

**AT THE RED
GLOVE; A NOVEL**

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At the Red Glove; a novel by Katharine S. Macquoid

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KATHARINE S. MACQUOID

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A Novel

ILLUSTRATED BY C. S. REINHART

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1885

PROLOGUE.

It is noonday in June in one of the old towns of Southern France. A girl stands beside a fountain in the middle of a grass-grown square. She is tall, and although her shabby old clothes are badly made they reveal a beautiful figure. Her face and head are hidden by the bright orange kerchief that shields her from the scorching sunshine; but her movements are full of languid grace as she places her tall brown pitcher beneath the spout of the fountain.

"Mon Dieu," she says, impatiently, "the heat stifles me."

The square is like an oven, the very stones smell as if they were baking; the *persiennes* of the houses that border the square are all closed, there is not so much as a cab stirring. Surely every one is asleep! No! behind one pair of green barred shutters a pair of small eyes greedily note the perfection of the girl's figure and the languid grace with which she leans against the old fountain. Her orange kerchief casts so deep a shadow that the concealed observer cannot make out her face, but he feels sure it is handsome. He watches her lift the pitcher away from the slender trickle of water she has set flowing, and he sees that when she perceives how heavy it is, she stamps impatiently on the burning pebbles and pours some of the water away.

The unseen gazer smiles; he knows how scarce water is in the old southern town. He stands watching till the girl places the pitcher on her head and moves slowly out of sight.

The big, full-fed looking man who has watched her rubs his hands together, his small eyes are twinkling with satisfaction. He turns away from the window of the eating-room, where the flies buzz noisily on the pane, and rings for the waiter. That worthy is asleep, his napkin over his head to keep the flies away, but the bell rouses him from his nap, he whisks the napkin from his ugly face, and stands obsequiously bowing before Monsieur Carouge.

Monsieur is an adroit questioner; he has soon set the waiter talking about all he wanted to know.

"Elvire, la belle Elvire? oh yes," the waiter says, with a smirk; "she and her mother are very poor—monsieur cannot guess how poor they are. Her father was a noble—yes, once upon a time he was Marquis de— I have forgotten the title, monsieur," he goes on, with a careless whisk of his napkin, "but he lodged in an old farmhouse in the environs. At last he married the farmer's young daughter, and soon left her a widow with this one child, Elvire. Well, monsieur, soon after this the farmer had a fit and died, and then it came out that he was insolvent. Monsieur le Marquis, however, had left just money enough to keep his widow and her child from beggary; but as I say, monsieur cannot guess how poor they are. Mon Dieu," he gives another contemptuous flick with his napkin, "many a beggar fares better than they do."

"Don't they try to earn a living?" said Carouge.

The waiter shrugs his shoulders. "They might do so, monsieur, but they are proud. Not so long ago a restaurant-keeper at Marseilles happened to be here, and he saw Elvire as you saw her. Well, monsieur, he spoke to the mistress, and he made quite a liberal offer for that girl as *demoiselle de comptoir*; he offered, too, to find work for the mother. Pouf!" he snapped his fingers, "they refused to listen to the message. Madame Fontaine told our mistress that she had promised her husband before he died that whatever she might have to do, Elvire should never work for her living; and," the garçon added, with a laugh, "the girl kept her mother up to her promise."

"But I saw her drawing water just now," says Monsieur Carouge.

The waiter gives a sly, sleepy smile. "Elvire will do that, monsieur," he says, "and it gives her some change, and she likes to be admired; but in-doors it is different; she will not cook or clean, her mother has told me so. She says, 'It is the noble blood which cannot lie.'" Here the waiter jerks his thumb in a contemptuous fashion, and Monsieur Carouge smiles.

"You seem to be acquainted with Madame Fontaine," he said; "will you let her know that a gentleman wishes to call on her this evening on business matters?"

The waiter looks inquisitive, but Monsieur Carouge begins to light a fresh cigar.

In the evening the waiter guided him to the top of a narrow, dirty street, with tumble-down looking houses on each side of it; then, after learning that the number was twenty-five, and the room he

was in search of a *quatrième*, Monsieur Carouge was left to find his way. It was nearly dark, but Carouge could see that the staircase of No. 25 was horribly dirty. When after knocking he was admitted into a miserably furnished room, his eyes were riveted by the beauty of the girl, who stood like a perfect statue seemingly indifferent to his presence.

There was still light enough to see her face and her splendid dark eyes half shadowed by their long lashes.

Carouge told the mother that he believed he had had some acquaintance with her late husband, and that, as he was going on to Paris, he would be glad to execute any commission with which she might honor him.

Madame Fontaine stared at him, and then began to pour out her troubles in a manner which assured him of that which he had guessed from her face, namely, that she was grasping as well as poor, and that she would not be difficult to deal with. He saw that the girl's pride was roused by his visit, and he made it very brief. "If madame will permit me," he said, "I will repeat my visit as I return;" then he made a low bow—"with the permission, also, of mademoiselle." He thought the girl looked like a disguised princess as she just bent her head in return. Carouge smiled to himself as he went down the filthy staircase.

"It's all right," he thought, "she's not angry with me; she's only mad that I should see her in such a hole and in such a gown—only fit for a rag-picker. She will let her mother sell her, and the mother will ask a good price," he said to himself, as he rubbed his fat ringed fingers together.

It was quite by chance that he had stopped in this old town, and he had originally had no intention of returning to it; but he could not get rid of the vision of Elvire; he had to stay a fortnight in Paris, and he found himself hardly able to bear the delay. At last he was free; he had bought everything he thought likely to please Elvire, and before he repeated his visit he sent his gifts.

To her mother Elvire at first refused to have anything to do with these beautiful things; but Carouge had been careful to include a mirror among his gifts, and when the girl had seen herself in one of the elegant dresses he had provided, she consented to wear it. Carouge called again and was infatuated; he had not thought she was so beautiful. In the self-respect that came to Elvire when she discarded her shabby clothes, the cloud of brooding discontent left

her face—she was gracious, smiling even, but she would not thank her benefactor; he had done it for her mother, she said, and she might thank him.

Before he left the house, Carouge asked for a few moments alone with Madame Fontaine. He had already discovered that she was as ignorant and uncivilized as her daughter was charming. He felt that he could speak without reserve.

"I wish to marry your daughter," he cried, "and I do not wish to lose any time about it if you will authorize me to execute the necessary formalities. I suppose the marriage can take place in a week; if not, I am afraid I must give it up, as my business calls me home."

Madame Fontaine stared, and said something about Elvire. Carouge smiled. "You can tell your daughter," he said, "that I offer her a luxurious home, plenty of dresses and jewellery, and a kind husband, who will try to make her life as pleasant and happy as possible; if you succeed in persuading her," he said, with emphasis, "you shall have for yourself, for the rest of your life, one hundred francs a month, with the understanding that you keep away from your daughter."

Then he said good-day, and left her to reflect on his proposal.

Madame Fontaine earned her pension easily. Elvire was as indolent as he was by nature luxurious. She craved ardently for ease and comfort, as well as for all that makes life beautiful; and though she was only nineteen, she was already aware that money could give her all that she wanted. To her savage, undeveloped nature poverty meant all that was hard, hideous, and disgraceful, and she felt grateful to Monsieur Carouge for his offer. The marriage was soon arranged. Directly it was over, Carouge and his bride started for Berne. He was a little troubled by the joy with which Elvire said good-bye to her squalid home and to her mother; but he soon forgot this, and when he at last brought his prize to the dainty nest he had provided for her, a few miles out of Berne, her delight in the fresh glitter of her surroundings charmed him. It seemed to Elvire that she had found all she wished for in these showily furnished rooms where she could see herself reflected from head to foot in tall mirrors, and lounge away the day on soft couches, or, if she pleased, wander in a charming garden full of flowers.

But there was more than this: there was a steady, silent, middle-aged woman, half companion, half maid, to relieve her of every

trouble, and Carouge constantly brought home some new present to his beautiful idol.

She was to him a lovely doll, who amused him by her gentle, pleasant talk, pleased him by her gratitude, and charmed his eyes by her beauty and the supple grace of her movements. He did not trouble himself about anything else. He told her that he was the proprietor of an hotel in Berne, but this only interested her in connection with the dainty dishes and excellent wines he constantly brought home from this Hôtel Beauregard. She seemed utterly incurious about the world beyond her garden. Carouge congratulated himself on having secured such a prize, and as months rolled by the peace of his life seemed secure. The truth was that Elvire had tired long ago of his idolatry, but she felt that she owed this new life entirely to him, and she resolved not to lose her position by her own fault. Something warned her that Carouge would be very severe if she disobeyed him; so she kept within the garden, which was large enough to afford her a good deal of exercise, as she was by nature too indolent to care for a long walk.

Twice he drove her closely veiled into Berne, but he took care to choose a dull time of the year for these visits, and after the second Elvire said it was a quiet, uninteresting place, and that she did not wish to be taken there again.

Meantime she grew every day more beautiful. But all transition periods must come to an end. Her first ambitions being satisfied, other desires began to germinate in Elvire. Their growth made her restless. Instead of lying for hours on her delicious sofa, she passed up and down with impatient steps. The room seemed to have become small and confined; she spent most of her time in the garden, often peering through the iron gate, wondering what was happening in the world outside. She was ashamed of her discontent, and she said nothing to Carouge, but he soon remarked that she had lost her spirits.

He questioned the duenna, for he could see that Elvire was not ill.

"She wants change," the woman said, "the sameness tires her."

Carouge shook his head.

"You are imbecile," he said; "how can I give her change? I cannot leave my business. Why don't you get her some fancy needlework, something that will interest her. What is the use, if," he added, savagely—"if you can't keep a girl like that amused."

The remedy was tried, but it failed. Elvire amused herself for

an hour or two in examining the work and admiring the colors of the embroidery silks; but she did not like needle-work, and said so.

She became more and more silent and absent, and at last one evening Carouge said, abruptly, "What ails you, child?"

Elvire fixed her dark, liquid eyes on his face, her cheeks glowed till he thought they looked like nectarines.

"Shall I tell you?" she said, gravely.

"Yes, little one;" but he was startled by the new expression he met in her eyes.

Elvire had already rehearsed this scene; she knew it must come, and she knew what she wanted to say, but she could hardly get her words out.

He waited patiently.

At last, abruptly, almost harshly, she said, "I want to live in Berne, to see other people, to do as they do."

An oath burst from Carouge, but the girl turned so pale that he forced a smile.

"Why, my angel, do I not make you happy here?"

She looked at him gratefully, with tears in her eyes.

"You have been very good to me, but you are not always here. I am alone all day, and I—I want to see other ladies. I want to see if I am like them. I can only read and write; ladies can do many other things!"

"They do many things best left undone," he said, brutally. "You are quite clever enough for me; I like you as you are."

Elvire rose and stood before him, her eyes flashing, her bosom heaving with roused passion.

"I belong to myself as well as to you," she said: "I am not clever enough for myself! How can I know anything while I live cooped up like a slave?"

Carouge swore fiercely.

"A wife has only got to please her husband," he said, doggedly; "it is my pleasure that you stay here."

He thought that she would burst out crying, and that he should pacify her by the promise of a new gown or a trinket; but to his surprise she turned away proudly and in silence.

For a whole week she pouted in his presence, and cried passionately when she was alone; but Carouge remained obstinate. At the end of ten days his young wife had become pale and thin, and there was a desperate look in her eyes. Carouge became frightened; he