

# 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.

III, IV, V, and VI—He visits the mysterious singer, but she wears a mask. He falls desperately in love with her, but he has not seen her face. The unknown woman gives her name as Mme. Angot, which is assumed. They have dinner. She refuses to see him again.

VII—Hilliard and Dan Merryhew decide to go to Italy. Merryhew loves Kitty Killigrew, a comic opera singer, who has gone to Italy. Hilliard receives a black mask in an envelope.

VIII and IX—Hilliard and Merryhew arrive in Italy and later dine with Mrs. Stanford, an American Society woman, who tells Hilliard considerable about the mysterious woman with whom he is in love. She is now posing as an opera singer in Kitty Killigrew's opera company.

"Oh, there's a restaurant, but it's not much better than this. It's bad—files and greasy plates."

And by the time they had found the Ristorante Tornaghi—miserable and uninviting—they were laughing.

"Only I wish I knew where they were going," was Hilliard's regret.

"They?" said Merryhew.

"Yes. The woman with Kitty is the woman I'm going to find if I stay in Europe ten years. And when I find her I'm going to marry her."

"Sounds good," said Merryhew, pouring himself a third glass of very indifferent Beuane.

"And they may be going anywhere but to Monte Carlo—Paris, Cherbourg, Calais. In my opinion, Monte Carlo is the last place two such women are likely to go to alone."

So they sat in the dingy restaurant, smoking and laughing and grumbling till the next train was announced. At 4 that afternoon they arrived without further mishap at the most interesting station of its size in Europe, Monte Carlo.

And then into the omnibus adjoining came the man with the scar.

The Riviera, from San Remo on the Italian side to Cannes on the French, possesses a singular beauty.

Villefranche stands above Nice, between that white city and Monte Carlo. It is quiet and lovely. For this reason the great army of tourists pass it by. There is no casino, no band, no streets full of tantalizing shops. On the very western limit of Villefranche, on the winding white road which rises out of Nice, is a modest little villa, so modest that a ballerina would scorn it and a duchess ignore it.

In the balcony La Signorina reposed in a steamer chair, gazing seaward. The awning cast a warm glow as of gold upon her face and hair, a transparent shadow. She was at this moment the most precious thing upon which the eye may look, a wholly beautiful woman. Kitty Killigrew, standing in the casement window, stared at her silently, not without some envy, not without some awe. What was going on behind those dreamy eyes?

"Hilda?" said Kitty.

"Yes, Kitty."

"Who and what are you?" Kitty asked bravely.

La Signorina's eyes wandered till they met Kitty's.

"And what good would it do you to know? Would it bring money from home any sooner? You already know that I am unhappy. The adventures always is."

"Adventures?" Kitty laughed scornfully. "The proprietor pretends he



La Signorina turned again in a passion fierce and sudden.

does not know you, but I am certain he does. He forgets himself sometimes in the way he bows to you."

Kitty paused, then asked: "Won't you tell me what the secret is?"

"How beautiful that white sail looks!"

"You know all about me," went on Kitty stubbornly.

"Because you told me. I never asked you a single question."

"Is it—love?"

"Love!" La Signorina shrugged.

"Poor Kitty, you are trying in vain to make a romance out of my life. You should not read so much."

"It is not curiosity," declared Kitty.

"It is because I love you and because it makes me sad when I hear you laugh, when I see you beat your hands against the chair as you did just now."

La Signorina turned again in a passion which was as fierce as it was sudden.

"There is a man," she hissed, her eyes dilating. "But I loathe him, I hate him, I abhor him! And were it not wicked to kill he would have been dead long ago. Enough! If you ever ask another question I will leave you."

"I am sorry," said Kitty. "He was false to you and broke your heart."

"No, Kitty, only my pride."

"It is a strange world," mused Kitty.

"Let us turn to our affairs. I received a letter today."

"From home?" eagerly.

"I have no home, Kitty. The letter is from a friend in Naples. Mr. Hilliard and Mr. Merryhew, friends of yours, are in Italy."

Kitty could scarcely believe her ears. "Where are they? Where are they stopping?"

"That I do not know. But listen. They have started out to find us. When I tell you that Mr. Hilliard is the gentleman I dined with that night before we sailed you will understand my reasons for wishing to avoid him. From this time on we must never appear on the streets without our veils. If by chance we meet them we must give no sign. It will be only for a little while. Your letter will come soon, and you may renew your acquaintance with these two gentlemen when you return home. It may be hard for you, but if you wish to stay with me my will must be a law unto you."

"Not to speak to them if we meet them?" urged Kitty in dismay. "But that is cruel of you. They are both gentlemen."

"I do not know Mr. Merryhew, but I can say that Mr. Hilliard is a gentleman. As for being cruel, I am not only selfish."

"Are you not a queen who has run away from a kingdom?" asked Kitty bitterly. "One reads about them every day in the papers."

"My dear, you are free to choose one of two paths. I shall not urge you one way or the other, but you must choose now."

Several minutes passed. Kitty looked out to sea, and La Signorina closed her eyes. In her heart Kitty knew that she could no more leave this woman

than she could fly. She was held by curiosity, by sentiment, by the romantic mystery.

"I have chosen," she said at length. "I shall stay with you."

"Thanks, Kitty. And now the affairs of the company. We have played three days and have lost steadily. Tonight will be the last chance. Win or lose, tomorrow we shall return to Venice. I do not like the idea of going to Monte Carlo at night. It is not exactly safe. But since beggars mustn't be choosers we must go. Again I warn you to speak to no one while I am playing and under no circumstances raise your veil. They have begun to notice us, but it will end tonight. I was mad to think that I could win. And, by the way, Kitty, we shall not go back to the Campo Formosa."

Kitty accepted this news brightly. If there was one place she hated it was the Campo.

"Now run and dress," advised La Signorina. "Let me dream a little more while the sun sets."

She knew men tolerably well. After thirty they cease to follow visions—they seek tangible things. No, they must never meet again. It would not be wise. Her heart, galled by disillusion, might not withstand much storming. And she had no wish to add this irretrievable folly to the original blunder. She was afraid.

No; they must go their separate ways till the end. With a sigh she rose and went into the room. Kitty was busy with the finishing touches of her toilet. The older woman kissed her fondly.

"And do you realize that you are the most beautiful woman in the world?" asked Kitty.

"Little flatterer!"

"And if I were a man"—Kitty paused—"I'd fall in love with you and marry you."

La Signorina looked into the mirror.

## CHAPTER XII.

### GRAY VEILS

THE fascination of Monte Carlo is not to be described—it must be seen. Vice shall be attractive, says the mother of Satan. At Monte Carlo it is more than attractive; it is compelling. A subtle hypnotism prevails, the lure of gold. Fool and rogue, saint and sinner, here they meet and mingle and change. To those who give Monte Carlo but a trifling glance, toss a coin or two on the tables and leave by the morrow's train it has no real significance. It is simply one of the sights of Europe.

To this latter class belonged the two young men. They had no fortunes to retrieve, no dishonesty to hide, no restitutions to make, no dancers to clothe and house. It was but a mild flirtation.

They had searched Nice and Monaco and Mentone, but the women they sought were not to be found. They decided, therefore, that the women had gone on to Paris.

"My system needs a tonic," said Merryhew.

"We'll hold the funeral after tonight's play. Of all the damfool games it's roulette."

"And I can prove it," Merryhew replied. "I have just \$50 left." He took out the gold and toyed with it. "Can't you hear it?" he asked.

"Hear what?"

"The swan song of these tender napoleons."

Merryhew had played the numbers, the dozens, the columns, the colors, odd and even. Sometimes he would win a little, but a moment later the relentless rake would drag it back to the bank.

"Nature has done this very prettily. Quite clever with her colors, don't you know," he drawled, plucking the down on his upper lip, for he was trying to raise a mustache, convinced that two waxed points of hair at each corner of his mouth would impress the hotel waiters and other fachini—baseborn.

"Don't be a jackass!" Hilliard was out of sorts.

"You agreed with me that I was one. Why not let me make a finished product?" good humoredly.

"Well," Merryhew finally said, "you might as well let me have my letter of credit now."

"You will not set eyes upon it till we return to Genoa. That's final. I know you, my boy, and I know Monte Carlo. Even with your fifty, a watch and a ring I'm afraid to trust you out of sight."

"I can see that you will never forgive nor forget those bad cigars. Come on. We'll take a look at our Italian

friend. He's a bad loser. I have seen him lose his temper too. It's my opinion that he's a desperate man."

"They usually are when they come to Monte Carlo."

So they walked round to the entrance to the gaming halls, where the lights, the gowns, the jewels, the sparkling eyes, the natural beauty and the beauty of enamel, the vague perfumes, the low murmur of voices, the soft rustle of silks, the music of ringing gold, all combine to produce a picture as beautiful as a mirage and as false. They joined the never ending procession which passes in and out of the swinging doors day after day, year after year.

"There's the chap with the scar. He is a handsome beggar," Hilliard admitted. "I wonder what sort of blackleg he is. He's no ordinary one, I'm certain. I begin to recognize the face of the man with him. He's a distinguished diplomat."

The Italian played like an old hand, a number once in awhile, but making it a point to stake on the colors. Red began to repeat itself. He doubled and doubled. On the sixth consecutive turn he played the maximum of 12,000 francs and won. The diplomat touched him on the arm significantly, but the player shook his head. Ten minutes later he had won 40,000 francs. Again he refused to leave his chair.

"If he stays now," said Hilliard, "he will lose it all. His friend is right."

"Forty thousand francs, \$8,000!" murmured Merryhew sadly. "Why couldn't he have luck like this?"

(To be continued.)

## Notice to A. F. & A. M.

There will be work in the third degree Friday evening.

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CITY NOTICES.  
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Continued from Page 2

the city of Medford, which check shall be held by the city of Medford on the conditions hereafter set forth. If said grantee, his associates, his successors or assigns, shall begin the actual work on the things mentioned in this ordinance with in four months from its passage and taking effect, and shall prosecute the same with diligence until substantially completed, so that not less than twenty-five hundred dollars (\$2500) shall have been expended in the actual construction work of installing said plant on the ground in said city within six months from the date of the taking effect of this ordinance, then, and as soon as the said sum of twenty-five hundred dollars (\$2500) shall have been so expended, and said fact certified as hereinafter set forth, said check may be withdrawn upon depositing in lieu thereof a sufficient bond, in the penal sum of two thousand dollars (\$2000), guaranteeing the construction of said plant in accordance herewith, so as to have the same substantially complete within 12 months after the date of the passage and taking effect of this ordinance.

It is understood and agreed that the city engineer of the city of Medford shall determine the question as to the amount of work actually done, and that the repayment of said check shall only be made upon the certificate of said city engineer that said work has actually been performed within said time.

It is further understood and agreed that time is, and shall be of the essence hereof, and that if said grantee, his associates, his successors or assigns, shall fail to begin actual work on the things mentioned in this ordinance within four months from its passage and taking effect, or to prosecute the same with reasonable diligence, so that there shall have actually been expended, as aforesaid, within the aforesaid six months, the said sum of twenty-five hundred dollars (\$2500) in the actual work of construction on the ground in said city, then all rights of the said grantee, his associates, his successors or assigns, in or to said certified check, shall be absolutely forfeited to said city, and said city shall retain the same and all thereof as liquidated damages for the breach of this contract.

Section 22. This ordinance shall take effect and be in full force from and after its passage, approval and posting.

Done at Medford, Oregon, . . . . . 1909.

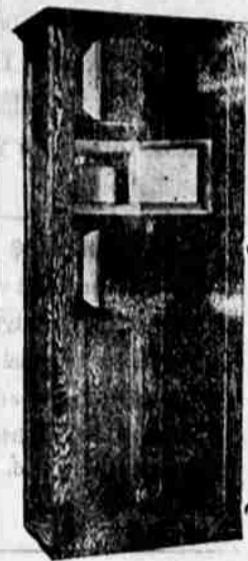
The foregoing ordinance was passed by the city council of the city of Medford, Oregon, on the 22nd day of October, 1909, by the following vote: Welch, aye; Merrick, aye; Wortman, no; Eifert, aye; and Demmer, aye; Emerick, absent.

Approved this 23rd day of October, 1909.

W. H. CANON, Mayor.

Attest: ROBT. W. TELFER, City Recorder.

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