

# **THE BLOSSOM AND THE FRUIT**

**A True Story of a Black Magician**

**By Mabel Collins**

**Mabel Collins: THE BLOSSOM AND THE FRUIT; A True Story of a Black Magician**

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## **PREFACE**

The great contending forces of good and evil we see battling in the world on every plane. This book is called the story of a black magician, because it shows the struggles and mistakes of one who has been an adept in black magic, and who is endeavoring with great force, but very blindly, to reach toward the White Brotherhood and learn good instead of evil. Fleta, who in her earlier incarnation, took power selfishly into her own hands, became by virtue of that power a black magician: one who has knowledge and uses it for selfish ends. We see her at the masked ball, in the first chapter, endeavoring by her arts to attract the companion of many of her past lives; but her object in doing this is to bring him directly under the influence of Ivan, that one of the White Brotherhood who, in his divine pity, has stretched his hand out toward her. Her aim is to begin the occultist's great work of saving others, especially those whom she has formerly injured. But through what terrible experiences she passes, and those about her, in this endeavor! We see her falling back instinctively on her old rites and using her old powers; we see Hilary deceived by his senses and passions. Fleta forgets that the Lotus flower can only bloom within one's own soul; but oh! Reader, do not judge of Fleta, nor of her relation to the White Brotherhood till you have seen her fierce career to its end and read the words in which, at last, Ivan says: "Enter."

M. C.

## INTRODUCTION

*Containing two sad lives on earth,  
And two sweet times of sleep in Heaven*

### *A LIFETIME*

Overhead the boughs of the trees intermingle, hiding the deep blue sky and mellowing the fierce heat of the sun. The boughs are so covered with white blossoms that it is like a canopy of clustered snow-flakes, tinged here and there with a soft pink. It is a natural orchard, a spot favored by the wild apricot. And among the trees, wandering from shine to shade, flitting to and fro, is a solitary figure. It is that of a young woman, a savage, one of a wild and fierce tribe dwelling in the fastnesses of an inaccessible virgin forest. She is dark, but beautiful. Her blue-black hair hangs far down over her naked body; its masses shield the warm, quivering, nervous brown skin from the direct rays of the sun. She wears neither clothing nor any ornament. Her eyes are dark, fierce and tender; her mouth soft and natural as the lips of an opening flower. She is absolutely perfect in her simple savage beauty and in the natural majesty of her womanhood, virgin in herself and virgin in the quality of her race, which: is untaught, undegraded. But in her sublimely natural face is the dawn of a great tragedy. Her soul, her thought, is struggling to awake. She has done a deed that seemed to her quite simple, quite natural; yet now it is done a dim perplexity is rising within her obscure mind. Wandering to and fro beneath the rich masses of blossom-laden boughs, she for the first time endeavors to question herself. Finding no answer within she goes again to look on that which she has done.

A form lies motionless upon the ground within the thickest shade of the rich fruit trees. A young man, one of her own tribe, beautiful like herself, and with strength and vigor written in every line of his form. But he is dead. He was her lover, and she found his love sweet, yet with one wild treacherous movement of her strong supple arm she had killed him. The blood flowed from his forehead where the sharp stone had made the death wound. The life blood ebbed away from his strong young form; a moment since his lips still trembled, now they were still. Why had she in this moment of fierce passion taken that beautiful life? She loved him as well as her untaught heart knew how to love; but he, exulting in his greater strength, tried to snatch her love before it was ripe. It was but a blossom, like the white flowers overhead: he would have taken it with strong hands as though it were a fruit ripe and ready. And then in a sudden flame of wondrous new emotion the woman became aware that the man was her enemy, that he desired to be her tyrant. Until now she had thought him as herself, a thing to love as she loved herself, with a blind unthinking trust. And she acted passionately upon the guidance of this thing — feeling — which until now she had never known. He, unaccustomed to any treachery or anger, suspected no strange act from her, and thus, unsuspecting, unwarned, he was at her mercy. And now he lay dead at her feet. And still the fierce sun shone through the green leaves and silver blossoms and gleamed upon her black hair and tender brown skin. She was beautiful as the morning when it rose over the tree tops of that world-old forest. But there is a new wonder in her dark eyes; a question that was not there until this strange and potent hour came to her. What ages must pass over her dull spirit ere it can utter the question; ere it can listen and hear the answer?

The savage woman, nameless, unknown save of her tribe, who regard her as indifferently as any creature of the woods, has none to help her or stay in its commencement the great roll of the wave of energy she has started. Blindly she lives out her own emotions. She is dissatisfied, uneasy, conscious of some error. When she leaves the orchard of wild fruit trees and wanders back to the clearer part of the forest beneath

the great trees, where her tribe dwells, when she returns among them her lips are dumb, her voice is silent. None ever heard that he, the one she loved, had died by her hand, for she knew not how to frame or tell this story. It was a mystery to her, this thing which had happened. Yet it made her sad, and her great eyes wore a dumb look of longing. But she was very beautiful, and soon another young and sturdy lover was always at her side. He did not please her; there was not the glow in her eyes that had gladdened her in those of the dead one whom she had loved. And yet she shrank not from him, nor did she raise her arm in anger, but held it fast at her side lest her passion should break loose unawares. For she felt that she had brought a want, a despair upon herself by her former deed; and now she determined that she would act differently. Blindly she tried to learn the lesson that had come upon her. Blindly she let herself be the agent of her own will. For now she became the willing slave and serf of one she did not love, and whose passion for her was full of tyranny. Yet she did not, she dared not, resist this tyranny; not because she feared him, but because she feared herself. She had the feeling that one might have who had come in contact with a new and hitherto unknown natural force. She feared lest resistance or independence should bring upon her a greater wonder, a greater sadness and loss than that which she had already brought upon herself.

And so she submitted to that which in her first youth would no more have been endured by her than the bit by the wild horse.

The apricot blossom has fallen and fruit has followed it; the leaves have fallen and the trees are bare. The sky is gray and wild above, the ground dank and soft with fallen leaves below. The aspect of the place has changed, but it is the same; the face and form of the woman have changed, but she is the same. She is alone again in the wild orchard, finding her way by instinct to the spot where her first lover died. She has found it. What is there? Some white bones that lie together; a skeleton. The woman's eyes fasten and feed on the sight and grow large and terrible. Horror at last is struck into her soul. This is all that is left of her young love, who died by her hand — white bones that lie in ghastly order! And the long hot days and sultry nights of her life have been given to a tyrant who has reaped no gladness and no satisfaction from her submission; for he has not learned yet even the difference between woman and woman. All alike are mere creatures like the wild things; creatures to hunt and to conquer. Dumbly in her dark heart strange questionings arise. She turns from this graveyard of her unquestioning time and goes back to her slavery. Through the years of her life she waits and wonders, looking blankly at the life around her. Will no answer come to her soul?

## **AFTER SLEEP, AWAKENING**

Splendid was the veil that shielded her from that other soul, the soul she knew and of which she showed her recognition by swift and sudden love. But the veil separated them; a veil heavy with gold and shining with stars of silver. And as she gazed upon these stars, with delighted admiration of their brilliance, they grew larger and larger, till at length they blended together, and the veil became one shining sheen gorgeous with golden broideries. Then it became easier to see through the veil, or rather it seemed easier to these lovers. For before the veil had made the shape appear dim; now it appeared glorious and ideally beautiful and strong. Then the woman put out her hand, hoping to obtain the pressure of another hand through the shining gossamer. And at the same instant he too put out his hand, for in this moment their souls communicated, and they understood each other. Their hands touched; the veil was broken; the moment of joy was ended and again the struggle began.

## *A LIFETIME*

Sitting, singing, on the steps of an old palace, her feet paddling in the water of a broad canal, was a child who was becoming more than a child; a creature on the threshold of life, of awakening sensation. A girl, with ruddy gold hair, and innocent blue eyes, that had in their vivid depths the strange startled look of a wild creature. She was as simple and isolated in her happiness as any animal of the woods or hills — the sunshine, the sweet air with the faint savor of salt in it, her own pure clear girlish voice, and the gay songs of the people that she sang — these were pleasure enough and to spare for her.

But the space of unconscious happiness or unhappiness which heralds the real events of a life was already at an end. The great wave which she had set in motion was increasing in volume ceaselessly; how long before it shall reach the shore and break upon that far-off coast? None can know, save those whose eyesight is more than man's. None can tell; and she is ignorant, unknowing. But though she knows nothing of it, she is within the sweep of the wave, and is powerless to arrest it until her soul shall awake.

"My blossom, my beautiful wild flower," said a voice close beside her. A young boatman had brought his small vessel so gently to the steps she had not noticed his approach. He leaned over his boat toward her, and touched her bare white feet with his hand.

"Come away with me. Wild Blossom," he said. "Leave that wretched home you cling to. What is there to keep you there now your mother is dead? Your father is like a savage and makes you live like a savage too. Come away with me, and we will live among people who will love you and find you beautiful as I do. Will you come? How often have I asked you. Wild Blossom, and you have never answered. Will you answer now?"

"Yes," said the girl, looking up with grave, serious eyes, that had beneath their beauty a melancholy meaning, a sad question.

The man saw this strange look and interpreted it as clearly as he could.

"Trust me," he said, "I am not a savage like your father. When you are my little wife I will care for you far more dearly than myself. You will be my soul, my guide, my star. And I will, shield you as my soul is shielded within my body, follow you as my guide, look up to you as to a star in the blue heavens. Surely you can trust my love. Wild Blossom?"

He had not answered the doubt in her heart, for he had not guessed what it was, nor could she have told him. For she had not yet learned to know what it was, nor to know of it more than that it troubled her. But she put it aside and silenced it now, for the moment had come to do so. Not till she had learned her lesson much more fully could the question ever be expressed even to her own soul, and before this could be, the question must be silenced many times.

"Yes," she said, "I will come."

She held out her hand to him as if to seal the compact. He interpreted the gesture by his own desire, and taking her hand in his drew her toward him. She yielded and stepped into the boat. And then he quickly pushed away from the steps, and, dipping his oars in the water, soon had gone far away down the canal. Blossom, looking earnestly back, watched the old palace disappear. In some of its old rooms and on its sunny steps her child-life had been spent. Now she knew that was at an end. She understood that all was changed henceforth, though she could not guess into what she was going, and she waited for her future with a strange confidence in the companion she had accepted. This puzzled her dimly. Yet how should she lack confidence having known him long ago and thrown away his love and his life beneath the wild apricot trees, having seen afterward the steadfastness of his love when her soul stood beside his in soul life?

A long way they went in the little boat. They left the canals and went out upon the open sea, and still the boat-man rowed unwearingly, his eyes all the while upon the beautiful wild blossom he had plucked and carried away with him to be his own, his dear and adored possession. Far away along the coast lay a small village of fishermen`s cots. It was to this that the young man guided his boat, for it was here he dwelled.

At the door of his cot stood his old mother, a quaint old woman with wrinkled, rosy face, wearing a rough fishwife`s dress and coarse shawl; her brown hand shaded her eyes as she watched her son's boat approaching. Presently a smile came on her mouth. "He's gotten the blossom he's talked of so often in his sleep. Will he be happy now, the good lad?"

He was truly a good lad; for his mother knew him well, and the more she knew him the deeper grew her love. She would do anything for his happiness. And now she took to her arms the child, the Blossom, and cherished her for his sake. Before many days had passed, the fishing village made a *fete* day for the wedding of its strongest boatman. And the women's eyes filled with tears when they looked at the sad, tender, questioning face of the beautiful Wild Blossom.

She had given her love without hesitation, in complete confidence. She had given more; herself, her life, her very soul. The surrender was now complete.

And now, when all seemed done and all accomplished, her question began to be answered. Dimly she knew that, spite of the husband at whose feet she bowed, spite of the babes she carried in her arms, till their tiny feet were strong enough to carry them down over the shore to the marge of the blue waters, spite of the cottage home she garnished and cleansed and loved so dearly, spite of all, her heart was hungry and empty. What could it mean, that though she had all, she had none? Blossom was grown a woman now, and there were some lines of care and of pain on her forehead. Yet still she was beautiful, and still she bore her child-name of Blossom; but the beauty of her face grew sadder and more strange as the years went by, the years that bring ease and satisfaction to the stagnant soul. Wild Blossom's soul was eager and anxious; she could not still the mysterious voices of her heart, and these told her (though perhaps she did not always understand their speech) that her husband was not in reality her king; that he heard no sound from that inner region in which she chiefly existed. For him there was contentment in the outward life that he lived, in sheer physical pleasure, in the excitement of hard work, and the dangers of the sea, in the beauty of his wife, the mirth of his happy children. He asked no more. But Wild Blossom's eyes had the prophetic light in them. She saw that ill this peace must pass, this pleasure end; she recognized that these things did not, could not, absolutely satisfy the spirit; her soul seemed to tremble within her as she began to feel the first dawn of the terrible answer to her sad questioning.

*A deeper dream of rest,  
A stronger waking.*

Many a long year later, a solitary woman dwelled in that fisherman's cottage on the shore of the blue sea. She was old and bowed with age and trouble. But still her eyes were brighter than any girl's in the village, and held in them the mysterious beauty of the soul; still her hair, once golden, now gray, waved about her forehead. The people loved her and were kind to her, for she was always gentle and full of generous thought. But they never understood her, for they were long ages behind her in her growth. She was ready now for the great central test of personal existence; the experience of life in civilization. When the old fishwife lay dead within her cottage, and the people came to grieve beside her body, they little guessed that she was going on to a great and glorious future; a future full of



spoken of by occultists, that pleasure and pain are the same. It is so, for both are sensation, and there is no true means of discriminating between the kinds of sensations. What is pleasure to one person is pain to another. Had Fleta been a magician at heart and nothing more, this solitude, this utter loneliness, would have wrapped her round with comfort, as a garment might. It would have given her opportunity for personal thought, for plotting and scheming. But she was not that; she was only a magician, because of her innate power and the blindness of her ignorance. Her heart was tender now, full of love; but she knew not how, with this love in her to forget her utter loneliness.

Yet it must be forgotten. She succeeded in changing her attitude toward it, in retreating from the agony and making it only sensation, which it was possible to regard as pleasure. At last it became pleasure. But she knew it had to be more than this. It had to be nothing!

It came at last, suddenly, this is consciousness. The fact that she w<sup>^</sup>as alone — that everything and everyone had fallen away from her, was nothing. And why — because she was nothing.

And then a new vigor flashed into her being. Something so strong it was, as though light ran through her veins instead of blood. Something so pure, it blotted out all memory of self. She rose to her feet.

"For all that lives, I live!"

Her voice rang out on the air and startled herself. It seemed unrecognizable, it was so bell-like. She looked down, and her glance fell on the dial. It was sun-down.

For a second, which seemed like a superb eternity, she stood quite still, her mind, her soul, her being, bathed in an unconsciousness which was more vivid than any consciousness. And then she fell forward, her face upon the earth, beside the rose-bush<sup>^</sup> among the flowers.

## **EPILOGUE**

Two months later the agent visited the now-deserted Dower House, and then the castle. He found the door of the haunted room standing open for the first time in his experience. He looked in timidly, and saw nothing but a few autumn leaves, seemingly blown by the wind about the bare floor. Shuddering, he closed the door and went away.

Some wayward impulse prompted him, before leaving the castle grounds, to go down to the Lady's Walk and look at the sea. But he did not look at it, for the moment he entered the Walk he saw a figure lying among the flowers, and his whole attention was given to that. A woman — motionless, richly dressed, and with beautiful hair, which had fallen loose and lay beside her on the earth. What could it mean? Nerving himself he approached and touched her. Instantly he knew she was dead, and with a shudder of dread, turned the face upward. Ah, what a sight! None could tell this had been a human face save by the bones.

Where was Fleta's beauty now? Where was Fleta?

The End