



Blondine Part VI: Blondine's Second Awakening

Sophie Ségur
French

Intermediate
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Blondine slept profoundly, and on awaking she found herself entirely changed. Indeed, it seemed to her she could not be the same person. She was much taller, her intellect was developed, her knowledge enlarged. She remembered a number of books she thought she had read during her sleep. She was sure she had been writing, drawing, singing and playing on the piano and harp.

She looked around, however, and knew that the chamber was the same to which Bonne-Biche had conducted her and in which she had gone to sleep.

Agitated, disquieted, she rose and ran to the glass. She saw that she was much grown and she found herself charming, a hundred times more beautiful than when she retired the night before. Her fair ringlets fell to her feet, her complexion was like the lily and the rose, her eyes celestial blue, her nose beautifully formed, her cheeks rosy as the morn, and her form was erect and graceful. In short, Blondine thought herself the most beautiful person she had ever seen.

Trembling, almost frightened, she dressed herself hastily and ran to seek Bonne-Biche whom she found in the apartment where she had first seen her.

“Bonne-Biche, Bonne-Biche!” she exclaimed, “I entreat you to explain to me the change which I see and feel in myself. Last night I went to sleep a child—I awoke this morning, and found myself a young lady. Is this an illusion or have I indeed grown and developed thus during the night?”

“Yes, my dear Blondine, you are fourteen years old to-day. But you have slept peacefully seven years. My son Beau-Minon and I wished to spare you the weariness of all early studies. When you first entered the castle you knew nothing; not even how to read. I put you to sleep for seven years, and Beau-Minon and I have passed this time in instructing you during your sleep. I see by the wonder expressed in your eyes, sweet princess, that you doubt all this. Come into your study and reassure yourself on this point.”

Blondine followed Bonne-Biche to the little room. She ran first to the piano, commenced playing and found that she played remarkably well. She then tried the harp and drew from it the most ravishing sounds, and she sang enchantingly.

She took her pencil and brushes and drew and painted with a facility which denoted a true talent. She wrote and found her handwriting clear and elegant. She looked at the countless books which were ranged round the room and knew that she had read them all.

Surprised, delighted, she threw her arms around the neck of Bonne-Biche, embraced Beau-Minon tenderly and said to them:

“Oh! my dear true good friends, what a debt of gratitude do I owe you for having thus watched over my childhood and developed my intellect and my heart. I feel how much I am improved in every respect and I owe it all to you.”

Bonne-Biche returned her caresses and Beau-Minon patted her hand delicately. After the first few happy moments had passed, Blondine cast down her eyes and said timidly:

“Do not think me ungrateful, my dear good friends, if I wish you to add one more to the benefits you have already conferred upon me. Tell me something of my father. Does he still weep my absence? Is he happy since he lost me?”

“Dear Blondine, your anxiety on this point is most natural and shall be relieved. Look in this mirror, Blondine, and you shall see the king your father and all that has passed since you left the palace.”

Blondine raised her eyes to the mirror and looked into the apartment of her father. The king seemed much agitated and was walking backwards and forwards. He appeared to be expecting some one. The queen, Fourbette, entered and related to him that notwithstanding the remonstrances of Gourmandinet, Blondine had herself seized the reins and guided the ostriches who becoming frightened dashed off in the direction of the Forest of Lilacs and overturned the carriage. Blondine was thrown over the grating which bounded the forest. She stated that Gourmandinet had become insane from terror and grief and she had sent him home to his parents. The king was in wild despair at this news. He ran to the Forest of Lilacs and he had to be withheld by force from throwing himself across the boundary in order to search for his cherished Blondine. They carried him to the palace where he yielded to the most frightful sorrow and despair, calling unceasingly upon his dear Blondine, his beloved child. At last, overcome by grief, he slept and saw in a dream Blondine in the castle of Bonne-Biche and Beau-Minon. Bonne-Biche gave him the sweet assurance that Blondine should one day be restored to him and that her childhood should be calm and happy.

The mirror now became misty and everything disappeared, then again clear as crystal and Blondine saw her father a second time. He had become old, his hair was white as snow and his countenance was sad. He held in his hand a little portrait of Blondine, his tears fell upon it and he pressed it often to his lips. The king was alone. Blondine saw neither the Queen nor Brunette.

Poor Blondine wept bitterly.

“Alas!” said she, “why is my dear father alone? Where is the queen? Where is Brunette?”

“The queen,” said Bonne-Biche, “showed so little grief at your death, my princess, that your father’s heart was filled with hatred and suspicion towards her and he sent her back to the king Turbulent, her father, who confined her in a tower, where she soon died of rage and anger. All the world supposed you to be dead. As to your sister Brunette, she became so wicked, so insupportable, that the king hastened to give her in marriage last year to the prince Violent, who charged himself with the duty of reforming the character of the cruel and envious princess Brunette. The prince was stern and harsh. Brunette saw that her wicked heart prevented her from being happy and she commenced trying to correct her faults. You will see her again some day, dear Blondine and your example may complete her reformation.”

Blondine thanked Bonne-Biche tenderly for all these details. Her heart prompted her to ask, “But when shall I see my father and sister?” But she feared to appear ungrateful and too anxious to leave the castle of her good friends. She resolved then to await another more suitable opportunity to ask this question.

The days passed away quietly and pleasantly. Blondine was much occupied, but was sometimes melancholy. She had no one to talk with but Bonne-Biche and she was only with her during the hours of lessons and repasts. Beau-Minon could not converse and could only make himself understood by signs. The gazelles served Blondine with zeal and intelligence but they had not the gift of speech.

Blondine walked every day, always accompanied by Beau-Minon, who pointed out to her the most lovely and sequestered paths and the rarest and richest flowers.

Bonne-Biche had made Blondine promise solemnly never to leave the enclosure of the park and never to enter the forest. Many times Blondine had asked Bonne-Biche the reason of this prohibition. Sighing profoundly, she had replied:

“Ah, Blondine! do not seek to penetrate the forest. It is a fatal spot. May you never enter there.”

Sometimes Blondine mounted a pavilion which was built on an eminence near the boundary of the forest. She looked admiringly and longingly at the magnificent trees, the lovely and fragrant flowers, the thousand graceful birds flying and singing and seeming to call her name.

“Alas!” said she, “why will not Bonne-Biche allow me to walk in this beautiful forest? What possible danger can I encounter in that lovely place and under her protection?”

Whenever she was lost in these reflections, Beau-Minon, who seemed to comprehend what was passing in her heart, mewed plaintively, pulled her robe and tried to draw her from the pavilion.

Blondine smiled sweetly, followed her gentle companion and recommenced her walk in the solitary park.

Note: The story continues in Blondine Part VII: The Parrot

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