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## Black Roses

Renzo Novatore

1920

I was lying on my purple bed – I don't know for how long – , but I couldn't relax. My temples throbbed, my forehead burned as if with fever, in my brain a jumble of murky thoughts whirled, and, cursing, I vainly implored Morpheus to gather me up in his arms.

Suddenly, I saw the door of my room burst open, and gently, an *Unpredictable* entered.

I looked at her: her beautiful, deep eyes held all the secrets of the sky and all the mysteries of the seas. Her hair was long and blond. The perfume of the ripe pomegranate wafted from her mouth, awaiting the eager bite. Her rosy hands were fine and transparent, and her tiny feet were white and graceful.

Who was she? I don't know. Only she was different from the other *Unpredictable* who had already appeared to me.

She approached me smiling and sweetly ran her slender fingers through my long and unkempt hair.

“My sweet one, my poor mad man,” she said to me, “why do you always torment yourself so? Don't you see that your black hair is already turning whit at the temples? Don't you see that your poor eyes are popping out of your head and that your facial muscles change the cast of your features into the

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twinge of a violent contraction? Don't you see how you are transfigured? Why this futile and endless torment of yours? Am I not the one you dreamed of, the one you waited for? Here I am!

"Ah, come, come with me, my poor man, my tender love.

"You love flights, deep seas, eternal noons. I know! I know, and I understand you.

"Come! Come! I have a fragrant scent, virginity and youth... I have an aura of intangible beauty, visions and dreams within me...

"Come with me! I will take you far, far away, into my noble house: a white cloud wandering in the regions of the sun.

"A magical wind of divine madness will emanate from the *Unknown* to rock us on the waves of a radiant dream.

"We will have a bed of white flowers that will never wither, and we will be happy, happy...

"I will strip off my fantastic veil, lie down at your feet and play on my lyre for you, the most beautiful music that has ever been played."

I had to be pale and thoughtful at that moment!

The *Unpredictable* spoke, she spoke without pause, and her gentle words penetrated into the deepest part of my mind like sweet music, like an infinite song.

My heart was moved, and my eyes were bathed in tears.

Meanwhile, the tiny hand kept running through the forest of my hair.

"My poor friend," she went on, "you are ill, very ill... but I will heal you, at least I hope to."

I reached out my bony hands, damp with cold sweat, to grasp that blond head and pull it against my panting breast.

"Ah! no... Not now," she told me, "when we get up there."

\* \* \*

What a tragic thing life is! What a horrendous conquest, tomorrow!

The very evening that followed the apparition was the most terrible I had ever passed through.

I left with the *Unpredictable*, and we wandered the whole night together in silence, and the whole following morning. In the afternoon, we reached the white cloud in the golden regions of the sun. The *Unpredictable* kept her promise... She removed the ruddy veil that covered her body, and naked and pale she offered herself to my greedy eyes. She loosened the curls of her blond hair and it fell on her snowy shoulders, and, squatting at my feet, she took up her lyre and sang me the most beautiful song that a human being could hear.

She sang while she looked fixedly into my gaping eyes as if she were searching there for my soul.

I was overcome, intoxicated, I kissed her savagely, brutally on her moist mouth of fragile rose.

Ah! fatal kiss...

Her face turned purple-blue, her eyes glazed over, the fire of her beautiful pupils was spent and her adorable body stiffened in my arms.

She was dead!

Had I just killed her? Had she wanted to die?

...

Now my muse is ringed in black, and my lyre plays funeral dirges. A black veil covers my emotions.

I feel that my mind would like to free itself once more beyond the borders of sorrow in search of the paths that lavish summer quilts with herbs and flowers; but *Fate*, against which man powerlessly roars and represses his rage, has mortally wounded her. Then the flowers — the beautiful white flowers — withered for her and the clouds dispersed — the beautiful house of dreams — and clasping the corpse of the *Unpredictable*, I fell into the abyss.

A funeral march echoed inside me. Perhaps, tomorrow, I too will be dead.

Now I can no longer laugh at anything or anyone; I am alone with my sorrow. I believe that I am a flower born in the field of death, because I feel within myself the deadly and anguished moan of all the deceased.

Yes, I still feel the warm kiss of the sun and the caresses of the wind in my hair, but the illness — my real illness — comes from roots that still cling to the land in which I was born.

Others — those like me — are already dead or will die tomorrow, but she who should not have died is now dead.

And my *illness* is such that now I see the whole face of reality.

Unsatisfied, therefore, with the world of men, I develop the desire for a life that I have not lived and that perhaps no one could live. My forehead is ringed with large black roses: the roses of death. Iconoclasts, laugh, a funeral passes.