# Extradited from Bohemia

O. Henry

From near the village of Harmony, at the foot of the Green Mountains, came Miss Medora Martin to New York with her color-box and easel.

Miss Medora resembled the rose which the autumnal frosts had spared the longest of all her sister blossoms. In Harmony, when she started alone to the wicked city to study art, they said she was a mad, reckless, headstrong girl. In New York, when she first took her seat at a West Side boardinghouse table, the boarders asked: “Who is the nice-looking old maid?”

Medora took heart, a cheap hall bedroom and two art lessons a week from Professor Angelini, a retired barber who had studied his profession in a Harlem dancing academy. There was no one to set her right, for here in the big city they do it unto all of us. How many of us are badly shaved daily and taught the two-step imperfectly by ex-pupils of Bastien Le Page and Gerome? The most pathetic sight in New York — except the manners of the rush-hour crowds — is the dreary march of the hopeless army of Me-diocrity. Here Art is no benignant goddess, but a Circe who turns her wooers into mewing Toms and Tabbies who linger about the doorsteps of her abode, unmindful of the flying brickbats and boot-jacks of the critics. Some of us creep back to our native villages to the skim-milk of “I told you so”; but most of us prefer to remain in the cold courtyard of our mistress’s temple, snatching the scraps that fall from her divine table d’hote. But some of us grow weary at last of the fruitless service. And then there are two fates open to us. We can get a job driving a grocer’s wagon, or we can get swallowed up in the Vortex of Bohemia. The latter sounds good; but the former really pans out better. For, when the grocer pays us off we can rent a dress suit and — the cap-italized system of humor describes it best — Get Bohemia On the Run.

Miss Medora chose the Vortex and thereby furnishes us with our little story.

Professor Angelini praised her sketches excessively. Once when she had made a neat study of a horse-chestnut tree in the park he declared she would be-come a second Rosa Bonheur. Again — a great art-ist has his moods — he would say cruel and cutting things. For example, Medora had spent an afternoon patiently sketching the statue and the architecture at Columbus Circle. Tossing it aside with a sneer, the professor informed her that Giotto had once drawn a perfect circle with one sweep of his hand.

One day it rained, the weekly remittance from Harmony was overdue, Medora had a headache, the professor had tried to borrow two dollars from her, her art dealer had sent back all her water-colors unsold, and — Mr. Binkley asked her out to dinner.

Mr. Binkley was the gay boy of the boardinghouse. He was forty-nine, and owned a fishstall in a downtown market. But after six o’clock he wore an evening suit and whooped things up connected with the beaux arts. The young men said he was an “Indian.” He was supposed to be an accomplished habitue of the inner circles of Bohemia. It was no secret that he had once loaned $10 to a young man who had had a drawing printed in Puck. Often has one thus obtained his entree into the charmed circle, while the other obtained both his entree and roast.

The other boarders enviously regarded Medora as she left at Mr. Binkley’s side at nine o’clock. She was as sweet as a cluster of dried autumn grasses in her pale blue — oh — er — that very thin stuff — in her pale blue Comstockized silk waist and box-pleated voile skirt, with a soft pink glow on her thin cheeks and the tiniest bit of rouge powder on her face, with her handkerchief and room key in her brown walrus, pebble-grain band-bag.

And Mr. Binkley looked imposing and dashing with his red face and gray mustache, and his tight dress coat, that made the back of his neck roll up just like a successful novelist’s.

They drove in a cab to the Cafe Terence, just off the most glittering part of Broadway, which, as every one knows, is one of the most popular and widely patronized, jealously exclusive Bohemian resorts in the city.

Down between the rows of little tables tripped Medora, of the Green Mountains, after her escort. Thrice in a lifetime may woman walk upon clouds once when she trippeth to the altar, once when she first enters Bohemian halls, the last when she marches back across her first garden with the dead hen of her neighbor in her band.

There was a table set, with three or four about it. A waiter buzzed around it like a bee, and silver and glass shone upon it. And, preliminary to the meal, as the prehistoric granite strata heralded the pro-tozoa, the bread of Gaul, compounded after the formula of the recipe for the eternal bills, was there set forth to the hand and tooth of a long-suffering city, while the gods lay beside their nectar and home-made biscuits and smiled, and the dentists leaped for joy in their gold-leafy dens.

The eye of Binkley fixed a young man at his table with the Bobemian gleam, which is a compound of the look of the Basilisk, the shine of a bubble of Wurzburger, the inspiration of genius and the pleading of a panhandler.

The young man sprang to his feet. “Hello, Bink, old boy! be shouted. “Don’t tell me you were go-ing to pass our table. Join us — unless you’ve another crowd on hand.”

“Don’t mind, old chap,” said Binkley, of the fishstall. “You know how I like to butt up against the fine arts. Mr. Vandyke — Mr. Madder — er — Miss Martin, one of the elect also in art — er — “

The introduction went around. There were also Miss Elise and Miss ‘Toinette. Perhaps they were models, for they chattered of the St. Regis decora-tions and Henry James — and they did it not badly.

Medora sat in transport. Music — wild, intoxi-eating music made by troubadours direct from a rear basement room in Elysium — set her thoughts to dancing. Here was a world never before penetrated by her warmest imagination or any of the lines con-trolled by Harriman. With the Green Mountains’ external calm upon her she sat, her soul flaming in her with the fire of Andalusia. The tables were filled with Bohemia. The room was full of the fragrance of flowers — both mille and cauli. Questions and corks popped; laughter and silver rang; champagne flashed in the pail, wit flashed in the pan.

Vandyke ruffled his long, black locks, disarranged his careless tie and leaned over to Madder.

“Say, Maddy,” he whispered, feelingly, “sometimes I’m tempted to pay this Philistine his ten dollars and get rid of him.”

Madder ruffled his long, sandy locks and disarranged his careless tie.

“Don’t think of it, Vandy,” he replied. “We are short, and Art is long.” Medora ate strange viands and drank elderberry wine that they poured in her glass. It was just the color of that in the Vermont home. The waiter poured something in another glass that seemed to be boiling, but when she tasted it it was not hot. She had never felt so light-hearted before. She thought lovingly of the Green Mountain farm and its fauna. She leaned, smiling, to Miss Elise.

“If I were at home,” she said, beamingly, “I could show you the cutest little calf! “

“Nothing for you in the White Lane,” said Miss Elise. “Why don’t you pad?

The orchestra played a wailing waltz that Medora had learned from the hand-organs. She followed the air with nodding head in a sweet soprano hum. Madder looked across the table at her, and wondered in what strange waters Binkley had caught her in his seine. She smiled at him, and they raised glasses and drank of the wine that boiled when it was cold. Binkley had abandoned art and was prating of the unusual spring catch of shad. Miss Elise arranged the palette-and-maul-stick tie pin of Mr. Vandyke. A Philistine at some distant table was maundering volubly either about Jerome or Gerome. A famous actress was discoursing excitably about monogrammed hosiery. A hose clerk from a department store was loudly proclaiming his opinions of the drama. A writer was abusing Dickens. A magazine editor and a photographer were drinking a dry brand at a reserved table. A 36—25—42 young lady was saying to an eminent sculptor: “Fudge for your Prax Italys! Bring one of your Venus Anno Dominis down to Cohen’s and see bow quick she’d be turned down for a cloak model. Back to the quarries with your Greeks and Dagos!”

Thus went Bohemia.

At eleven Mr. Binkley took Medora to the boarding-bouse and left her, with a society bow, at the foot of the hall stairs. She went up to her room and lit the gas.

And then, as suddenly as the dreadful genie arose in vapor from the copper vase of the fisherman, arose in that room the formidable shape of the New England Conscience. The terrible thing that Medora had done was revealed to her in its full enormity. She had sat in the presence of the un-godly and looked upon the wine both when it was red and effervescent.

At midnight she wrote this letter:

“Mr. BERLAH HOSKINS, Harmony, Vermont.

“Dear Sir: Henceforth, consider me as dead to you forever. I have loved you too well to blight your career by bringing into it my guilty and sin-stained life. I have succumbed to the insidious wiles of this wicked world and have been drawn into the vortex of Bohemia. There is scarcely any depth of glittering iniquity that I have not sounded. It is hopeless to combat my decision. There is no rising from the depths to which I have sunk. Endeavor to forget me. I am lost forever in the fair but brutal maze of awful Bohemia. Farewell.

“ONCE YOUR MEDORA.”

On the next day Medora formed her resolutions. Beelzebub, flung from heaven, was no more cast down. Between her and the apple blossoms of Harmony there was a fixed gulf. Flaming cherubim warded her from the gates of her lost paradise. In one evening, by the aid of Binkley and Mumm, Bohemia had gathered her into its awful midst.

There remained to her but one thing — a life of brilliant, but irremediable error. Vermont was a shrine that she never would dare to approach again. But she would not sink — there were great and compelling ones in history upon whom she would model her meteoric career — Camille, Lola Montez, Royal Mary, Zaza — such a name as one of these would that of Medora Martin be to future generations

For two days Medora kept her room. On the third she opened a magazine at the portrait of the King of Belgium, and laughed sardonically. If that far-famed breaker of women’s hearts should cross her path, he would have to bow before her cold and imperious beauty. She would not spare the old or the young. All America — all Europe should do homage to her sinister, but compelling charm.

As yet she could not bear to think of the life she had once desired — a peaceful one in the shadow of the Green Mountains with Beriah at her side, and orders for expensive oil paintings coming in by each mail from New York. Her one fatal misstep had shattered that dream.

On the fourth day Medora powdered her face and rouged her lips. Once she had seen Carter in “Zaza.” She stood before the mirror in a reckless attitude and cried: “Zut! zut!” She rhymed it with “nut,” but with the lawless word Harmony seemed to pass away forever. The Vortex had her. She belonged to Bohemia for evermore. And never would Beriah —

The door opened and Beriah walked in.

“‘Dory,” said he, “what’s all that chalk and pink stuff on your face, honey?

Medora extended an arm.

“Too late,” she said, solemnly. The die is cast. I belong in another world. Curse me if you will — it is your right. Go, and leave me in the path I have chosen. Bid them all at home never to mention my name again. And sometimes, Beriah, pray for me when I am revelling in the gaudy, but hol-low, pleasures of Bohemia.”

“Get a towel, ‘Dory,” said Beriah, “and wipe that paint off your face. I came as soon as I got your letter. Them pictures of yours ain’t amount-ing to anything. I’ve got tickets for both of us back on the evening train. Hurry and get your things in your trunk.”

“Fate was too strong for me, Beriah. Go while I am strong to bear it.”

“How do you fold this easel, ‘Dory? — now begin to pack, so we have time to eat before train time. The maples is all out in full-grown leaves, ‘Dory — you just ought to see ‘em!

“Not this early, Beriah?

“You ought to see ‘em, ‘Dory; they’re like an ocean of green in the morning sunlight.”

“Oh, Beriah!”

On the train she said to him suddenly:

“I wonder why you came when you got my let-ter.”

“Oh, shucks! ” said Beriah. “Did you think you could fool me? How could you be run away to that Bohemia country like you said when your letter was postmarked New York as plain as day?”