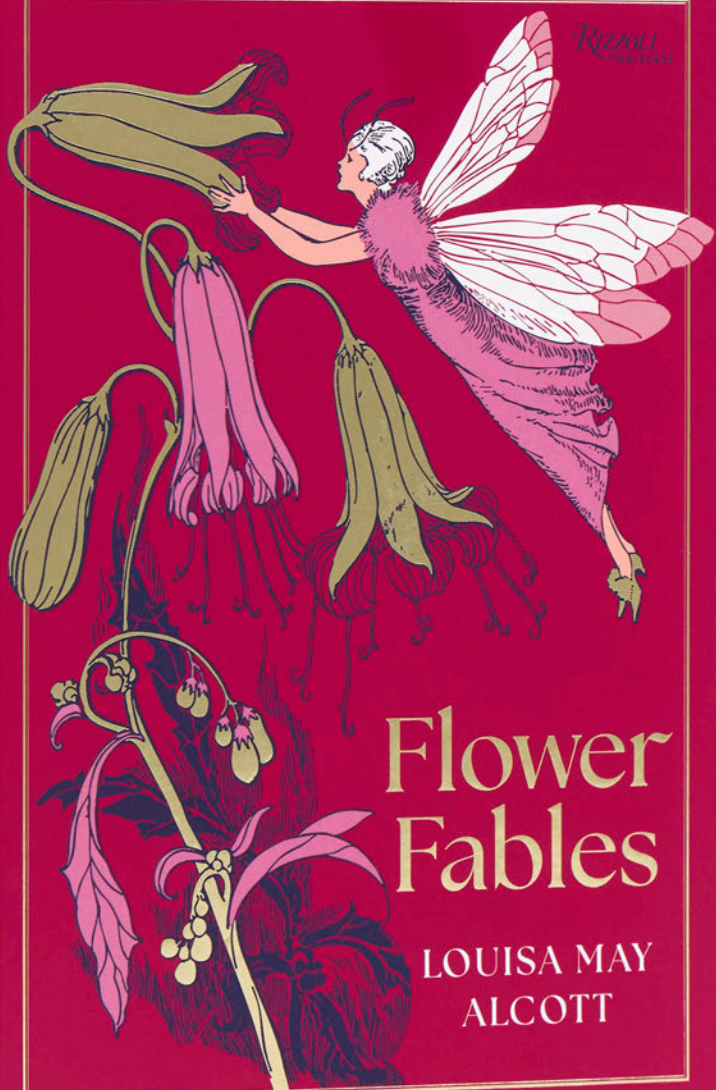


Flower Fables LOUISA MAY ALCOTT



RIZZOLI
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Flower Fables

LOUISA MAY
ALCOTT



*n the quiet,
pleasant meadow*

*Beneath a summer sky,
Where green old trees their branches waved,
And winds went singing by;
Where a little brook went rippling
So musically low,
And passing clouds cast shadows
On the waving grass below;
Where low, sweet notes of brooding birds
Stole out on the fragrant air,
And golden sunlight shone undimmed
On all most fresh and fair; —
There bloomed a lovely sisterhood
Of happy little flowers,*

*Together in this pleasant home,
Through quiet summer hours.
No rude hand came to gather them,
No chilling winds to blight;
Warm sunbeams smiled on them by day,
And soft dews fell at night.
So here, along the brook-side,
Beneath the green old trees,
The flowers dwelt among their friends,
The sunbeams and the breeze.*



*One morning, as
the flowers awoke,*

*Fragrant, and fresh, and fair,
A little worm came creeping by,
And begged a shelter there.
"Ah! pity and love me," sighed the worm,
"I am lonely, poor, and weak;
A little spot for a resting-place,
Dear flowers, is all I seek.
I am not fair, and have dwelt unloved
By butterfly, bird, and bee.
They little knew that in this dark form
Lay the beauty they may yet see.
Then let me lie in the deep green moss,
And weave my little tomb,
And sleep my long, unbroken sleep
'Till Spring's first flowers come.*

*Then will I come in a fairer dress,
 And your gentle care repay
 By the grateful love of the humble worm;
 Kind flowers, O let me stay!"*
*But the wild rose showed her little thorns,
 While her soft face glowed with pride;
 The violet hid beneath the drooping ferns,
 And the daisy turned aside.*
*Little Houstonia scornfully laughed,
 As she danced on her slender stem;
 While the cowslip bent to the rippling waves,
 And whispered the tale to them.*
*A blue-eyed grass looked down on the worm,
 As it silently turned away,
 And cried, "Thou wilt harm our delicate leaves,
 And therefore thou canst not stay."*
*Then a sweet, soft voice called out from far,
 "Come hither, poor worm, to me;
 The sun lies warm in this quiet spot,
 And I'll share my home with thee."*
*The wondering flowers looked up to see
 Who had offered the worm a home:*



*was a clover blossom,
 whose fluttering leaves
 Seemed beckoning him to come;
 It dwelt in a sunny little nook,
 Where cool winds rustled by,
 And murmuring bees and butterflies came,
 On the flower's breast to lie.
 Down through the leaves the sunlight stole,
 And seemed to linger there,
 As if it loved to brighten the home
 Of one so sweet and fair.
 Its rosy face smiled kindly down,
 As the friendless worm drew near;
 And its low voice, softly whispering, said,
 "Poor thing, thou art welcome here;
 Close at my side, in the soft green moss,
 Thou wilt find a quiet bed,*

*Where thou canst softly sleep till Spring,
 With my leaves above thee spread.
 I pity and love thee, friendless worm,
 Though thou art not graceful or fair;
 For many a dark, unlovely form,
 Hath a kind heart dwelling there;
 No more o'er the green and pleasant earth,
 Lonely and poor, shalt thou roam,
 For a loving friend hast thou found in me,
 And rest in my little home."*
*Then, deep in its quiet mossy bed,
 Sheltered from sun and shower,
 The grateful worm spun its winter tomb,
 In the shadow of the flower.
 And Clover guarded well its rest,
 Till Autumn's leaves were sere,
 Till all her sister flowers were gone,
 And her winter sleep drew near.
 Then her withered leaves were softly spread
 O'er the sleeping worm below,
 Ere the faithful little flower lay
 Beneath the winter snow.*



*Spring came again,
 and the flowers rose
 From their quiet winter graves,
 And gayly danced on their slender stems,
 And sang with the rippling waves.
 Softly the warm winds kissed their cheeks;
 Brightly the sunbeams fell,
 As, one by one, they came again
 In their summer homes to dwell.
 And little Clover bloomed once more,
 Rosy, and sweet, and fair,
 And patiently watched by the mossy bed,
 For the worm still slumbered there.
 Then her sister flowers scornfully cried,
 As they waved in the summer air,
 "The ugly worm was friendless and poor;
 Little Clover, why shouldst thou care?"*

*Then watch no more, nor dwell alone,
 Away from thy sister flowers;
 Come, dance and feast, and spend with us
 These pleasant summer hours.
 We pity thee, foolish little flower,
 To trust what the false worm said;
 He will not come in a fairer dress,
 For he lies in the green moss dead.”
 But little Clover still watched on,
 Alone in her sunny home;
 She did not doubt the poor worm’s truth,
 And trusted he would come.*

*At last the small cell opened wide,
 And a glittering butterfly,
 From out the moss, on golden wings,
 Soared up to the sunny sky.
 Then the flowers cried aloud,
 “Clover, thy watch was vain;
 He only sought a shelter here,
 And never will come again.”*



*And the unkind flowers
 danced for joy,
 When they saw him thus depart;
 For the love of a beautiful butterfly
 Is dear to a flower’s heart.
 They feared he would stay in Clover’s home,
 And her tender care repay;
 So they danced for joy, when at last he rose
 And silently flew away.
 Then little Clover bowed her head,
 While her soft tears fell like dew;
 For her gentle heart was grieved, to find
 That her sisters’ words were true,
 And the insect she had watched so long
 When helpless, poor, and lone,
 Thankless for all her faithful care,
 On his golden wings had flown.*

*But as she drooped, in silent grief,
 She heard little Daisy cry,
 "O sisters, look! I see him now,
 Afar in the sunny sky;
 He is floating back from Cloud-Land now,
 Borne by the fragrant air.
 Spread wide your leaves, that he may choose
 The flower he deems most fair."
 Then the Wild Rose glowed with a deeper blush,
 As she proudly waved on her stem;
 The Cowslip bent to the clear blue waves,
 And made her mirror of them.
 Little Houstonia merrily danced,
 And spread her white leaves wide;
 While Daisy whispered her joy and hope,
 As she stood by her gay friends' side.
 Violet peeped from the tall green ferns,
 And lifted her soft blue eye
 To watch the glittering form, that shone
 Afar in the summer sky.
 They thought no more of the ugly worm,
 Who once had wakened their scorn;
 But looked and longed for the butterfly now,
 As the soft wind bore him on.*



*earer and nearer
 the bright form came,
 And fairer the blossoms grew;
 Each welomed him, in her sweetest tones;
 Each offered her honey and dew.
 But in vain did they beckon, and smile, and call,
 And wider their leaves unclosed;
 The glittering form still floated on,
 By Violet, Daisy, and Rose.
 Lightly it flew to the pleasant home
 Of the flower most truly fair,
 On Clover's breast he softly lit,
 And folded his bright wings there.
 "Dear flower," the Butterfly whispered low,
 "Long hast thou waited for me;
 Now I am come, and my grateful love*

*Shall brighten thy home for thee;
 Thou hast loved and cared for me, when alone,
 Hast watched o'er me long and well;
 And now will I strive to show the thanks
 The poor worm could not tell.
 Sunbeam and breeze shall come to thee,
 And the coolest dews that fall;
 Whate'er a flower can wish is thine,
 For thou art worthy all.
 And the home thou shared with the
 friendless worm
 The butterfly's home shall be;
 And thou shalt find, dear, faithful flower,
 A loving friend in me."
 Then, through the long, bright summer hours
 Through sunshine and through shower,
 Together in their happy home
 Dwelt butterfly and flower.*

"Ah, that is very lovely," cried the Elves, gathering round little Sunbeam as she ceased, to place a garland in her hair and praise her song.

"Now," said the Queen, "call hither Moon-light and Summer-Wind, for they have seen many pleasant things in their long wanderings, and will gladly tell us them."

"Most joyfully will we do our best, dear Queen," said the Elves, as they folded their wings beside her.

"Now, Summer-Wind," said Moonlight, "till your turn comes, do you sit here and fan me while I tell this tale of;

