

"THE GODDESS"

UNIQUE SERIAL STORY

BY GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

After the tragic death of John Amesbury, his devoted wife, one of America's greatest beauties, dies. At her death, Prof. Stilliter, an agent of the interests, kidnaps the beautiful three-year-old baby and brings her up in a paradise where she sees no man, but thinks she is taught by angels, who instruct her for her mission to reform the world. At the age of eighteen she is suddenly thrust into the world, where agents of the interests are ready to pretend to find her. The one to feel the loss of the little Amesbury girl most, after she had been spirited away by the interests, was Tommy. In a few days, however, he found himself living amid luxurious surroundings as the adopted son of Mr. Barclay, who has planned to have Tommy marry into wealth. But Tommy's lack of interest in Barclay's business affairs changes matters. Barclay meets with success in breaking up the match he had really planned. Turned down by the girl, Tommy goes to the Adirondacks to forget the affair. While there he meets by accident, Celestia.

CHAPTER III.

To rescue a girl who called herself Celestia from Professor Stilliter had been the work of instants and impulse. But what to do next was not to be decided with the plenty of reflection. Reflection did not come easily to Tommy, however, especially in the present circumstances.

He could not make her out at all to his satisfaction. At the moment she seemed perfectly sane, at the next completely mad. The only things of which he felt certain were that she was beautiful and good, and that she was suffering from some form of amnesia by which her powers of memory had been undermined.

"How long have you known that man?" he asked, referring, of course, to Professor Stilliter.

"Not so long as I have known you, but sometimes I feel as if I had seen you both before. But I can't ever have seen you, can I? You can't ever have been in heaven and I've never been on earth."

"If you were seeing him for the first time, why were you afraid of him?"

"For the same reason that I'm not afraid of you."

"He," said she, simply, "is bad and ugly. You are good and beautiful."

As Tommy guided her through the woods toward his camping ground he kept on saying to himself, "But there's got to be a show-down soon. What am I to do about her?"

He almost wished that he had not taken her away from Stilliter, but had, instead, stayed with them, dogged their footsteps from place to place until he was sure that the girl was in no real danger from the psychologist. Indeed, he was in a state of great mental perplexity, and at the same time there was a novel and romantic quality to the episode that he could not but enjoy.

"I only," he thought, "I might play around with her for the rest of the day and then turn her over to her proper guardians and have no further responsibility, I'd ask nothing better."

"Why it's—it's—she cried. "Yes," said Tommy, "it's wet water. Before Tommy could prevent, Celestia had stepped upon the surface, as if upon a solid pavement, and gone in above the knee."

"She gave a little cry of amused astonishment."

"Why it's—it's—she cried. "Yes," said Tommy, "it's wet water. Before Tommy could prevent, Celestia had stepped upon the surface, as if upon a solid pavement, and gone in above the knee."

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SEE CHAPTER THREE NEXT WEEK

Chapter Three of The Goddess may be seen at the Brant Theatre last half of next week, beginning Thursday, Nov. 11th.

ward with an occasional touch of the hand between her shoulders, and now with a steadily maintained pressure. "Of course I'm not used to walking," she said. "I'm sorry. I suppose I'll get used to it."

"If you are determined to push on to New York you will," said Tommy. His quick ears caught the sudden appetizing cluck of a partridge.

"Let's see if we can't get that fellow," he exclaimed. "You sit down and rest yourself, Celestia. Nobody hurts much in these woods and the birds are as tame as chickens."

But Tommy's first move was really the opposite of a move for he stood as still as he could and listened. Now a partridge, or a ruffed grouse, if you give him his right name, is a born ventriloquist.

First the partridge clucked to the right of Tommy, then to the left, then in front of him and then back of him. Tommy walked a few paces and once more stood still and listened. This time the clucking came from directly overhead, and Tommy looked upward in the dense branches of a young spruce tree, and after so looking for a few moments suddenly smiled. And although she did not know what Tommy was smiling at Celestia smiled too.

She sat down and leaned against the stem of a birch, her breath coming and going quickly, her great eyes following every movement that Tommy made.

Having located the partridge, Tommy "assembled" his trout rod, and with the end of the line, made a running noose. Then he began very quietly to poke the rod up among the branches of the spruce tree. An interesting clucking attested the fact that more eyes than Celestia's were on Tommy.

Tommy, his right hand clasping the butt of the rod, his thumb breaking the reel, reached gradually higher and higher until his arm was extended to its full length. He added a few inches to his reach by standing on tiptoe. But even this was not enough. So Tommy bent his knees a little and then jumped.

Before his feet regained the earth a frightful squawking and flapping arose in the spruce tree, and then there was dragged from it what looked like a pinwheel going at top speed.

Hunger is the most cruel tyrant in the world. There was a sharp scrunch, one last wind whistling of the pinwheel, and then there was one cocking of the gun in the north woods.

But Celestia looked pained now and troubled.

"It has wings like an angel," she said, "only darker."

Tommy was just going to say, "It's got white feathers than an angel," but he stopped himself in time and changed to:

"Even people who come here to make the world better, Celestia, have to stop to eat."

And he slipped the dilapidated bird into his pocket.

A few minutes later they reached Tommy's camp, and after he had given Celestia a cupful of spring water he cut a fresh balsam bough and made a thick mat for her to rest on, and rolled his coat and some other odds and ends into a pillow so that she could watch him make the fire and do the cooking.

In the midst of this he remembered that she was suffering from sunburn, and he made her bathe her face in a lotion that smelt of camphor and niter, and which burnt a little and then felt cool.

For lunch they had tea, biscuits (one of Tommy's most lamentable culinary failures), and the partridge. Cooked, he no longer looked like the victim of murder, but very beautiful and appetizing.

Celestia ate her full share, and then lay back on her balsam boughs and watched Tommy fill and light a pipe. "Why do you do that?" she asked. "Wasn't the partridge cooked enough?"

Tommy narrowed his eyes at her and for some moments didn't answer. Then he said: "I don't know what to make of you at all. First you say you come from heaven, and act as if you did, then you talk and act like a regular girl, then you pretend that you never saw a man smoke before. And then—what are you trying to do to me, anyway? Is that really the only dress you've got in the world? Do you always wear a golden band around your hair with stage jewels in it?"

And then suddenly a light dawned on Tommy, and he smote his thigh in applause of his own cleverness.

"I know what you are," he said. "You're the queen of the movies. You're up here staging a show, and you got bored and let me run off with you for a lark. Professor Stilliter has had something to do with the scenario. The heroine is supposed to be a little looney. Yes, Celestia—and you're practising all the time on me. Well, thank heaven, it's only acting. Why, I really thought you were mad as a hatter."

"No," said Celestia. "I'm not in the least angry. But I'm sure I don't know what you mean, but I like you when you get excited and talk fast and your eyes smile. It tests me."

Tommy shook his head at her and smiled reprovingly. "You can't keep on fooling me," he said. "Come now, what's your real name?"

"All right, if you don't want to tell me yet; it will keep; it's bound to. But tell me then, are you—the

hesitated and blushed. "I'd really like to know. You see I'm rather crazy about you. You're not Mrs. Somebody or other, are you?"

The embarrassed smile froze on his lips. He leaped to his feet and stood listening. Paint and clear sounding heartily rather than ominous, there rose to them from the valleys below a baying of dogs. Tommy had gone once with a posse of deputy sheriffs to see how a murderer is hunted down with the bloodhounds. Whole scenes of that pursuit flashed through his mind, and he knew that the baying, which now sounded in his ears, was not that of deerhounds running of season, but of bloodhounds following a human trail.

He climbed swiftly to the top of the Hub and stood listening. His field glasses glued to his eyes.

That there would ever be any difficulty of exading such a ban as Stilliter in the north woods had never occurred to him. He had pictured Stilliter a man of resource in a laboratory or in a dissecting room, but an insubstantial pig stalked out on the operating table, but not out of doors. The man was fat, unhealthily white, and appallingly near-sighted. That such a man should be so hot upon him had about it a sinister quality that brought Tommy's heart into his mouth.

A glimpse of two bloodhounds and four men, one of whom was Stilliter and another a full-blooded Indian, crossed an open space recently crossed by Celestia and himself during their hurried escape, and in the same direction, brought Tommy down from the Hub a great hurry.

As for Celestia—well, she couldn't be a movie actress; no movie actress playing truant would be hunted down with bloodhounds, and he felt that she must be accounted for upon some other hypothesis, but later when there was more time.

Meanwhile there was nothing to be thought of but instant getting together of such things as might prove useful, and flight.

"We've got to beat it, Celestia," he said. "I'm sorry, because you are tired, but that man—then by encircling his eyes with his hands he indicated Professor Stilliter's eyeglasses—"is after us."

She rose obediently to her feet. "I don't know why he wants to catch you," said Tommy, and either, you don't know or you won't tell. But you dislike him, and you're afraid of him, and that's enough."

A kettle, frying pan, salt, and matches rolled into a blanket and strapped to his back, and the Indian who rejoiced in the name of Old Man Smells-good, which, if it referred to anything about him except his ability to follow a trail, was an inappropriate name. They were all there, several miles away; but Old Man Smells-good was in the head of an exceedingly tall pine, which overtopped the rest of the forest, and from which the view was exceedingly fine and expansive. Old Man Smells-good had a pair of eyes that resembled a pair of telescopes. He could see anything that was in sight.

"Anything?" Stilliter called up. "No see a thing," answered the Indian without changing his expression. As a matter of fact, by miracle of optics he had just seen Tommy and Celestia ashore on the island. Smells-good dismounted the tree and stood shaking his head.

"No see anything," he said. "Dog no good. Smells-good he think I likely to go."

The old fakir. He seated himself upon his heels, filled and lighted his pipe, and closed his eyes as if in deep thought.

Stilliter began to show signs of impatience, but one of the guides said: "Better leave him alone; he's got a hunch, likely as not."

"Sand," cried Celestia. "Didn't you ever play in the sand when you were little?"

"I used to play with diamonds and rubies," said Celestia. "O, but this is wonderful. See, you can write in it and draw pictures. Look, I am making the man Stilliter."

And, indeed, with her forefinger for a pencil, she made an excellent caricature of him.

"Who taught you to do that, Celestia?"

"An angel," she said, simply.

"Well," said Tommy, "I've heard of people who could draw like angels—but oh, Celestia, aren't you a little tired of playing this heavenly origin business on me? I don't take any stock in it."

"She looked at him with a sudden grave wonder."

"When I tell you that I come from heaven, you don't believe me?"

"Why, Celestia," he said, meeting her gaze with equal gravity, "you're just a regular girl. Why there's blood on your cheek where a deer fly has bitten you."

"You've got to believe me," she said, and it seemed to Tommy she was trying to master him with her eyes.

"What are you trying to do to me?" he said. "Hypnotize me?"

And then he laughed, and looked so brown and healthy and good-natured that Celestia had to smile at him.

"Now, Celestia," he said, "I'm going to take you for a boat ride. But you've got to sit still—mighty still. You pretend that you're back in heaven listening to Israel accompanied by the Spheres."

But she spoke with a sudden sternness that made him very uncomfortable.

"Is there no reverence left on earth. No faith? It's high time that I came."

He helped her into the dugout, his eyes on the back of her head, enamored with the way her dark, strong hair met her straight, white neck, and as he paddled he kept saying: "Who the force is, she, and what the force is she?"

And to these questions he could not find any answers that were altogether satisfactory.

Just as they were landing on the island there came to them once more, faintly and from far-off, the baying of the bloodhounds. Celestia gave Tommy a look full of anxious appeal. "Don't be afraid," he said. "They are miles and miles from here."

So they were, all of them; Stilliter, the guides, the hounds, and the Indian who rejoiced in the name of Old Man Smells-good, which, if it referred to anything about him except his ability to follow a trail, was an inappropriate name. They were all there, several miles away; but Old Man Smells-good was in the head of an exceedingly tall pine, which overtopped the rest of the forest, and from which the view was exceedingly fine and expansive. Old Man Smells-good had a pair of eyes that resembled a pair of telescopes. He could see anything that was in sight.

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(To be Continued.)

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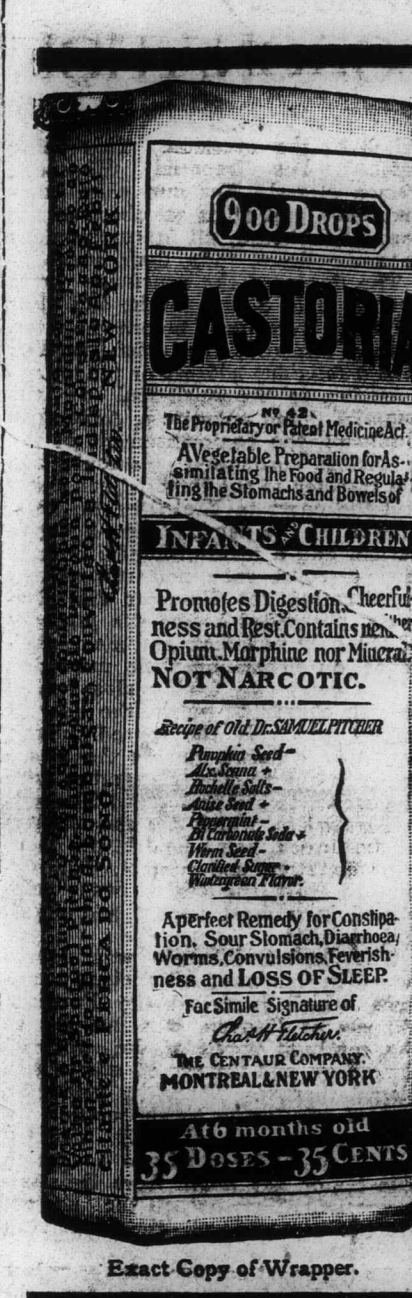
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