



Blondine Part IX: The Tortoise

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French

Intermediate
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One day Blondine was seated at the entrance of her hut, musing sadly as usual, thinking of her lost friends and of her father, when she saw before her an enormous Tortoise.

“Blondine,” said the Tortoise, “if you will place yourself under my protection, I will conduct you out of this forest.”

“And why, Madam Tortoise, should I seek to leave this forest? Here I caused the death of my friends and here I wish to die.”

“Are you very certain of their death, Blondine?”

“What do you mean? Is it possible I may be deceived? But, no; I saw the ruins of their castle. The Parrot and the Toad assured me of their death. You are kind and good and wish to console me without doubt but, alas! I do not hope to see them again. If they still lived they would not have left me alone with the frightful despair of having caused their death.”

“But how do you know, Blondine, that this seeming neglect is not forced upon them? They may now be

subjected to a power greater than their own. You know, Blondine, that a true repentance will obtain pardon for many crimes.”

“Ah! Madam Tortoise, if they still live, if you can give me news of them, if you can assure me that I need no longer reproach myself with their death, assure me that I shall one day see them again, there is no price which I will not gladly pay to merit this great happiness.”

“Blondine, I am not permitted to disclose to you the fate of your friends but if you have the courage to mount on my back, remain there for six months and not address a single question to me during the journey, I will conduct you to a place where all will be revealed.”

“I promise all that you ask, Madam Tortoise, provided I can only learn what has become of my friends.”

“Take care, Blondine! reflect well. Six months without descending from my back and without asking me a single question! When once you have accepted the conditions, when we have commenced our journey, if you have not the courage to endure to the end, you will remain eternally in the power of the enchanter, Perroquet, and his sister Rose and I cannot even continue to bestow upon you the little assistance to which you owe your life during the last six months.”

“Let us go, Madam Tortoise let us be off, immediately. I prefer to die of hunger and fatigue rather than of grief and uncertainty. Your words have brought hope to my poor heart, and I have courage to undertake even a more difficult journey than that of which you speak.”

“Let it be according to your wish, Blondine. Mount my back. Fear neither hunger nor thirst nor cold nor sunshine nor any accident during our long journey. As long as it lasts you shall not suffer from any inconvenience.”

Blondine mounted on the back of the Tortoise. “Now, silence!” said she; “and not one word till we have arrived and I speak to you first.”

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