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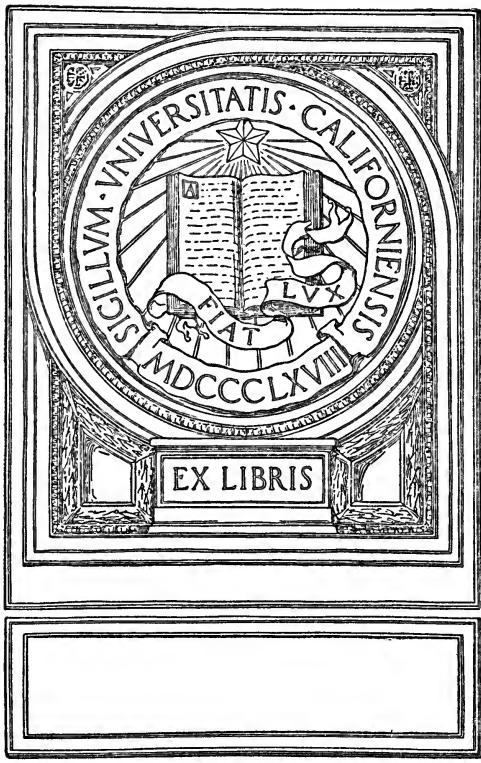
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The ROSE
OF DAWN

A TALE of
The SOUTH SEA

HELEN HAY

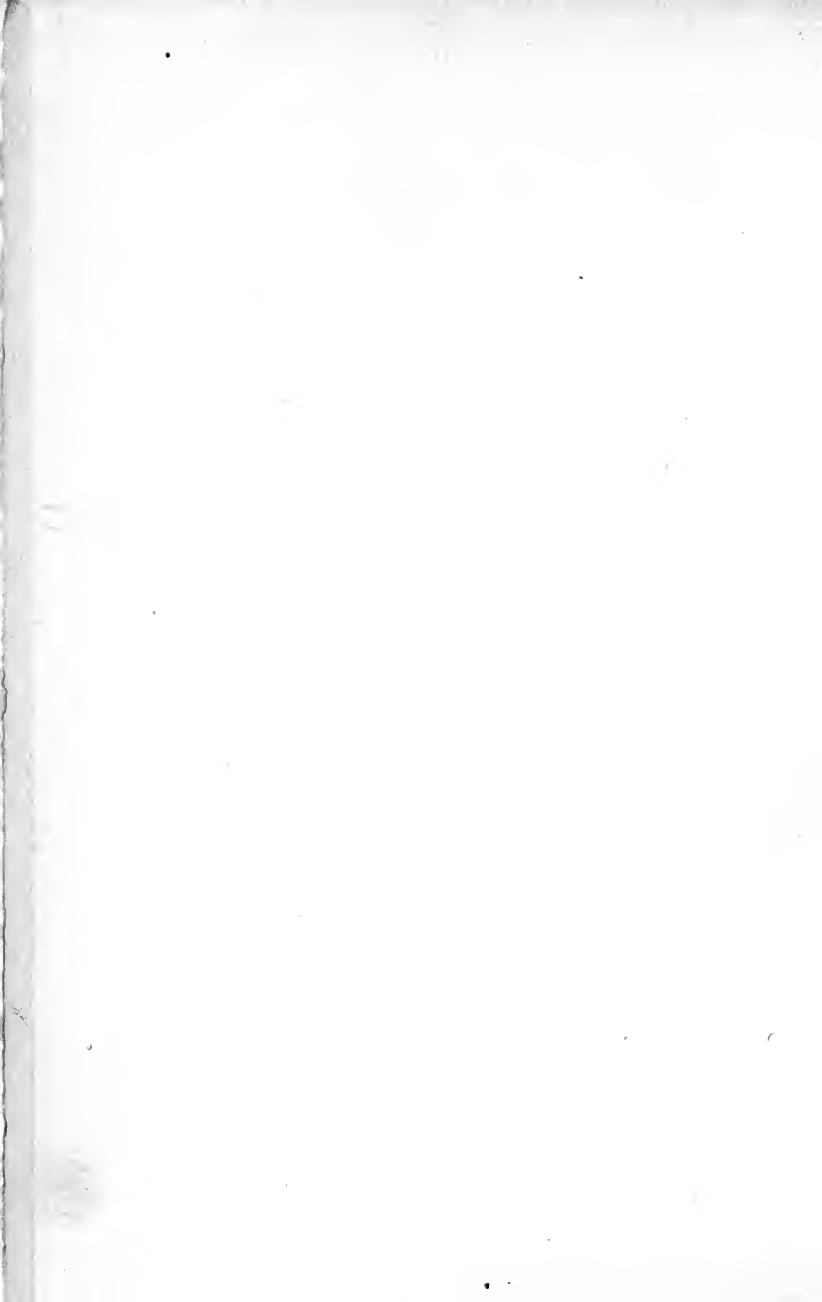
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THE ROSE OF DAWN

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The Rose of Dawn

A TALE OF THE SOUTH SEA

By HELEN HAY *Whitney*

With a Drawing by
JOHN LA FARGE



NEW YORK
CALIFORNIA

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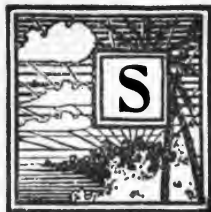
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The ROSE OF DAWN
A TALE OF THE SOUTH SEA

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MAIN



OMNOLENT, vast, in-
ert, the darkness lay
Waiting for dawn. Across
the ocean stirred
A luminous haze, not light,
but whispering light,

So softly yet, the islands had not heard.
The mystery of sleep was in the trees
And on the weary stars. A little cry
That broke the silence seemed a sacri-
lege.

Then thro' the palm trees glided like a
ghost

A dusky form ; the curtain of the dark
Was rent with life, the forest brought
forth men.

Instinct with morning every eye was
bright,

Tho' sleep so lately lay across their lids.
No sinister intent had called them forth

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Upon the shadows. May held out her hands,
And all the men who dared the dangerous sport
Were faring where the great bonita played, —
Strong shining fish below the mid sea waves.
Upon the beach beneath the paling moon
The boats were launched. Amid the busy stir
One man stood idle ; as a chief might order,
He bade the youths prepare his long canoe.
With folded arms he gravely watched the rest
And gave them salutation haughtily.
Uhila * was he called, and in his veins
There ran a slender stream of northern blood.
He bore upon his old and indolent heart,
Scarred with the sins of war, a white device.
Taka, daughter of chiefs and Fiji's pride,
Lily of maidens, was betrothed to him ;

* The lightning.

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Desirous eyes kinged him with envy's
crown.

Scraping across the beach the boats were
launched,

And as they touched the waves, they
seemed to take

New shape and dignity with that caress
Of little lapping ripples round the prow.

Uhila led the fleet as one who knew

His right by reason of his age and skill.

The little isle seemed now a sleeping
maid

Kirtled in green, the beach her snowy
breast

Veined with the purple brooks that sought
the sea.

Uhila watched it fade below the blue,

Crouched in the bow, his grizzled chin in
hand,

Taking his ease, while small Kuma,
keen-eyed,

Famed for his daring, paddled lustily.

The dawn had not yet broken, and the
soft

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Beautiful haze that veils the birth of day
Hung on the water. Loath to break the
peace,

Men gave their orders in hushed tones,
the clean

Chill of the morning wrapt their naked
bodies.

Then, as a slow blush mounts the cheek,
a light

Breathed from the sea, and all the air
seemed warm

As at the touch of spring, a violet streak,
A pale leaf green, a golden, and a rose
Broke in the sky, and morning was re-
vealed.

With a shrill cry, young Kuma raised
his hand

And pointed where with dip and shriek
and wheel

A flock of sea birds hovered ; all the rest
Echoed the call and bending to the
paddle

Shot o'er the waves, for now the fish were
gained.

Uhila grasped his rod, and at the stern

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Tossed out the shining hook, with laugh
and cheer

A glint of silver flashed, then all the air
Was gemmed with streaming stars. They
came from deeps ;

From azure fairer than its mother sky
Clouded with dazzling whitenesses of
foam.

Luck to their fishing:

Now, fair and remote

A scattered emerald from a broken chain
Lying below the bending breast of heaven,
The village had awakened, — once again
Serene Kambara, island of the south,
Exhaled its light upon the light of heaven.
The verdure seemed to shine with lucent
green,

The red hibiscus burned with inward
flame,

And in the village happy song and shout
Proclaimed the day was fair. Blue upon
blue

The bright waves glittered like a shat-
tered star

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Set in the silver crescent of the sand.
The palm trees' plume uplifted daunt-
lessly
To call the morning. At the forest's
brim
The day was made alive by human
flowers,
Sweet maidens who against the emerald
Showed warm and brown in purest har-
mony.
The fierce bright flame that is the tropic
sea
Burned on their eyes and called them to
its heart.
Like eager sea birds they forgot the land,
And, happy as the amorous waves, they
gave
Their slim brown bodies to the sea's em-
brace.
They found them driftwood and astride
they leapt
The feathered breakers, one with daring
skill
Curved her sweet length to lie within the
palm

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Of a strong wave, and so was brought to
shore.

“Taka,” they cried, “has beaten us;”
and all,

Shaking the bright drops from their shin-
ing hair,

With laugh and song sprang to the beach
again,

Sunning themselves to languor ere they
made

Their pretty toilet.

Some had gathered flowers

In fragrant wreaths, and others brought
the grave

Work of the morning. Yet because the
wine —

Sun of the South — gilds even toil, it
seemed

A poet's pastime. Scarlet beans they
threaded

Later to lie about some golden throat.

Deftly they wove fine mats, and deftly
twisted

Bright witchery to adorn themselves, and
snare

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Men's eyes. With little songs they
pearled the air.

Hush! it is Taka singing: —

“ Far away
In a fountain dwelt a maiden ;
When the silver moon was high
She was glad, but heavy laden
Was she when its light must die.
Far away.

“ Far away
Came a stranger brave to love her,
Loved her when the moon was high ;
When the moon was pale above her
Love grew pale and like to die
Far away.

“ Far away
From the fountain's mist he drew her
Happy while the moon was high,
Waning, fled she, her pursuer
Held her back, and saw her die
Far away.”

“ 'T is a sad song for morning,” cried
the maids —

THE ROSE OF DAWN

“And for a bride. Come, Hopa, sing of laughter.”

Hopa sang : —

“Little brown streams,
Slim as my fingers,
Running and laughing
While the light lingers,
Have you no dreams,
Little brown streams?”

“Little brown maidens,
Laughing and weeping,
Singing and dancing,
All the night sleeping,
Have you no lovers,
Little brown maidens?”

Afar there sounded in the mellow breeze
The rhythmic movement of the maidens'
toil ;

Before them on the sand a snowy sheet
Lay spread, — the tapa cloth ; tutunga
trees

Yield them their inner bark, and lightly then
The maidens tap the fibres till they join,

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Made firm with scented gums and bright
with dyes,

To form a fabric that a bride might choose,
And this was for a bride. Among the
rest

One maiden shone ; a moon beside her
stars,

Taka, the fair. Her father was the chief
Of this small village. His the splendid
store

Of kava bowls for which the isle is famed,
The shining fish-hooks, fairest of mother
of pearl,

Great mats from ancient days with border
rare

Of crimson feathers, cruel tragic spears,
Sweet unguents, necklaces of pearly shells
Envied by maidens, and above them all
Bales of the snowy tapa, made by hands
Subtle, wise hands of women, over whom
The earth had long laid flowers.

In the land

Where history is but a charming tale
Droned by old men at twilight, future
days

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Pleasantly certain as the next repast,
Where gods and goddesses appear as
birds,
Trees, plants or moonlight, gently rising
tide,
And shining girdle of leaves, — all homely
things,
Which hold the people's hearts. — In this
fair land
Taka was born. Thro' sixteen years of
moon
And tropic sun she blossomed in the air.
Chilled by no frost, the world uncon-
sciously
Mirrored her sweetness back to her. The
sun
Had kissed her skin to a warm topaz;
rare
As dusky wealth of Autumn, her sweet
breast,
Gleaming and bare, was hung with ropes
of flowers
Yellow and white, and in her curling hair
Glimmered the pure gardenia. All the
braves

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Wished her for wife, but old Akau the chief,

Knowing Uhila's prowess and the blood
Left by an English forbear in his veins,
Knowing that Taka too could boast, or
mourn,

A foreign ancestry, had lately pledged
His daughter to this brave, and now the
village

Made preparations for the marriage.
There

By the warm sea the maidens paid their
court

To Taka, who so soon would leave their
gay

Indifferent frolic lives to wed the grave
Stern chief. She did not falter at the
choice.

Love which the maidens sang was but a
word ;

She wished no better fate than to be
mated

To a strong warrior whom her heart held
dear

As friend to kind Akau. So she waited.

THE ROSE OF DAWN

In her slim hands she held a polished cup,
The shell of cocoanut, which caught the
light

Like a brown pool. The toil of many
days

Had turned the tawny shade to warmest
black

In gradual depths as shaded Taka's
cheek ;

With perfumed oil her fingers gave caress
And waked the hidden pictures in the
grain,

The yellow sand, the dusky amber girl,
The brown perfected in the shining globe.
Earth's monotonies are justified in this.

Close to her lolled small Hopa, blithe
and gay

As a young cricket, teasing all the rest
With her sharp wit ; often she dropped
her work—

The threading of bright flowers into
wreaths—

To look across the waves, and suddenly
She called, "A sail, a little sail," and
all

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Followed her pointing fingers. Far away,
Tossed like a feather, black against the
sky,
Hovered a tiny craft, its unknown lines
Marked it as stranger, and the maidens
all
Curiously watched its coming to the
shore.

All night the little shell with ceaseless
dip
And pause, and rise and dip again, had
borne
The trackless trade winds. Tui Tua
Kau,
"King of the Reefs," had ventured over
far
From Tonga's shore. Caught by a wan-
ton gale,
His idle racing, lengthened in a whim
To cheat his laughing mates, grew a wild
flight.
The frail canoe seemed, on the angry sea,
A sweet rose petal blown across the
night.

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Yet wisely now the winds had mind to
crown

Their joyous undertaking, and upon
The shores of Fiji's isles they drew their
prize.

The maidens on the shore had seen afar
The stranger's coming, and the songs
were stilled

To hush of expectation. Even so

A prince might come to claim his king-
dom, lone,

In a frail craft, with weary eyes, and
hair

Crowned with a fading wreath, more
beautiful

Than all their lovers, slender, strong and
young.

With one lithe spring he gained the yel-
low sand

And caught the boat and drew it with a
swing

High on the beach,—its movement seemed
alive.

His sinewy fingers loosed the flapping
sail,

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Gay shells clinked musical against the mast,
And all the maidens, timorous as birds,
Laughed at the sound with shy averted face.

Then straight and slender as the cocoa palm,

Straight as its shaft and crowned with shining hair,

The stranger lifted up his head. The wreath,

Faded yet still alive thro' ocean's breath,

Drooped o'er his brows. His flashing sun-bright eyes

Struck thro' the group of girls as shoots a dart,

And caught and quivered in sweet Taka's breast.

More noble than the rest, she scorned to fear,

And graceful in her modesty she faltered,

Then came to meet and greet the stranger guest.

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Erect she faced him, o'er her brow the
frail

Curves of the crest she wore, antennæ-
wise,

Trembled a little. As a maid beseems,
Her eyes drooped from his gaze, yet not
too soon

To miss the gleam with which he caught
the first

Flash of her beauty. With that glance
he gained —

Half conscious of a gladness — that this
maid

Was still for winning. As the custom is
Her hair fell in twin braids, and were she
wed

They had been sacrificed to that estate.

Maiden she was, his eyes caressed the sign

Black o'er the topaz beauty of her breast.

The stranger spoke. "Malua am I called;
I hold for title Tui Tua Kau.

Over the violent seas, beneath the frown,

Cold and untoward, of a starless sky,

The waves of chance have borne me; thro'
the night

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Around me and above the pitiless trades
Were blind with darkness, blown like
maiden's hair

Across my face. As palm trees beaten
by wind,

The tortured breakers tossed their stream-
ing crests,

And all the light of all my life seemed
dead —

Then — morning broke, and I behold the
sun ! ” —

He held her with his gaze and found her
eyes —

“On Tonga's shore I reigned a chief,
and now

I am a beggar at your mercy.” Then

The young pride mounting to his cheek,
he cried,

“Nay, but I jested, for I come so far
To green Kambara for a lordly bowl
Fit for the kava of a chief.”

She smiled,
And with the smile Malua felt the blood
Leap in his heart, his heart inviolate

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Never before so stirred 'neath woman's eyes.

"Come, then, with me," said Taka, and the beach

Stretched from their feet, a ribbon that should bind

In its white length the heaven to the earth.

With delicate step she led him to the hut

Where old Akau gave him kindly greeting.

A little in the shadow, where the gourds
And strange sweet herbs — soft musty fragrances —

Hung swinging from the beams about her head,

Taka withdrew. Her wide eyes opened wide,

And, lightly folded on her golden breast,
Her two hands lay like flowers.

In the light
Bright as a sun god sat Malua listening
With greatest reverence to the aged man,
Who spoke to him of ancient, long dead things

THE ROSE OF DAWN

While he displayed his wealth of burn-
ished cups
Out of the splendid eld. "My son," he
said,
"Yours is dim future, mine the deathless
past ;
Heroes have died for me and yet shall die,
And all the glory of the virgin earth
Yields up its sweets to me, for now I
rest
And stretch my withered sinews in the
sun
And wait for peaceful death ; because
your lips
Are innocent, and dawn is in your eyes,
I give you of my store the fairest trea-
sure.
After my Taka, you have won my
heart."
In his strong hand he laid a bowl ; for
this
The ages had paid toll, soft lightnings
shone
From its brown glory, carved most royally.
He raised the kava bowl aloft, the sun

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Struck on its shining rim, and straight as
a spear
Shivered the dusk where Taka stood.
The light
Lay on her swelling throat, and showed
her eyes
Starred like a tropic night. The stran-
ger's hand
Trembled a little, and his quick-drawn
breath
Carried a message from his breast to
hers.
They left the hut together. From the
clear
Bright heat of noon they turned, and took
their way
Into the greenly silent forest. Leaves
Flickered above wet blossoms, simple
sounds
Of homely labor borne upon the breeze
Made them the more alone. They spoke
of Love,
A mighty word to ease the strange new
pain
Born in their hearts.

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Sudden the path grew wide—
A little space deprived of flowers and
life—

“The house of sandal wood,” said Taka,
pointing,

And there, the last home of a chief, it
lay.

White shells and snowy pebbles girt him
round

In his great mould of clay, and all his
spears

And clubs of war kept vigil, showing
still

His might in battle. Shrill the parrot’s
scream

Rang on the desolation, and the trees
Seemed to withdraw their shadows from
the place

Sacred to death, the violent crime of
war.

A little shadow darkened Taka’s heart,
Could this sweet world contain both
death and love?

She sought Malua’s eyes to be assured
That love lives always.

THE ROSE OF DAWN

He had gone before
To hold the leaves for her to pass, and
softly
She came, and like a golden butterfly
Her small hand fluttered down upon his
arm.
He caught his breath as tho' the leaping
blood
That fled before this touch were very
flame,
Then slowly, slowly turned, and in her
eyes
Gave up his heart's desire. No word
was said.
She knew not that she loved, he only
knew
She was the moon of women; but their
hearts,
Wiser than they, had flowered into one.
Then as she passed beneath the swinging
leaves,
He caught the wreath wherewith on
Tonga's shore
The maids had crowned him "King of
Love and Beauty,"

THE ROSE OF DAWN

And cast it from him with a high disdain
Of token other than from Taka's hand.
She laughed to see it, and her step was
light
Along the flowery way.

Love in this land
Grows into perfect stature as the swift
Sweet growth of nature. In these gra-
cious souls
Love stood full-armed, godlike, from
birth. Their lips
Whispered of life and laughter, but their
hearts,
Singing together, told each other clear :

“ Ah, Love, dear Love, there is no need
to say,
Catch up life's song, its lightest, merriest
word,
Pledge deep the golden sun, the breeze
and bird,
Draw down long lashes over happy eyes,
That none may guess the light that in
them lies,

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Nor with what secret smile your lips are stirred.

The moonlight is so short, so long the day,
Nay, Love, dear Love, there is no need
to say."

The whole world laughed with flowers
overhead,

The sky a hollow sapphire ached with
blue,

The green bright sea gave jewels to the
sun,

And all the air was love that doting earth
Breathed to the sun, her lover.

In the midst

Two radiant gods with brave, wide eyes,
and hair

Crowned with the beatific spring, they
stood, —

Taka, the fair, and young Malua, fierce,
Passionate-hearted youth, and passionate
youth ;

Faltering before her innocent gaze, he
cried,

THE ROSE OF DAWN

“Dare I adore?” so crystal clear she
seemed

A silver dewdrop in the rose of dawn.

And Taka, trembling: “How can he be
mine,

So strong, so fair, a god with heart of
flame!”

And so they strove against their hearts
and lived

Long lives of hope and fear and love’s
sweet pain

Within a heart-beat. But the time was
near!

There in mid-forest, rimmed with leaves
jade green,

All singing in the sun,—as deep and
brown

As Taka’s eyes,—the pool disclosed
itself.

Across the clear light of the morning,
showers

Of fiery jewels shone against the trees,—

Rubies, bright sapphires, purple amethyst,

Topaz, fierce opal, grass-green emeralds

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Flitting and darting ; — were they only
birds !

Flower made bird or bird made flower,
they seemed

To eyes newborn upon a world of love.

The air was heavy with strange scents,
the old

Familiar perfumes seemed so rarely
sweet,

The jasmine was the very breath of
love.

And when they rested on a flowery
bank,

And Taka wove the red hibiscus wreath

To crown Malua, as he gazed at her,

Stretched at her feet, his chin upon his
hand,

The whole long world had waited but for
this.

(Weaving the rosy wreath.)

“ My dream was of thee at sunrise

With light steps over the sea.

Lonely upon the mountain,

I woke from my sleep for thee.”

THE ROSE OF DAWN

(Weaving the rosy wreath.)

“The wild dark rocks were round me,
The flowery maids were gone ;
I woke, thou — bright as lightning
Beside me — waited the dawn.

“Weaving the rosy wreath,
I weave my life in a dream.
Thou camest through dawn on the sea,
Red flower on a sunlit stream.”

(Weaving the rosy wreath.)

She laid the scarlet wreath upon his hair.
“My King,” she whispered, and Malua’s
eyes —
Boy, spite of all his battles — filled with
tears
Wrung from his burdened heart. He
caught her hand ;
The lake was hushed with noon-tide, far
away
A fond bird starred the forest with a cry.
Then Taka turned, and in her eyes a
light —
The light of summer moon in water still—

THE ROSE OF DAWN

And in her face the glamour of moon and
star,
On which the crimson petals of her lips
Lay trembling, eager wings to her new
soul,
Love was confessed.

The day went swiftly on.
Malua left her side to gather fruits
For a love feast together. In a dream
His heart had moved, and like a child he
longed
To prove it real by sweet familiar ways,
Serving his fairest lady while their
laughter
Fell on the air like music. Taka, waiting
On the green bank his coming, told her
heart :
“ Not for his beauty only, tho' his eyes
Burn into mine more beautiful than the
night,
Not for the corded muscle in his arm
Which broke a great branch that would
stay my path,
Not for his voice, a murmur of soft seas,

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Nor all the gracious ways he knows so well,

Not for his love that breaks within his eyes, —

All these are dear, are dearer than my life,

But for himself I love him," Taka dreamed.

"To be his sister, nay, his mother then,
To welcome him from hunting with my eyes,

To fight his battles with the other women,
To triumph in his triumphs, yet perchance

Be happier if when vanquished he would come

Safe in my arms for shelter. If I might
But suffer for his sake and see him stand
Stronger and happier — he should never guess —

But I might sometimes touch his hair
and know

The curls that clung around my fingers
mine,

Bought by my pain as he, Malua, mine.

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Just so the heaven belongs to each small
star

Fixed by its gracious power eternally.”

Thro' the late afternoon Uhila came.

The Earth was idle, on her knees her
hand

Opened, relaxed and empty, and her
eyes

Closed to the ardent sun. The village
slept,

Waiting for evening's cool. Uhila came;

Over his shoulder like a silver shroud

He brought the gleaming fish. The
purple shadows

Lay in soft pools about the palms; the
leaves,

Listless as weary love, hung motionless,

And the hot green gave color to the air,

The world viewed through an emerald.

He came,

And to Akau's hut he brought his gift,

A mighty fish to grace the wedding feast.

And where was Taka? All the gor-
geous day

THE ROSE OF DAWN

She had been absent, old Akau told ;
And of the stranger, wanderer, with eyes
Lit by the fires of youth, Akau told,
Like a glad wind of morning bearing
spring,
Spring with the heart of summer, and his
brow
Crowned with the calm white flowers of
innocence.
Uhila knew, in days long past he too
Had wandered thro' the forest in the
glory
And glow of youth.

With mouth set stern and grim
He followed to the pool. His heart was
stirred
With turbulent emotions. She was his, —
Taka was his, the blossom that should
cheer
The winter of his age. His springing
step
Was stealthy as a tiger's, and the way
Was clear before him. Rightly was he
named

THE ROSE OF DAWN

The lightning; keen and cruel he would
flash

Into this sky of love, death in his hand.

The path was strewn with little crimson
flowers

Scarlet festooned the trees, or was it
blood

That danced within his eyes? His thoughts
were vague:

Death, mercy, love, but strongest was
desire

Merely to see and satisfy his fear.

Sudden he saw them, and he hid his eyes

Before the sight, then strained to see
again

Taka, her arms piled high with blossoms,
stood,

An amber goddess of spring with flying
hair

Beneath a flower-bent branch, whose
leaves had caught

One of her sun-kissed curls. Malua
watched her.

Laughing, she would have torn away the
tress

THE ROSE OF DAWN

And with the effort all the starry flowers
Drifted like snow across their bended
heads,

But with a low cry he withheld her hand,
And standing where she needs must turn
to see

His two arms o'er her slender shoulder
laid,

With fingers little used to gentler arts
His timid touch unloosed her perfumed
hair,

Too near — for aught but that her curv-
ing throat

Should be upturned to meet his sure
caress,

And all the blossoms drifted thro' the air
And fell like blessings on their bended
heads.

Uhila bore no more ; his heart was great
With unshed tears ; their beauty and their
love

Touched like soft music on his injured
soul

With infinite sadness and a hopeless calm.

THE ROSE OF DAWN

He left them there and sought the forest
shades
To search his heart. A great nobility
Slept in his native breast, and those pale
drops
Of northern blood had taught him self-
control
And might of mercy. To and fro he
paced,
Learning his lesson. Taka, little moon
Sent by the gods to light his loneliness,
Was his no longer. He must twist his heart,
Wried with grim pain, to smiles of pleas-
antness.
Ah, it was great. Uhila should be great,
Giving her to Malua as a gift,
Showing Akau how he wished no more
To wed so young a maid, and then the
tears
Broke from his eyes and burned his
throbbing breast.
Homeward he turned, and all the sleepy
birds
Twittered good-night — and almost was
he glad.

THE ROSE OF DAWN

In the cool green of evening, silent now
Save for their beating hearts, the lovers
came

Back to the village. In the stranger's
honor

The people made a feast. The air was
filled

With busy sounds of preparation. Some
Brought driftwood for the fires, some
gathered flowers

To deck themselves, and all the fruitful
earth

Was robbed of its delights for beauty's
sake.

Before the feasting Chief Akau rose,
Grave and majestic, for the evening prayer;
Pouring libation from the kava bowl
In a deep silence, to the gods he cried,

“Take of our offering, O you mighty
gods,

Look on this people kindly, let them
prosper

In health and increase. Let the fecund
ground

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Grant us, your creatures, life to serve
you well.

Take of our offering, O you gods of
war,

Let men be brave and triumph in your
name.

Take of our offering, O you gods of
sea,

Spare us your wrath, and in your might
depart

Along the ocean to some far off shore.

Take of our offering, all you mighty
gods.”

The feasting ended, round the fires they
gathered,

Wise aged men telling anew their tales
Of youth, sweet purposeless youth which
dreams of stars

The while it gathers weeds — of battles
dire.

Their thin cold blood warmed with grim
memories

Of gods they told, of goddesses with hair
Streaming across the sunset, and of dear

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Women long dead, and then the maidens
came,
Singing their little songs. One sang of
love :

“ The breath of spring is in his hair,
He needs no crimson necklaces
To win the favor of the fair.

“ The full moon leaned to kiss his eyes,
The fairies brought him purple flowers,
The flowers of love, and made him wise.

“ The maidens die for his disdain,
His heart strikes silver lightning,
Their warm tears stir the flowers like
rain.

“ The breath of love is in his hair,
He needs no crimson necklaces
To win the fairest of the fair.”

Another sang of the sad mothers, lone
In their dark homes at evening, while
beyond
The limitless twilight on some field of war
Their hearts lie dead.

THE ROSE OF DAWN

“ O my men, my men !

Keen in the rain and sunshine
For glorious splendid deeds,
You are gathered as idle weeds.

“ O my men, my men !

The mighty gods were jealous,
Your virtues shone like a star ;
The enemy came from afar !

“ O my men, my men !

Vengeance shall follow soon,
Your people shall blast the foe
Or ever the cold winds blow.

“ O my men, my men !

My life is an empty shell,
No one has heard my moan,
I sit in the dark alone.”

Then of the gods they sang, — a moon-
light song :

“ Sleep, O soft little winds,

Restless whispering grass,
Reeds of the water-ways sway not,
Sleep, that the gods may pass.

THE ROSE OF DAWN

“Deepen, you dreams of the sleepers,
Veil you, O fire of the moon.
Darken, you silver of stars,
Sleep, for the gods come soon.

“Sleep, for the gods who sleep not
Pass on the midnight’s breath;
Mystical, magical, secret,
Sleep, for to wake is death.”

And after singing came the dance; the
brown
Lithe women decked with bright fantastic
hues
Wavered into the circle of the light.
Kneeling, they wove their spells. As
gracious flowers
Swayed by the winds of evening, they
were blown
By breezes of desire. The eye was filled
With luxury of soft motion and the sound
Of soft monotonous chanting charmed the
ear.
Then in their midst came Taka, and
she stood,

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Waiting the signal. Slow she raised her
arms,

Slow as tho' ages hung upon her hands
Heavy with burdened love. The music
hushed.

Deep in the mystery of her steady eyes
Lingered the secret of the world, and
then

Laughter and light came dancing from
her smile.

Her fingers fluttered on the harp of love,
And every chord uttered itself again
Within some dusky heart. The earth
was still.

The warm night air was strong with heavy
scent

Of oil upon the dancers and the flowers
That decked their breasts and hair.
Malua's soul

Fainted beneath the load of so much
love,

And when the dance was finished, and
her eyes

Held him for one long second ere she
smiled

THE ROSE OF DAWN

And stole away, he knew for death or
life

His spirit lay within her golden hands.

Woe for Uhila! As the twilight glow
Faded in soft immeasurable plains
Of darkness, so the beauty in his heart
Faded in clouds of wrath. The great
fire blazed —

A ruby in the raven hair of night —
And clear across the flames Uhila saw
His rival, garlanded with blossoms, pale,
Calm as a happy lover. Could he smile
Over his empty hands and meekly bow —
Uhila bow! — to taste a stranger's whip!
Death snapped the sparks, and Vengeance
hurled the flames.

Like blood the fire fell o'er the bare young
heart,

And he who watched in one mad bound
foresaw

How blood indeed might flash across that
breast.

The high resolve grew dim in that fierce
light,

THE ROSE OF DAWN

“'T is noble, strong ;” then, in a stab of
keen

Humor, he saw again a native brave
Decking his naked body with the coat
Crowned with the hat of some sea-faring
man, —

Aping the civilization of his stride
Till his new prowess fell to comrade's
jeers.

So with a tiger heart it were to wear
A grave forgiveness of this wanton wrong.
The primal lust had burst the slender
bar,
Weak white man's morals. Now to slay
and slay.

Darkling, he fixed Malua with his eyes,
Noting each shadow of his changing
thoughts,

When the dear dreams centred on Taka,
dreams

Dimming his sight. Holding his lips
apart,

He slowly rose, Uhila following,
For in the dark the music of her face

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Smote on the boy till he could bear no more

The feasting and the firelight ; silently
He rose and stole away. The night was still,

And "Taka, Taka, Taka," rang his soul

Against the stars. He felt infinity
Above him brood, and knew the mighty gods,

Who once in every lifetime drop an hour
Of their remembrance fraught with god-like bliss

To luckless man, had turned on him their eyes.

Unconsciously his feet retraced the path
To the dark pool where joy had birth that day.

The scents that wake when the cool dusk begins

Lapped him luxuriously ; the heavy sweet
Of passionate gardenia, — kiss made flower, —

White as his turbulent love, was as the crown

THE ROSE OF DAWN

And climax of the jasmine stars that
breathed

His love in placid day, and when he
paused

Beside the pool, the forest held its
breath.

“O sweet, O beautiful!” Malua cried,
His young eyes blazing to the tropic
night.

“Never before, since all the gods were
young,

Was woman loved as I love Taka.”

Then,

Caught in a very ecstasy of love,

He laid his arms about a slender tree,

White in the moonlight, and his fevered
cheek

Pressed on its cooling stem. With broken
music

Shaken from his breast, he cried on
Taka, —

Little happy words that mothers whisper
Above their sleeping babes. “If love
could find

THE ROSE OF DAWN

A way to utter love without her lips ! ”
Her lips, her eyes, the music of her
voice —

Death would be easy on her golden heart.
He pictured her at twilight in the door
Of their far home, with eager arms out-
stretched

To welcome him from toil ; how she
would stand

A queen among the other women, crowned
With crimson flowers. How had he won
her, he

A stranger to her people and her blood !
For in her veins the stream ran pale,
but, “ Ah,”

He cried, “ my kiss shall burn it red
again.

White she may be, a queen, my queen,
she is,

And still my slave in fetters of my love.”

Uhila watched him from the shadow.
Gods!

How young he was ! as Vave, the swift-
footed

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Splendidly strong, an innocent god of war.
The morn with chilly lips laid myriad
kisses

About his beauty, slipped thro' jealous
leaves

Dripping with silver and fantastic fingers
Reached to caress him from the amorous
trees.

Hither and forth he paced ; Uhila's eyes
Ached with his hatred of the sight ; at
length

“Taka,” Malua cried, and stretched his
arms

Rigid in air, his face against the sky.

The goad was in Uhila's soul, he leapt
Into the moonlight and upon his foe.

Fixed to the ground, they strove as giant
trees

Tossing fierce branches in a storm ; their
wrath

Smote on them like a tempest, hot with
hate.

Malua knew a curse was in the hands

That sought his throat, and in the blazing
eyes

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Close to his own. Life would defend
fair life
As chief and Taka's lover. Round the
shoulders
Dark and strong, straining to his heaving
breast,
He threw his arms, and locked in that
embrace
They stood a moment, breathing with the
quick
Sharp catch of weary runners. Then a
turn —
Raising his knee, Uhila strove in vain
To throw his enemy. Upon their heads
And swaying bodies lay the silver light
Of the bright moon. The great night
seemed to pause
Chin upon hand to watch the struggle,
air
Hushed to retain the hoarse and laboring
sobs
Such strain brought forth. Their shining
bodies, oiled
In honor of the feast, granted no hold
To the fierce gripping arms.

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Then suddenly
Uhila sprang aside and grasped a branch,
A rough, harsh weapon — for they were
unarmed.

Wary they watched each other's eyes,
like beasts

Stealthy, retreating, circling with heads
low,

Bodies bent for the catch. Malua sprang
Close to Uhila, caught his murderous
hand,

And with the branch between them, all
its thorns

Tearing their breasts, they strove once
more. The moon

Glittered in troubled ripples, they had
come

Under the shadow of the trees, the
dark

Goaded Uhila's soul anew, his blood,
Blazing with conflict, gave him mad-
man's strength

And devil's skill. His straining form
relaxed,

Heavily slipping earthward ; ere Malua

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Could gain fresh hold upon his fainting foe,
Uhila with a twist had laid him low,
Knee on his breast, lean fingers at his
throat
Seizing his life.

Malua's eyes grew dim,
The gentle stars seen faint thro' hanging
leaves
Wavered uncertainly; his brain seemed
black,
Confused with horrid death, the dewy
moss
He lay on failed beneath him. Suddenly
Hanging upon the brittle rim of death,
His outstretched hand, gripping the scat-
tered leaves,
Closed on a sharp stone, instinct more
than brain
Showed him the way; he raised his
weapon, struck
And struck and struck again.
The night looked down
Waning, and saw thro' tangled boughs
a still,

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Dead figure on the troubled earth. All
stained
With crimson blood, there lay a crimson
wreath,
And thro' the forest stole a dusky shade
Fleeing he knew not where save that he
'scaped
Death, that was lying by the forest pool.

At dawn the weary boy, who thro' the
night
Had cried his love and anguish to the
dark,
Wandering half crazed thro' forest deeps
unknown,
Feeling upon his throat the hand of hate,
Feeling upon his heart the still more
potent
Fingers of love, came to the open shore
Waiting for day. The restless, eager
foam,
Stretching white arms around the sleep-
ing earth,
Woke his great love anew. The loneli-
ness

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Of open spaces set his hungry soul
Dreaming of Taka, Taka who should
come
And fill the empty world for him. The
sky
Paled at the thought. The dawn was
stealing near,
Glimmering faintly on the edge of night.
He could delay no longer ; like a thief
He must secure his jewel in the dark.
In the vast pause that presages the morn
He came to Taka's door. Ajar it stood,
And on the mats within he saw revealed
The pure young oval of her perfect face.
"Taka, my little one," Malua whispered,
And thro' her dreams "Malua" passed
her lips,
Slipping insensibly to waking. So
She saw him at the door and came to
him,
Her dewy dreams still warm within her
eyes,
And gave her face to passionate caress.
Then with soft, broken words he told
again

THE ROSE OF DAWN

His love, and after when her heart was full

Of glad acceptance, as a flash of fire
Searing his image on her soul, he told
How blood had paid the price of love.

She heard,

And daylight ebbed before her eyes to faint

White mist, then refluent turned and smote

Her heart's eyes with the horror of the truth.

Uhila dead. Uhila with the smile

That woke for her alone. Her thoughts,
like leaves

Blown by cold winds, were scattered,
and the words

“Uhila dead” was but a symbol grim

Of darkness. All the past, her happy
life

Flower in the sun, her home, and all the
dear

Familiar duties, all her life to come

Woven with thoughts of kind Uhila, all

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Struck to the ground by murder. In her
blood
The pale drops cried to heaven against
the wrong,
Wrong to her people and her love, till now
So beautiful.

Malua knew her pain,
And how upon its verdict hung his life.
Death's flame had touched the golden
rose of love.
If it be dross or gold, the test should tell.
The black gulf night that lies 'twixt
dawn and dawn,
Deepened by darker sin, — could frail
love, tired
With passion, hope to bridge the perilous
way?
His brain cried, "No," his heart, "Ah,
Gods, but yes
Or I shall die."

He laid a tender arm
About the shrinking child and drew her
forth

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Along the forest path. She did not hear
The morning birds who blithely wel-
comed day,
She did not see the dew upon the leaves,
Glamour of dawn, but dazed with love
and pain,
Yielding to that she knew not, kept the
way
Towards the forest pool.

It seemed to them,
Waiting the unutterable moment of their
loss
Or utmost gain, as tho' the swinging
earth
Was emptied of all life, the very air
Seemed hollow and unearthly, breathless
pause
On a great brink. They reached the
pool, and Taka
Gathered her senses till her eyes were
clear
As shining wells of truth. She leaned
no more
Helpless upon Malua, tho' his arm

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Circled her still. Before them on the path,
Noble and dead, with mute hands plead-
ing, eyes
Subtle with secrets of eternity,
Waited Uhila.

In a moment's space
Malua knew the utter pangs of death
Strong as his soul. And Taka must be
free,
Free to decide between the mighty dead
And him, the weakest of all living men.
He spoke no word, the blood of youth
once more
Fought with the skill, the power, the
eloquence
Of great familiar age. If Taka drew
From out his arms and love a heart-
beat's time,
She had decided, and Uhila won.
This the boy knew. Taka had seen
him, Ah!
Her woman's heart in pity and distress
Shivered as tho' cold death had laid a
hand

THE ROSE OF DAWN

Upon her brow. Malua felt a hell
Deep as the world, and then — the sky,
pale stars,
Rose dawn, unfathomed heaven rocked
in his heart

With tumult of his glory. Taka turned,
Drew closer in his arm, and raising up
Her flowery face smiled in his eyes.

'T was done —
Death, life and passionate passion burned
away
In the white flame of love.

Uhila lay
Vanquished, forgotten. Turning to the
sea,
Taka, Malua, children of the sun,
Went forth to meet the sunrise and the
day.



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