

# Royal Poinciana



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If living well is the best revenge, living fabulously well can inspire rebellion--especially in those who have to clean up after the party is over. For "Mrs." Madeline Memory, head house-keeper at Palm Beach's Royal Poinciana hotel, exclusive winter preserve of the rich and famous, the "season" of 1896-97 seems unlikely to offer the fulfillment long denied her, restricted as it will be to maintaining the grim facade of a prim,

dedicated employee.

Then into Maddy's chambered life barges one of the hotel's liveliest guests, the smoothly attractive and thoroughly unattached Harrison St.

John Loring. Masquerading as a financier who works when he chooses and plays with abandon, Harry Loring is in fact a glib confidence man.

Though Maddy has been formally enjoined from fraternizing with the guests, she comes to see the genuinely affectionate "investor" as her one chance at a splash of color on an otherwise muted canvas, and there follows a series of elaborate deceptions and escapades that add up to a tale of many parts: of social portraiture (how the overindulgent of that glittering age dressed, ate, and played), of love (in an era when sex was a four-letter word), of poses and illusions, of scandals and white-gloved crime. The illicit, Bittersweet romance at the heart of the narrative soars and ebbs and constantly renews itself as it finally draws its lovers together in an enduring complicity.

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