

# Dead Sea Apples

by MoonlitMeda

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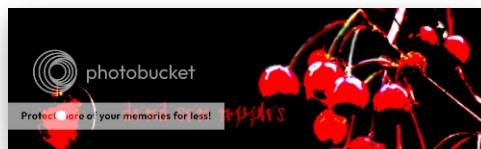
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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This was written as a birthday present for my Emmical.

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I don't think anyone who has met me would ever dream of saying I have a benevolent side. That's because I don't. I don't have a warm heart under a crusty exterior. I don't have a warm soul. I doubt that I have a soul at all. I don't think I go deep enough. There's no inside to me; I threw it all out and turned in on myself to become who I had convinced everyone else I was. I don't regret it. I did the right thing by anyone's book. My sisters believed in following your dreams, becoming the person you wanted to be, and that's what I did. My mother believed in showing the world the face you wanted them to see, and that's what I did. My father believed in bending everything to your will, and that's what I did. They should all be proud of me. I'm proud of myself.

They aren't, though. Not one of them is proud of me. I became the person they wanted me to be, and they all threw it back in my face. It was good for me that they did; it showed me how little I cared. It's not as though any of them ever did what they wanted of me. All of them thought they did. Both of my sisters believed they'd found their happy endings, and neither of them did. As if anyone could be truly happy growing up a Black and living like Andromeda in her little Muggle hovel. As if Cissy didn't know she's growing into our mother and will follow her right through to the inevitable fall into mental collapse. Cissy never had a strong mind anyway. Hypocrites. They asked more of me than they ever did of themselves.

My parents are worse, because right up to the day they die, they will pretend that I am what they both wanted. The strong-minded elder daughter, the only one they could let be who she was. Neither of them really wanted a daughter who didn't need them. They wanted someone to teach, to bully into being what was required of them, just as they were bullied as children. They didn't want someone who had exactly the right temperament to be who they wanted; they wanted themselves over again to pay back, to make things even.

They were wrong, though. I wasn't quite the perfect girl. You can't be happy, if you're the person they wanted me to be, and ~~can~~ be happy. I can be wildly, deliriously happy. I can fly with my feet on the ground. I can laugh a real laugh that shows the soul I don't have, as well as the company laugh stolen from my mother. I can be myself and show myself to the world and not care about the consequences. The self I am is the outer self they wanted me to only show. The things I'm not are the things I was only supposed to pretend I wasn't. I went too far for them. They were just Dead Sea apples, they and my sisters both. Golden on the outside and ashes within. A pretence,

a lie. I just am.

I am like the elements: I don't pretend. I don't force myself into roles. There again, it was always Andromeda who compared herself to nature. Not that she said as much to me, I could see it in her eyes. Don't say I didn't know my sister. The fairy tales in her heart, the autumn leaves in her soul were laid bare, because she always forced them out into the open. She followed her heart; that was the point of life for her. Refusing to play a role, and then seamlessly taking on a new one. Loving wife and mother. She makes me sick. She calls herself what I am, sincere, and the world believes her, but it's all just another pretence. She locked away the Black in her and coated it in sugar and spice and all things nice. That was one of the daughters my parents needed. The rebellion.

Cissy and my mother dance the same dance in my mind, trains running on the same tracks. They are all about the mask; it's all they think about. Pirouetting in and out of the lives of their husbands, being who they need to be. Mind you, Cissy believes she's happy. Another loving wife and mother. She and Andromeda are alike in that, although neither of them would admit it. Cissy was the other daughter my parents needed. The weakling.

And then there was me. The one they prayed for and got, first time lucky. Be careful what you wish for. I couldn't be moulded, because I was already the finished model. There was no work for them to do. Bellatrix Black: the girl who did not need a mask. Black through and through, and proud and *laughing*. It was the laughing that ate their hearts. I could be what they wanted without trying, when they couldn't do it themselves, and I could laugh.

I'm laughing to this day. I have everything I want and everything they want, and I'm living as myself and no one else. I can introduce myself and not have one part of me shy away from my own name. I am myself and myself and myself, and not one other member of my family will ever be able to say that.