

**A RESCUED
MADONNA**

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A Rescued Madonna by Harriet A. Cheever

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HARRIET A. CHEEVER

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MADONNA**



THE RESCUED MADONNA.

A RESCUED MADONNA

BY

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A RESCUED MADONNA.

I.

A FINE house on a broad avenue was alight with many a brilliant gleam. Each time the wide door swung noiselessly on its hinges there floated forth the melody of skilled touches on instruments of sweetest sound. The tempered atmosphere within was redolent with the fragrance of a thousand flowers. Light forms in fleecy or richly heavy robes glided gracefully to and fro throughout the softly perfumed rooms.

And Queenie reveled in it all.

Accustomed to a like grouping of similar charms, the sweet scent of flowers, the trained skill of the orchestra, the faultless attire of young men and beautiful maidens, she yet sprang with ever fresh vigor to each joyous occasion, and from the moment of entering the

Castle of Delights, all the glamour of a fairy-like scene enveloped her beauty-loving senses, and a dreamy remembrance of a poetic "Araby the Blest" lurked in the pleasant odors of banks and pyramids of flowers.

Queenie herself was superb that night. With a carriage altogether in keeping with her name, her appearance could scarcely have been more regal, while all absence of affectation but added to her superior grace of mien. The closely ribbed white silk suited well her grand young figure, and the freedom and ease born of a knowledge that naught was lacking of personal finish or attire added its share to her womanly loveliness.

"Quite like a glint of paradise," flippantly observed a young man who had stopped to address Queenie as she became the center of first one, then another charmed circle, wherein the unspoken adulation gleaming from admiring eyes bespoke the easy conquests within her reach.

"Paradise?" rejoined a pushing young lawyer. "Question is, what one specially needs of

another paradise while things are so nearly celestial in this mundane sphere."

But at this Queenie made a becoming little show of decorous reserve, and the shapely shoulders of the lawyer shrugged a trifle in deprecation of his perhaps too venturesome remark.

As Queenie and her cousin Albert, who had accompanied her (a frequent cavalier because of their strictly cousinly relations), passed through the canopied passage on the way out from the Fitzroy mansion, a crouching figure crept close to the carriage door, and as Queenie was stepping in, a woman in rags, with a rough, disheveled head, thrust a thin, brown hand before Albert, and said in a beseeching voice:—

"Oh, for love o' God, Seenyur, a penny o' help! A penny, Seenyur, for one leetle roll!"

"Get out!" snarled the coachman. "How did you come here? Get out, I say!"

"I don't see how that creature eluded the police on guard," Albert said carelessly, as they drove away. "Still," he added, "I'd have

given her some change had I had any about me. I usually forget it with a dress suit."

Queenie said nothing. In the glare of the electric light she had caught one look at the woman's face, and for a moment the strange impulse arose within her to echo the cry that had reached her like a low, sweet wail: "Oh, for the love of God!"

II.

QUEENIE sat combing out her hair in the small hours of the morning. Her enjoyment had been almost too great to bring fatigue, and while the thick, shining locks grew smooth under the lingering brush, she thought how contentedly she could live on and on in so bright a world. The perfume of all the flowers seemed imprisoned in the few on her dressing table. The lights still shone before her eyes. The tripping music from the perfectly tuned strings was in her ears. Compliment, witty sally, jets of repartee, all were pleasurably revived as in smiling reverie the maiden wound in loose, comfortable coils her bright, abundant hair.

But no recollection came of the miserable figure crouching at the carriage door. And when Queenie slept no unkempt form crept into her dreams. But she awoke the next morning with a queer sensation, doubtless the influence of a