

Fleurie

translated by

Ross G. Arthur

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Alexander was a very handsome and amorous knight. He was married to a beautiful, virtuous lady named Iole, who was very humble in speech, and they had a beautiful daughter named Fleurie. When she was about fifteen years old, her mother died, leaving the daughter devastated.

Because she was so beautiful, the King was so much in love with her that he could not control his affections for her. He could not have his way with her properly; so that he could enjoy her legally, he made an edict, despite the fact that it was contrary to reason and against the law to do it: by special permission, henceforth the kings of Hungary could marry their daughters if they wanted.

Fleurie realized that this edict was contrary to reason and that it was made because of her. To turn her father away and to change his emotions for her, she spoke to her servant Agrapine, who had raised and instructed her: "My governess, my friend, you know that we should love, fear, serve and honor God above all things, and that it would be better to suffer death than to do otherwise. Now it is true that my lord the King has just made an edict because of me which is contrary to God and the law. And so I would like you to find out from him what it is that makes him love me like this and to want me for his wife, and what it is about me that most pleases him. When I know this, I will act in such a way that he will have to be satisfied."

Agrapine went to the King and performed the task Lady Fleurie had set for her very well. The King replied that he loved and was pleased by everything about his daughter, especially her beautiful hands.

She reported this to Lady Fleurie, who said, "Sweet God, my creator, I wish to obey You, and I prefer to die rather than that my lord the King, my father, should put himself outside the law on my account. Pardon me,

my creator, for what I am about to do for love of You; this should satisfy him somewhat."

She had brought everything necessary for cutting off her hands and for caring for her afterwards so that death would not result. She summoned one of her chief servants, whom she could trust, and her maid Agrapine; she closed the door behind them, and said, "It is necessary for you to obey me if you want at all to have my love. You must know that my lord the King, my father, loves me uncontrollably, and wants to marry me and have me as his wife, which is contrary to reason. It is the case that everything about me pleases him, especially my hands. In this I will give him satisfaction, for I will have them cut off and I will send them to him as a gift. You must cut them off, and you, Agrapine, take them to him."

When they heard what she wanted, they did not want to obey her or cut them off. Fleurie began to change color, to grow red with anger, but she threatened them so harshly that her servant cut them off for her and cared for the wound as well as he could. Then she sent him to France with plenty of money, and told him that if the King banished her she would come to see him in the city of Paris.

Then she had Agrapine take her hands as a gift. When the King saw them he almost went mad and lost his mind, and he went for a long time without speaking because of his sorrow. Then he summoned his council and told them what his daughter Fleurie had done, much to their astonishment. Then he ordered that she be burnt in his presence. His counsellors told him not to be so cruel toward his own flesh and blood, and said that he would be greatly blamed for it; rather, he should put her and her damsel Agrapine in a boat on the sea, and let God do with her as He pleased, and let them go wherever they could go. The King agreed to this, and so it was done. The wind took them to the port of Marseille.

The day they arrived, Varon the Count of Provence noticed their boat and went to see them. When he saw this beautiful woman with no hands, he felt great pity for her. He brought them to his lady mother, and gave orders that they should be treated well. Lady Hecuba, the Count's mother, was not pleased about it, but the Count was very happy to gaze at Fleurie's beauty. She pleased him greatly, and so he loved her very

much; he asked her to be his mistress, but she refused. But because the Count was very insistent about it, she answered him: "My father and sustaining lord, I would never perform such a dishonorable deed, for the love of God my creator and of the place I have come from, and I would rather have to beg for my bread. Please, do not ask me again to sin." Then she told him where she came from and the reason why she had no hands. When he heard the story, he was astonished, and said to her: "Because I see that you are so good, and you are the daughter of a king, if it pleases you I will take you as my wife." She agreed to this humbly, and married him.

But his mother Lady Hecuba was very angry.

And she conceived by him a beautiful son. When she was in her sixth month, the Count went to Hungary to find out the truth of the matter. When he arrived there, he was uncertain how to go about enquiring, for the events with Fleurie had happened in secret.

It was reported to the King that the Count of Provence had arrived in his country and that it was appropriate to entertain him according to his rank. "But surely," said the King, "I can not. I am unable to be joyous because of the harm that I did to my daughter. But please, my lords, you entertain him lavishly with my wealth, for he has been my dear friend for a long time." When the Count had been graciously received by the lords of the country, he went to thank the King, and asked him the cause of his anxiety, and the King told him the truth. When the Count heard it, he knew and recognized that what his wife had told him was true, and felt that he had been greatly honored.

At the end of nine months, she gave birth to a beautiful child who was named Lamorad. Fleurie ordered that her husband should be informed, since he sired it. When the messenger had the letters, he went to see the old Countess to find out if she wanted to write anything to the lord Count her son. She said she did not, "but if anyone asks you, say that you did not speak to me because you were in such a hurry." She had the letter he was taking secretly removed, and gave him another which reported that the young Countess had carried and given birth to a monster which had no hands, the face of a dog and the body of a human.

When the Count received the letter, at first he crossed himself and felt worried, but then he wrote back to say they should take care of his

wife and the monster. The messenger returned again to the old Countess, because of the warm welcome she had given him. She had his letter taken away again, without his knowledge, and replaced it with a false letter. It said that the Count of Provence ordered his officers, as soon as they saw this letter, to deliver the country by the death of his wife and son, and that he was very sorry that he had taken her as his wife, since she had no hands and since it was most displeasing to his lady mother and to all his fiends.

When the lords and officers of the country had seen and heard this letter, they said that they would not put them to death, but would send Fleurie and her son, out to sea to take their chances in a boat, and would leave it to God to decide; for they thought her perfectly virtuous and beautiful. She was put into a boat and arrived, as it pleased God, in a place where there were charitable nuns of good repute. When they knew that she had come, they went to see her, and asked her where she was going and who had brought her there. "The grace of God," she replied, and asked them to welcome her in their convent, out of charity; they did so willingly.

When the Count had learned all about his wife and knew that she had told him the truth, he returned to his country expecting to find his wife. When he learned what had been to her, he almost fell into despair. Then he sent for his mother, who confessed the truth to him. When she had confessed the truth and acknowledged her treason, he condemned her to die shamefully, and swore that he would never rest until he had found his wife. He travelled through many lands, but he could never hear any news of her, but endured great troubles in his attempt to find her. It happened that as the Count was returning to his country by sea, he heard the bells of the convent where his wife was staying. He went in that direction. As he arrived, his wife was hearing mass most devoutly, as was her custom. When the priest who was celebrating mass was about to say the *Agnus Dei*, and when he had taken the worthy and holy sacrament, the clerk who was helping him was forced to leave because of a flux in the stomach and didn't return in time. The priest had no one who could or was willing to help him serve the host. Fleurie, who was hearing mass, stepped forth, moved by good will; she thought she would come and help the priest serve; but she could not do as she wanted

because she had no hands, but she tired very hard. Therefore, when God saw and recognized her good will and intentions, He performed a great miracle for Fleurie, for He gave her back her hands; she gave thanks and praise to our Lord Jesus Christ. And when the priest saw this, after he had praised God by singing mass, he had the bells rung, so much that the ladies came running; when they saw the obvious miracle, they praised God for it devoutly.

When the Count had come in, he was well received and honored. When he had made his prayers, the nuns prayed him to take some food, and he agreed gracefully. Then, when he had dined and given thanks to God, he began to tell them about his voyage and what had inspired him to undertake it, and how he had not found what he was searching for. As he was telling them his story, his and Lady Fleurie's son, little Lamorad, who was already six years old, a beautiful and attractive child, sat on the Count's lap and made friends with him. The Count smiled and said, "God bless you, you are a pretty child." And he looked very intently at the nuns, so the abbess said to him, "My lord, what is it that makes you laugh and look at us so intently one after the other? Certainly it seems to me that you have some wicked suspicions."

"That is true," said the Count, "but I won't say them to you."

"I believe," said the abbess, "that you think this child belongs to one of us."

"You have guessed very well," said the Count. Then the abbess told him that the child belonged to a young woman she was caring for, out of love for God, and that when she came there she had no hands, but her appearance and behavior showed that she was descended from nobility. And today as she was hearing mass, God had returned her hands to her by a miracle, and she had been returned to health.

When the Count heard this story, he praised God in his heart and recognized clearly that it was his wife, and asked to be taken to her. When he knew her and she him, they embraced each other with great love.

The Count stayed there with her and his son for two weeks, during which time he sent word back home, and made generous donations to the convent. Then he took his wife and his son Lamorad back to Provence and treated her most grandly.

He informed her father Alexander of the whole situation; he came to visit them, and then took them back to Hungary and turned over all his kingdom to them, for he was very old. To win salvation, he became a monk and lived a very holy life.

The King—the former Count of Provence—and his wife reigned for a long time with great joy, honor and nobility. Then they died in God. Lamorad, their son, reigned after them, bringing prosperity to his country and defending Christianity. And he died as a knight errant.

Source: *Nouvelles Françaises Inédites du Quinzième Siècle* ed. Ernest Langlois (Paris, 1908; rpt. Slatkine: Geneva, 1975).