the music room. There we began the duet of Othello and already the catastrophe was upon us. I sat all through dinner brooding over his mask. For days I did not sleep nor eat as I obsessed over Erik's face. I sang for him Desdemona with a despair, and terror which I had never known before. As for him his voice thundered forth, revealing his soul with every note. Love, jealousy, hatred burst forth around us. I could think of nothing else this day but seeing his face. I wanted to know the face of my voice and with one movement that I was unable to control I swiftly wiggled my fingers and removed the mask which one second earlier had adorned his face.

He hissed mad incoherent words and cursed me! Falling to my knee's I crouched against the wall. Leaning over me he cried "LOOK! You wanted to see! Now SEE!! Feast your eyes on my cursed ugliness! Look at Erik's face! Now you know the face of the voice! You were not content to hear me, eh? You wanted to know what I looked like! Oh, you woman are so inquisitive! Well, are you satisfied? I'm a very good looking fellow, eh?" And then he stopped, my eyes were closed so tightly that I didn't think I would ever open them again. Even though I had removed his mask seconds earlier I still had not see his face, and now I was to afraid to open my eyes. His voice changed then and all the hair on my body stood on end as he spoke.

"When a woman has seen me as you have, she belongs to me. She will love me forever." Drawing himself to his full height, with his hands around my arms he lifted me up and roared "LOOK AT ME!" and I turned my head even now my eyes still shut. "Beg for mercy as you will never know me as brutally as you know me now", he raged grabbing my hair and twisting my head to face him. "Do I frighten you?" he hissed and then his hands were upon my head squeezing my temples and tears rolled down my eyes. "OPEN YOUR EYES AND GAZE UPON ME NOW Christine. Look at me one time before you die" he said in the gravest of tones. Shaking and trembling I pried my eyes open, and there before me WAS the Angel of Music, his skin a porcelain white, his eyes blue like the sea after a storm, a perfect nose, a chiseled chin like that of a god and as I inspected him closely I saw on the left side of his face a scar from cheek to neck. I reached to touch it, his eyes locked mine and as I touched him he threw me down onto the floor and was on top of me tearing at my dress. Things were blurred and I remember staring into his beautiful face and not understanding why he hid it. I cried "Erik why do you hide yourself you are the most magnificent man I've ever known." He hissed something evil at me that I cannot recall. The last thing I remember feeling or what I thought at the time was a knife slicing my throat. My head swirled and I felt like I had previous times before when I sang and the lights became to much, I faded to blackness.

What is written next is a mixture of what I can recall and what I've been told by Erik. Apparently I laid there dead for some time. Erik placed his hand on my face and caressed it, but he could not bare to see me die. In his rage he had taken my life but he knew he could bring me back. Holding me in his arms my head to his neck he slit his throat and pushed my lips to him. I was clinically dead but I started to come to like I had so many times before when I fainted during or after a performance. Erik tells me that all along he had been feeding on me. That I sustained him as he worked on his Opera, and now he shared with me what he had taken all along. My blood and his mixed together - offered back to me for all of eternity. I was no longer human but I did not know or understand that when I woke. I felt weak at first and just let the blood drain over my lips and into my mouth not knowing what was going on. As it flowed down my throat and into my veins I felt empowered. I vaguely

remember grabbing the back of Erik's neck with the palm of my hand and drawing him closer to me as I began to drink like an animal that had not seen water in a vast amount of time. There was no equivalent feeling as this in my mortal life. This instant of rebirth, however strange, was the greatest pleasure I've ever known. It filled my body with an ecstasy unimaginable. The passion and closeness were unmatched. Erik felt the need to pull away from my grip. He had never created another and did not know what to expect. As he pulled away I drew him closer. I was strong and he felt weak but breaking free of my grasp he stood for what seemed to be an eon staring at me. I felt different, though I could not put my finger on it, somehow EVERYTHING felt different. I still did not understand what happened to me. I was in awe of everything especially Erik, I tried to stand up but the pain came. Falling to my knees I crumbled to the floor in excruciating agony. My body contorted in ways Erik did not know a body could. I felt fire burn in every part of my body, convulsions.... spasms..... anything imaginable happened to me during this time and when it finally stopped I just lay there on the ground. I felt the last bit of my breath seep out of my lungs hissing into the cold night air. I was dead!

I heard Erik's voice, like someone calling you out of a dream. He was bent over me.

"Look I am not laughing now, I am crying for you Christine. You had to tear off my mask and who is now damned for all eternity and who can never leave me again. As long as you thought me handsome, you could have come back. I know you would have come back but now that you know my hideousness, you would run away for good, so I had to keep you here. Keep you here with me."

I gasped for air though I do not know why; I can only assume it was an involuntary reflex none of which I physically required any longer. I sat up looking at his face, which seemed more beautiful than before, such beauty is frightening to behold and I wondered now if I possessed that same beauty that he had. He turned away from me. He stood and walked to the organ and began playing Don Juan Triumphant, his masterpiece played for me and little by little it expressed every emotion, every suffering of which mankind is capable. It intoxicated me and I crawled toward him but he dare not look in my direction.

"Erik" I said, "Show me your face without fear. I SWEAR you are the most unhappy and yet sublime of all men and if I ever shiver when I look at you it will be because I am thinking of the splendor of your face and your genius." He turned around and he fell to his knees holding me in his arms for hours with out uttering a word.

To be continued....