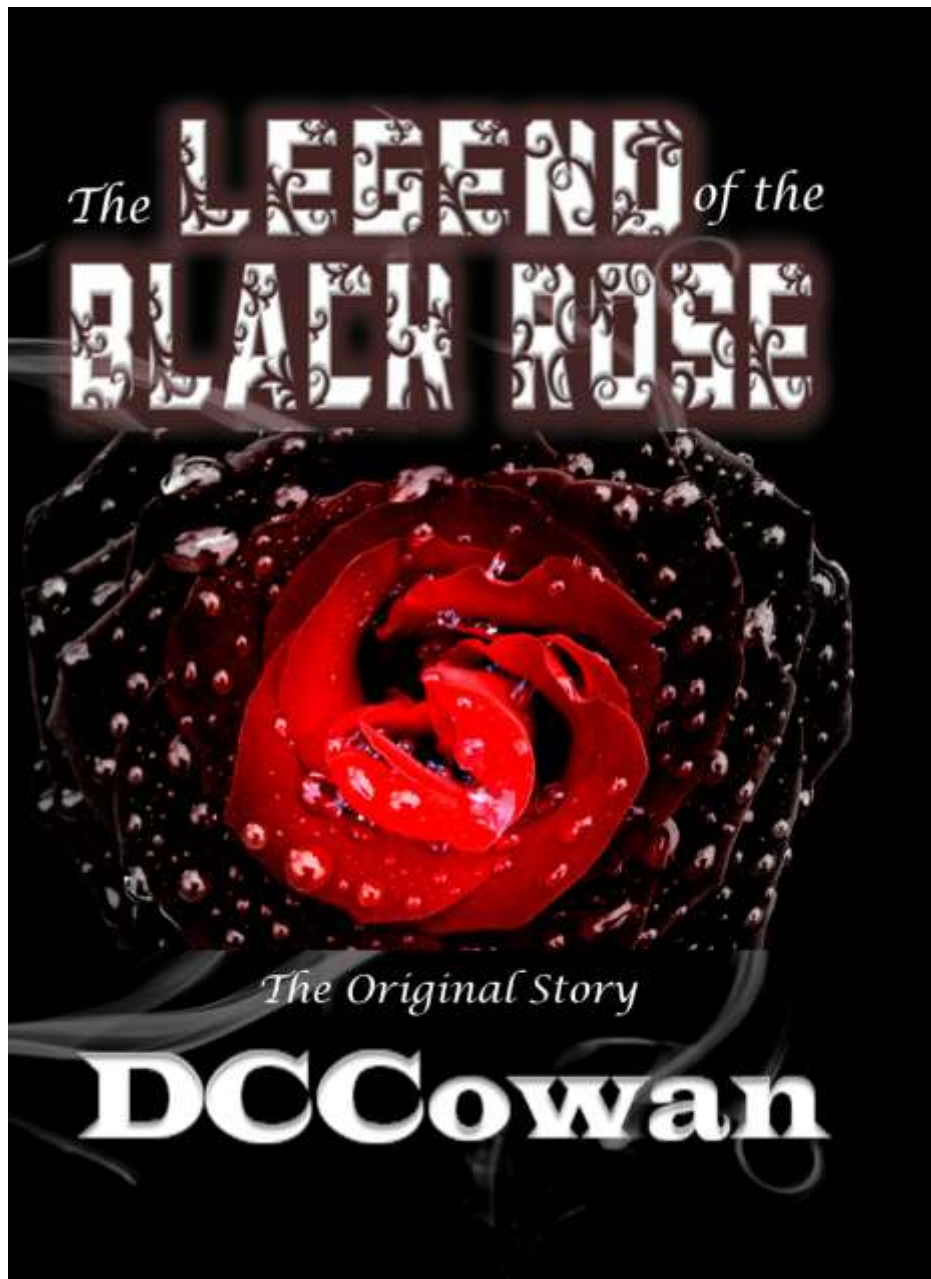


The Legend of the Black Rose by author D. C. Cowan



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**THE  
LEGEND  
OF THE  
BLACK ROSE**

The Original Story

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Sample Chapter

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## Chapter 1: Fifty years' time

A family of four prepared for a church service during Black History Month. People were beginning to shuffle inside the church. They followed the people across the street from the parking lot. As the family stepped off the curb, the son broke away from his father's grasp.

"Go on ahead," Cecil said to his wife and daughter. Once the mother and daughter made it safely across, they paused as they heard the father's irate voice. "Hurry up son!"

Ciscely waved her husband over. "I'll get him Cecil. You take Christina inside." She gave Christina's hand to Cecil. "Come to me Cee-Cee!" She held out her hand to him.

He shook his head and backed up.

"Please come on."

"I'll get hit!"

"It's okay, Cee-Cee." As Ciscely tried to cross the road, a car headed straight for her.

"Mommy, watch out!" her son called out, but his cry came too late. The car rammed into her, and then sped off.



"Mary, Mary Madelyn? Are you okay?" Peter Lucas asked as he knelt down beside her.

"Mary, why do you keep calling me Mary? My name is Ciscely, Ciscely Raymond." With a quivering hand, she steadied her spinning head. The strangers around her appeared to be heading to the same church as her. "Your Black history month outfits are so authentic! Where did you find such historically correct costumes?" Still in awe, she said. "The cars . . . even the cars are authentic. . ." Mary rambled with glossy eyes of wonder.

"Mary you are talking out of your head! You may have been hurt. We'd better let a doctor check

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on you. I didn't even think that car hit you." Minister Peter Lucas turned to his friend. "Hey, James, go inside; tell Mary's mother she has been hurt! Hit by a car!" the minister shouted.



"Is she any better, Doctor? Do you still think she has a memory loss?" Mrs. Clark, Mary's mother, asked the doctor.

"It seems to be more like, " he replied, "it's . . . almost like she's experienced an identity change."

"But why would she take on a new identity?" Mrs. Clark asked.

The doctor could see how worried Mrs. Clark was, so he decided not to mention anything else about her daughter's condition. "Let us not worry yet, Mrs. Clark. She only has a bump on her head. Really, she does not appear to be hurt that severely," the doctor reassured Mrs. Clark.

They were speaking just outside Mary's door. As she gaped around the strange room, fear gripped her inner being. "My GOD! Where am I? What happened to my husband and my family?"

Mary Madelyn felt physically heavy, like a different person. She gazed at her hands. They were a rich, dark chocolate hue. She touched her hair. It fell down her back, very long and coarse to the touch. It felt oily and straightened. She feared seeing herself in the mirror, but slowly rose from her bed, feeling achy and dizzy. She walked slowly to the mirror. A sense of nostalgia filled the room. She owned many antiques, but had nothing like these. She glimpsed into the long, narrow, wall mirror—gasped for breath—then screamed, and fainted.

"What happened?" Mrs. Clark said as she ran into the room to hold her daughter. "What happened? I do not understand what is going on! What frightened her so?" She cradled Ciscely's head in her arms.

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After another visit from the doctor and a mild sedative, Ciscely rested, though she couldn't sleep. She had to pull herself together so she could think about what happened. The last thing she remembered hearing was her ten-year-old screaming, "Mommy, watch out!" She didn't know what happened after that. She and her family were on their way to a Negro History Week celebration at church. No longer allowed to have the holiday, but in secret, the church still celebrated one day to remember the dying history of their ancestors. Everyone was dressed in "period" clothing. When she woke up, people surrounded her in costumes, people she did not even know. She worried for their safety because they walked around outside with the costumes on. They took the celebration too far. Even at home, they still wore those costumes. And all the while, everyone kept calling her Mary. She knew her name, Ciscely Raymond. She had a daughter, named Christina; and a son, Cecil. They were the four Cs. One moment she had a wonderful family and husband; now she found herself trapped in someone else's body.

She had screamed for that very reason. Ciscely, a tall well-built woman with shoulder length sandy-blonde hair that frizzled severely when it rained, her eyes a fawn brown, and a complexion so light she appeared virtually white—as everyone told her. On the other hand, Mary possessed this statuesque, broad-hipped body, and piercing black eyes. Mary had long black wavy hair, unusually long for a black person. But now Ciscely, being lost inside of Mary's body, felt so frightened; she could feel her—or rather Mary's—insides screaming for an outlet. "Mary, Mary." She puzzled over the name. The name and face seemed so familiar to Ciscely.

To her, nothing felt worse than to have no one around familiar to talk with or to confide in. She would wait, play the memory loss bit, and try to solve this horror herself. She'd always been levelheaded. She would get to the bottom of this somehow. God would help her.



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The weeks to come were a nightmare. She knew nothing about the people she was living with. She knew even less about Minister Peter Jeremiah Lucas to whom she was engaged. She had pieced a few things together. By the time period, she was back by about fifty years in time—1930. In her heart, she felt something bad must have happened in the present. That was what her son was trying to tell her, “Mommy, watch out!” He called that to her just before the car hit her. She shivered to think of it, but she felt she must have died or maybe she fell into a coma. Somehow, she had spiritually left her body. For some reason, the essence of her being became trapped in time. Mary Madelyn must have been hit at the same time, same place, and same day *fifty years before*, at least this was her theory. She had survived, but where was Mary Madelyn’s soul? Ciscely wondered where her own body was. Was she supposed to have died? Was Ciscely’s soul fueling Mary’s life? God, it was so unfair. Ciscely craved her family, her husband, her home, and the luxuries of modern times. Life was hard fifty years ago, so incredibly different.

And then it hit her one day. These were the same people from *her* church, but it was fifty years earlier. Ciscely felt so foolish. Why hadn’t she seen it before? She knew some of them, but not well. Ciscely figured out that Mary Madelyn was the pastor’s wife. It was the maiden and middle names, Madelyn Clark, which had confused her. Mary Madelyn Clark was Mrs. Mary Lucas, the first lady of her church. She knew Mrs. Mary had lived to be old. Mrs. Mary was in her sixties during Ciscely’s old life. How would this event change everything? It was so shocking, so utterly shocking. It never occurred to her that Bishop Peter Jeremiah Lucas was once Minister Lucas.

Brother James was Dr. James Calvin Blakemore. Dr. Blakemore always seemed to like Ciscely. Always joking with her in church, telling her how slim and pretty she’d turn out to be. She wondered why he joked about that. He seemed to know something about Ciscely that she did not; it was a private joke that she did not comprehend—until now. Brother James knew she called herself Ciscely Raymond, so when he finally met her in 1971, he could make the connection. But then that would

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mean Bishop Lucas would also be able to make the connection. She remembered, in 1971, when she had first met and told Bishop Lucas her name was Ciscely Raymond. He was so shaken up, but refused to explain. She did not wish to confide in him; it might be too awkward for Mrs. Mary once she returned to her body. Perhaps Ciscely could go to James Blakemore. She needed a friend or she would go crazy.

She called James aside at church. “I need to talk to you,” she whispered. He nodded and they went outside to talk. During old times like this—even ogling at an engaged woman could cause a church-wide scandal. Minister Lucas boiled with jealousy by their interest in each other. Since the accident, she had been “flirting” a lot with James, he felt.

“James,” began Ciscely, “what I’m going to tell you is bizarre, but please listen, please. I must talk to someone.” James held her hands. She started from the beginning and pieced everything together tediously. James listened, occasionally squeezing her hand. Time was slipping away. People were beginning to leave the church. The church people either smiled at them or frowned in disapproval at Ciscely holding James’s hands. Mentally, she was faraway. Suddenly, her present consciousness returned. She quickly withdrew her hands from James’s. It was too late. Peter stood before them with hands and teeth clenched, as his eyes and nose flared.

“What is going on here, James? Mary? What does this mean? Isn’t it inappropriate for you to be doing this in public?”

“The fact that we are *doing it* in public obviously means you have made something out of nothing!” She stormed away to her family’s car and sat there waiting as they finished socializing. After fifteen or twenty minutes, James approached the car. Again, he took her hand as she sat fidgeting and tapping her foot.

“Mary, I believe you. I believe every word you have told me. We need to come to grips with this. We need to meet and talk this over. You are obviously not Mary Madelyn. She never would have let

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me hold her hands. Her reputation was her life. Mary has always been after our pastor's son and wouldn't do anything, or say anything, to jeopardize that. Peter was stunned by your outburst. He has become so overwhelmed by your dual personalities he forgot to be angry at me." He smiled. "He started to pour out his heart about you. We will talk later, but he did say you kiss differently." He laughed. "Better. I would like to know more about this Ciscely Raymond and her kisses. Don't give up. Let the doctor help you." James thought for a second, and sighed. "I need to become a doctor to help people. They always come to me with their problems."

"You *will* be a doctor, James," Ciscely said knowingly. "A very good one."

James stopped talking and gave her a bewildered look. He started to say something else, but decided against it.