

The Forbidden Fruit: A True Story of Sex, Drugs, and the Afterlife

Tina Scott

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Tina Scott's touching memoir *The Forbidden Fruit* is about love, death, and the afterlife.

In this collection of correspondence, prose, and poetry, Scott, who was born in France and has traveled the world, shares her diverse life experiences, including the death of her husband, a failed first marriage, and her relationships to drugs and sex. Emails dominate the book's early portions; most are directed to friends of the deceased. These give way to blog entries from a cancer support site, which in turn are replaced by coverage of experiences with LSD, cocaine, and hallucinogenic mushrooms. But it was a trip to Nepal, where Scott taught English courses for monks, that changed her life forever.

During that three-month stay in Nepal, Scott sent emails to friends and family; these are shared in parallel with excerpts from her journal, which contain their own details and anecdotes. A spirit of adventure dominates here and elsewhere in the fragmented text, while poetry (some original, some borrowed) is used to layer introspection into the story.

Spirituality works its way into the book as Scott considers her relationship to the divine, and her belief in the afterlife and ghosts: "I talk to dead people. It's a gift. I speak to those who have crossed into the spirit world." These sensibilities give way to a divergent final portion, inspired by a trip to Ground Zero in New York City. Scott writes that her time there reinforced her belief in the afterlife; her thoughts on the historical event of September 11, 2001, are made to function as "a true ghost story." While the final portion's topics are of interest, they are not Scott's alone: she worked on this tale in tandem with a friend, Judi Parsell, the story's co-author.

The book muses through recurring topics, like self-perception, that bind its varied experiences together. Scott discusses how her experiences changed her, helping her to weather later difficulties; her reflections are accomplished. When the book switches to describing others, it maintains this concentration on fleshing people out in terms of the moments that defined them—though it also shows how the covered people impacted her, too. Thus, a roommate in Nepal is captured in terms of her enthusiasm and exploratory spirit, and is shown enjoying each minute of her time; she is also credited with inspiring Scott to share her story with the world.

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ANNA MARIA COLIVICCHI (January 11, 2022)

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