

The Lure of the Mask

By
**HAROLD
MAC GRATH**

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(Continued.)

... SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I—Jack Hilliard, a wealthy New York clubman, hears a mysterious voice singing in the night under his window.

II—He inserts an advertisement in a personal column to find the singer. He receives a reply.

CHAPTER V.

THE MASK.
"JOININ' th' elites?" asked the boy when Hilliard was well under way once more.

"No; it's a seance. They are going to call up my fate round a table." "Ugh! Aw, go-wan! Dey don't call up no ghosts wit' French cider and hot holds." The boy relapsed into silence.

By and by the carriage stopped. "Dis is where we alights, me taid," the boy jeered. "An' no lookin' mind."

Hilliard found the carriage steps and landed safely. He stood for a moment, listening. They were in a quiet part of the city; no elevated or surface cars were near. He was assured that the location was exclusive. Garrets are not to be found in quiet places.

"Look out fer th' steps," said the boy, again taking Hilliard by the hand. "And you be careful of that basket."

"I ain't lettin' it drop any." Winding steps, thought the blindfolded man. He could recollect none. It seemed to him that they stood there five minutes before the door opened.

When it did, the boy passed in the basket and resolutely pushed Hilliard into the hall. The door closed gently, and the adventure was begun. Whither would it lead him?

"Take off the bandage the signor may now," said a voice in broken English.

"Thanks!" He tore the handkerchief from his eyes and blinked. The hall was so dimly lighted that he could see nothing distinctly.

"The signor's coat and hat."

He passed over these articles, shook the wrinkles from his trousers, smoothed his chin and stood at attention. The maid eyed him with abundant approval.



She was masked!

al, then knocked timidly on the door leading to the drawing room.

"Avanti!" called a soft voice. Hilliard gathered in his courage, opened the door and stepped inside.

On a divan near a lamp sat a woman in black. Only a patch of white throat could be seen, for her shoulders were not bare and her arms only to the elbows. Her back was turned squarely. But what a head! He caught his

mask tonight because I am taking a surreptitious leaf out of my book of cares."

"You are, then, seeking a diversion?" "Nothing more or less. Do not flatter yourself that there is anything personal or romantic on my side. I am bored."

"I am wholly in your hands," he said, "and they are very beautiful hands." "Is there anything more beautiful than a cat's paw when the claws are hidden? Never judge a woman by her hands." Nevertheless she buried her hands in the depths of a down pillow. She had forgotten her rings. She slipped them off and managed to hide them.

"I promise to remember. Your letters"—he began diffidently. Where the deuce was his tongue? Was he to be tongue-tied all the evening before this Columbine, who, with the aid of her mask, was covertly laughing at his awkwardness?

"My letters? A woman often writes what she will not say and says what she will not write. Did you not ask me to disillusion you?"

"Yes, but softly, softly. I begin to believe one thing—you brought me here to teach me a lesson. Gentlemen should never use the personal column."

"Nor should ladies read it. I am not saving any mercy for myself!" with laughter.

"Shall I begin with my past?" "Something less horrifying, if you please!"

"I object to the word nice," he said. "I should have preferred milkop! Hadn't you better try some new kind of torture?"

This time her laughter was relaxed and joyful. And somehow Hilliard felt more at ease. He was growing accustomed to the mask. He stretched his legs and fingered his nether lip.

"Have you not somewhere an invisible cloak?"

"I had one that night, which nature lent me," she answered readily. "I was so invisible to you that I heard the policeman call out your name. I thank you for insisting that I was not a chorus lady."

Here was a revelation which accounted for many things. "I haven't been very fortunate so far in this adventure."

"That is rank ingratitude. I am of the opinion that fortune has highly favored you."

"But the mask—the mask! If you heard the policeman call my name you must have heard him speak of one Ledy Lightfinger."

"I did, indeed. And is it not possible that I am that very person?" Hilliard dropped his hand toward his watch. "Why do you hate Italy?"

She sat straight, and what little he could see of her mouth had hardened.

"There will be no retrospection this evening, if you please," her voice rather metallic.

The mystery lifted its head again. One does not hate a country without a strong and vital reason. Was Giovanni partly right, after all? Was this a kind of trap—a play to gain his interest? Was her singing under his window purely accidental?

"Will you not sing?" he asked. This was an inspiration. Music might assist in melting her new reserve.

"You recollect, then, that I possess a voice?"

"It is all I have to recollect. Tell me, whether it is all this to be?" "To the door and into the log again."

"On my word, I'm half inclined to believe you to be an anarchist or a red or something on that order."

"Put yourself at ease. I am neither Ledy Lightfinger nor a Socialist. There are no dynamite bombs in this house."

Her severity, her irony and her apparent lack of warmth were mere matters of calculation. Her plan was to inspire him with trepidation, to keep him always at arm's length, for his own safety as well as hers. She knew something of men. She was secretly



"The song you sang under my window." pleased with his strong face and shapely head. The chin was square, but not heavy; the mouth humorous, kindly and firm; the nose bridged, and the brown eyes, sleepy, yet with latent

fires, were really handsome. She was not afraid to be alone with him, nor was it really necessary to wear a mask. But the romance in her heart that she believed to be dead was not dead, only waiting to be rekindled.

"I will sing!" "That is more than I dared to hope."

"What shall it be?" she asked. "The song you sang under my window."

"But that is for the male voice!" "You sang it very well nevertheless. I have a good memory too." He leaned forward, his arms crossed on his knees. Was there ever in all the world such an Arabian night?

She sang, but without that buoyant note of the first night. One after another he called out the popular airs of the old light operas. She had them all on her tongue's end.

Where had he seen that copy of Botticelli before? If only there was a little more light!

"Pardon me," he said. "You asked"—She repeated her question, wondering what had drawn his attention.

"I like my grand opera after dinner. After dinner I shall want Verdi, Berlioz, Gounod."

"But after dinner I may not care to sing." She spoke in German.

He was not expecting this tongue. Besides, his German had never been a finished product. For all that, he made a passable reply.

"You speak as many languages as a Swiss hotel concierge."

"I wish I did. My mother had one idea in regard to my youth—I should speak four languages and eventually become a great diplomat. My mother had one of the loveliest voices. It was a joy to hear her speak, now Italian, now German, now French. We were great comrades. It was rare fun to go with her on an antique hunting expedition. They never fooled her nor got the better of her in a bargain."

She liked the way he spoke of his mother.

"But you," he said—"you are not Italian?"

She smiled. Her fingers stirred over the keys again, and Grieg's "Papillon" fluttered softly from flower to flower.

(To be continued.)

NOTICE OF SALE.

In the matter of the estate of George M. Needles, deceased.

Notice is hereby given that in pursuance of an order of the county court of Jackson county, Oregon, made on the 14th day of October, 1909, in the matter of the above named estate, the undersigned administrator of the estate of said deceased will sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, on Monday, the 25th day of October, 1909, at 10 o'clock a. m., in front of what is known as the "Horseshoe Club Saloon," situated on Front street in the city of Medford, the entire stock of merchandise contained in said saloon, consisting of a large amount of whisky in barrels, in bottles and otherwise, together with a variety of other kinds of liquor usually kept by retail vendors thereof; also including two pool tables, both in good condition, and each completely equipped with fixtures; also a stock of tobaccos, cigars, pipes, cigarettes, etc., and a full set of decanters, glasses and tumblers, and other articles used in connection with and in a saloon where liquors are sold by retail. For a more definite knowledge of the kind and amount of liquors, fixtures, etc., to be disposed of at said sale, inquire at the office of Colvig & Reames, Medford, Oregon.

Dated October 15th, 1909.

CLARENCE L. REAMES, Administrator of the Estate of George M. Needles, Deceased.

NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned will apply to the city council of the city of Medford, Oregon, at the meeting thereof on October 19, 1909, for a license to sell spirituous, vinous and malt liquors in quantities less than a gallon, for the period of six months, at his place of business at Nos. 22 and 24 Front street, North, in said city.

JOHN HARRINGTON.

Dated October 9, 1909.

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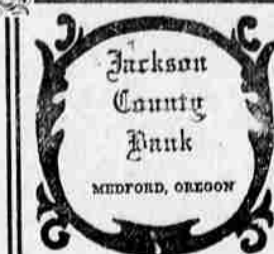
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