**Tomira Zori: The God of a Thousand Names**

Darkness was slowly falling over Alexandria. There was the silence and concentration of an April twilight. In a thicket of trees and flowers, the round marble temple of Eros was whitewashed.

Leaning against a column stood Xantos, the honeyed priest of the Radiant God, and thought that perhaps he was keeping a final night's vigil over the mysteries of the temple, a small, forgotten almost. One by one, the temples of the Hellenistic gods were being destroyed. Sacred books and parchments were burnt, beautiful statues, whose perfect, mathematically strict proportions of shapes reminded the initiates of the law of harmony governing the universe and the qualities a neophyte must acquire, were destroyed. In the place of the white deities and heroes, great wooden crosses were erected, on which was roughly carved the image of a Man with a face drawn in pain, his hands and feet pierced with nails.

The darkness was thickening. Xantos's eyes hovered for a moment on the subtle profile of the marble Apollo, when, unexpectedly, a slim and white figure emerged from the purple evening shadows, with fair hair in large rings falling to his shoulders. The stranger looked into Xantos' face and in a voice soft and deep asked:

 - Do you recognise me, Xantos? He recognised Xantos: on the Stranger's narrow, white hands were blackened bleeding stigmata and dark, stagnant drops, like a pomegranate flower, hung on his forehead and temples.

 - Thou art Christos Rex, Lord - the new God of the Romans. The man smiled. It was a smile that was immensely sweet and immensely sad.

 - You have called me, Xantos. The priest bowed his head in homage.

 - You probably come, Lord, to destroy the temple of the god I serve. Your worshippers say that you are the only god and that there should be no temples other than those dedicated to you. I am ready to die here, where I have lived and loved.

 - Thou hast called me Christos, Xanthos, said the Man quietly. But I have other and older names, and my eternal name is Love...

 - Love, did you say? It is the name of the god I serve - Eros, the Eternal Y o u n g O n e.

 - - - Eternally Young, repeated the Stranger in reverie. I was - when the first spark of divine fire, called the soul, animated the body of man. I was - from the beginning of creation. People love me or hate me without measure. I am I whom they kill with their own hands to worship under a new name. I have a thousand names, Xanthos. Christos is one of them, and another is - Eros.

 - Lord, whispered Xantos, bending at His knees.

 - Lord, God of sunshine, radiant Eros, why then do You allow Your temples to be demolished, to be thrown into the dust? -----------

 - Each new temple is dedicated to a different my name, Xanthos. People worship the name rather than the one who bears it.

 My shrine is the Universe, and my Host is the Sun. There I offer the Eternal Sacrifice, of which all other sacrifices are but a reflection. My temple is also every human heart, Xanthos. And whatever name people call Love, know that it is my name. And if you have loved me as Eros - loving joyfully - love me in sorrow and suffering. I shall be called Christos - Rex, Xantos.

When Xantos raised his eyes - he was alone. In the bright sky the stars lit up large - golden. Silently, in the blackness of the bushes, rose petals were falling like white, fragrant flames.

And then Xantos, priest of the god Eros, began to pray:

"I have grasped thee, O Incomprehensible One, whose eternal name is Love. Thou art Life, and Death, and Resurrection. Thou art the eternal Ring of Being. Eros and Orpheus, Krishna and Horus, Ormuzd and Christos. And whether crimson roses or drops of blood burn over Thy brow, Thou art the Way, the Truth and the Beloved. Thy arms have been opened for centuries in the eternal sacrifice of Love and giving, on the visible or invisible Cross.

I worship Thee, Thou who hast cast aside the white wings of Eros to bleed thy feet against the sharp stones of earthly ways, Thou who hast taken off the lotus wreath of Shri Krishna and put on the crown of thorns; Thou hast exchanged the seven-stringed harp of Orpheus for words of pain and anguish, from the starry paths of Horus - Thou hast descended to the way of Calvary.

Greeted be Eros, whom I shall henceforth call Christos - Rex."

The priest Xantos rested his burning forehead against the feet of the Marble Eros and persisted in prayer.

On the steps of the Temple glided uncertainly the pale ray of the new moon.

And the next day, over the white altar of the Sun God, Xantos the priest set up a cross large of rosewood, which he himself had made in the morning. Among the flowers, on the marble of the eros altar, like black embroidery, folded the exquisite letters of the Hellenic script into the words:

Christos - Rex -- God of Love.

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