

An excerpt from  
***The Unlikely Sainthood of Madeline McKay***  
 by Joseph Aragon



HAROLD: So! Quite a spectacle last night. I hope you've recovered from what must have been a strenuous ordeal.

MADELINE: It was. But our Blessed Mother is stronger than anything the Devil can throw at us.

HAROLD: Indeed she is. I feel very fortunate to be speaking with you. When word reached the Archbishop's office about a seer in our midst, I knew that I just had to write a story about you. I hope it isn't too forward of me to ask an interview of you right this minute. If need be, I can come back some other time—

MADELINE: No, Father, that's all right. You're here, after all. Have a seat.

HAROLD: Thank you.

*(They sit. HAROLD pulls out his pad and pencil.)*

Now. I suppose we'll start with the basic questions. Where did you grow up?

MADELINE: I was orphaned as a young child and raised by the Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Piety.

HAROLD: I'm not familiar with that order.

MADELINE: They don't get around much. It was an idyllic time for me. Full of its share of hardships, of course, but the nuns were very kind and raised me as one of their own. They instilled in me many values: generosity, and mindfulness, and of course, piety.

HAROLD: Perpetual Piety, yes. And when was the first time our Blessed Mother appeared to you?

MADELINE: Oh, I'll never forget that night. I was ten years old. I was kneeling at my bedside, finishing off the Joyful Mysteries of the rosary when all of a sudden I saw a white light. Then it grew and grew, and then I saw . . . this girl . . . dressed all in white. With a blue sash around her waist. And she was beautiful. She had the face of a porcelain doll. And when she spoke—

HAROLD: Her voice was beautiful too, I suppose. Like music?

MADELINE: Exactly.

HAROLD: I see. And what did she say to you.

MADELINE: That one day I would become her messenger. That I would take her message and deliver it to all those who have ears to hear.

HAROLD: And that message is?

MADELINE: Oh, it's not something I can articulate in a mere interview, Father, it's something that must be experienced.

HAROLD: Really. And how much do you charge for that.

*(Pause.)*

MADELINE: Depends. Let me get the price list.

HAROLD: What are you really doing here, Ms. McKay.

MADELINE: You know the answer to that, Father.

HAROLD: Yes, but not in all its glorious detail.

MADELINE: Suffice it to say that we are here to "fulfill the needs of the Blessed Faithful." They want what I've got to offer, and they're willing to pay for it. And it's all perfectly legal.

HAROLD: Legality is the least of my concerns. *(pause)* Let me show you something.

*(HAROLD pulls out a folder of press clippings from his case.)*

The archdiocese has secretly been keeping tabs on this place for years now. Ever since an anonymous informant contacted us about it. I've just been assigned to the case so I haven't gone through all of these, but this particular article caught my eye.

*(HAROLD hands MADELINE an article.)*

MADELINE: "Local Pastor Ousted from Priesthood."

HAROLD: And take a wild guess who that is. This happened fifteen years ago, when Proctor got too heavily involved in the Order. He was kicked out for teaching heresy. Have you familiarized yourself with the philosophy of the place during your stay here?

MADELINE: A little.

HAROLD: And what do they believe?

MADELINE: That the Virgin Mary will come and announce the End of the World.

HAROLD: And in all your years of catechism, have you ever heard of such a thing?

MADELINE: . . . How did you know I took catechism?

HAROLD: I have a nose for lapsed Catholics.

Proctor is no longer of the Church. And he's dragging hundreds of people along with him and turning them into mindless miracle chasers. And your presence here, Ms. McKay, only complicates matters.

MADELINE: Well! I better get out of here before it turns ugly.

HAROLD: Please don't make light of this.

MADELINE: I'm not stupid, Father. Of course I know they're mindless miracle chasers. That's why I'm here!

You wanna know where I really came from? I used to be a fortune teller. Crystal ball, Tarot cards, the works. Made an okay living out of it too. People would come in, fretting about something or other. Will they find a job, will they find true love, whatever. On the surface they wanted their fortunes told, but what they really wanted was peace of mind. They wanted to know if they were *capable* of being successful, if they were *capable* of being loved. So I give them these assurances, I do some hocus-pocus and I send them on their way. And they feel a million times better about themselves than when they came in.

It's the way church is supposed to work, but doesn't.

These people are seeking something, salvation, redemption, whatever you want to call it. And you can hardly blame them for coming to me. 'Cause they're sure as hell not getting it from you.

HAROLD: *(pause)* I'm sure you think very highly of the service you provide. But I didn't come here to argue about your lack of moral scruples.

MADELINE: Then why are you here.

HAROLD: To warn you.

MADELINE: Warn me? You don't even like me.

HAROLD: It's a priest thing. When the informant contacted us, we were told of certain "suspect practices".

MADELINE: How suspect?

HAROLD: Enough to cause us alarm. This commune is a dangerous place, Ms. McKay. And their leader, "Reverend" Proctor, is a dangerous man. It's a good thing that informant spoke up when she did, otherwise we'd pass this place off as just another commune. But it isn't.

*(gets up)* Well, I'd best be off. I've got a date for brunch with a bunch of nuns. *(leaves a business card on the table)* Just in case. My advice to you, Ms. McKay: Leave this place. While you still can.

*(HAROLD exits. MADELINE takes his card and looks at it. She goes off to get dressed.)*



End of Excerpt