

The Lure of the Mask

By
**HAROLD
MAC GRATH**

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(Continued.)

In the Villa Ariadne the wonderful fountain by Donatello was encircled by a deep basin in which many generations of goldfish swam about. Forming a kind of triangle about the basin were three ancient marble benches such as the amiable old Roman senators were wont to lounge upon during the heat of the afternoon. A maiden sat on one of these benches, her arms thrown out on either side of the crumbling back, her chin lowered and her eyes thoughtful.

Merrihew stole up from behind with all the care of a practiced hunter. Then he put his hands over her eyes. She struggled for a brief moment, then desisted.

"It is no puzzle at all," she declared. "I can smell horse, horse and again horse. Mr. Merrihew."

"Yes. I should have fetched along a sachet powder. I remember but one thing, Kitty, and that's you." He sat down beside her. "There's no doubt that I reek of the animal. But the real question is, How much longer are you going to keep me dangling on the string? I've been coming up here for ten days now."

She had dressed expressly for this moment, but Merrihew was not going to be told so.

"But am I to be blamed if, after having refused twice to marry you, you still persist?" Kitty assumed a judicial air.

"But you haven't refused me this time."

"Because I wish to make it as easy as possible for you." Which of the two meanings she offered him was lost upon Merrihew.

"Come, let us be sensible for ten minutes."

Merrihew laid his watch on the bench beside him.

Kitty laughed rollickingly, for beneath her furbelows and ribbons and trinkets she was inordinately happy and light of heart. Her letter had come. She was only waiting for the day of sailing.

Merrihew reached out and caught her hand.

"Oh, I said let us be sensible for ten minutes," she demurred.

"Kitty, will you marry me?"

"Could you take care of me?"

"I'll work."

"Oh, if you were only rich!"

"You don't mean that, Kitty."

"No," relenting, "I don't. But you bother me."

"All right. This will be the last time. Will you marry me? I will do all a man can to make you happy. I love you with all my heart. I know. You're afraid. You've an idea that I am fickle. But not this time, Kitty; not this time. Will you?"

Then without further hesitance, indifferent to the future or the past, conscious only of the vast happiness of the present, Kitty laid her hand in his. He would have drawn her into his arms had not they both seen O'Mally pushing through the box hedge, followed by some belated tourists. Merrihew swore softly, and Kitty laughed.

On the terrace the tea table dazzled the eye with its spotless linen, its blue canton and its bundle of pink roses. Hillard extended his cup for a second filling. La Signorina vaguely wondered where Kitty was. She needed Kitty at this moment.

How inexplicable were the currents and cross currents of life! She had met a thousand men, handsomer, more brilliant. They had not awakened more than normal interest. And yet this man, quiet, humorous, ordinarily good looking, aroused in her heart discord and penetrated the barriers to the guarded sentiment. Why? Always this query.

She gathered up a handful of the roses and pressed them against her face, breathing deeply.

"If I were a poet, which I am not"—He paused irresolutely.

"You would extemporize on the beauty of the perspective," she supplemented. "How the—"

"I was thinking of your hair," he interrupted. "I have never seen any-

thing quite like it."
She had recourse to the roses again.

"You have not told me the real reason why you sang under my window that night."

"Have I not? Well, then, there can be no harm in telling you that. I had just signed the contract to sing with the American Comic Opera company in Europe. I saw the world at my feet, for it would be false modesty to deny that I have a voice. More distinctions. The world is not at my feet," lightly.

"Will you answer a single question?"
"I can make no promise."

"Is there another man?"
Silence, which grew and lengthened.

"What do you mean?" she asked evenly.

"In Venice you told me that there was a barrier. I ask now if this barrier be a man."

"Yes."

A wrinkle of pain passed over his brow. "If you love him—"

"Love him! No, no! I had hoped you would not speak like this. I relied upon your honor."

"Is it dishonorable for me to love you?"

"No, but it is for me—to permit you to say so."

He was pale, but not paler than she. "I offer you nothing, Mr. Hillard, nothing—no promise, no hope, nothing. A few days longer and we shall separate finally."

Merrihew and Kitty came into view.

"It is all over," said Merrihew exultantly. "Kitty has promised to marry me as soon as we land in America."

La Signorina took hold of Kitty's hands.

"Is it true, Kitty?"

"Yes, ma'am," Kitty answered, with a stage courtesy. "I have promised to marry him, for there seemed no other way of getting rid of him."

This caused real laughter. La Signorina relighted the tea lamp, and presently they were all talking together.

They laughed quietly as they saw O'Mally gravely conducting his charge to the gates. He returned with Smith. Both were solemn visaged.

"Well, noble concierge?" inquired La Signorina. "Why, you look as if you were the bearer of ill tidings."

"I am," said O'Mally.

"What has happened?" asked Merrihew.

"Enough," said O'Mally laconically. He directed his next words to La Signorina. "You are sure of this friend of yours, the princess?"

"Certainly," answered La Signorina, her astonishment increasing.

"She gave you the right authority?"

"Absolutely," more and more astonished.

"Well, before I swing the thunder let me tell you something," said O'Mally. "I was in Florence a few days ago. I made some inquiries. It was imperative, I know. I interviewed four or five hotel concierges. Only one of them ever heard of the name. This concierge directed me to another, but as he spoke only Italian we could not make things fit. But when I mentioned the princess' name he hurried as if something highly amusing had hit him. The main thing is this, your princess has played us all rather a shabby trick. In the letter you read to us in Venice she said that she had never visited this villa."

"Only in her youth," replied La Signorina, her brows drawing together in a frown. "To the point at once."

"It is simply this. Our little jig is up," responded O'Mally. "Read these and see for yourself." He gave her a broad white envelope and a clipping from La Nazionale of the day before.

She seized the clipping eagerly, but the eagerness died from her face quickly, leaving it pale and stony. The clipping fluttered to the ground. Her gaze passed from one face to another, a horror growing in her eyes. Slowly she picked up the envelope and drew out the card.

"Tell me, what is it?" cried Hillard, troubled.

In answer she gave him the card. He read it. It was rather a knock. Now, why should the Principessa di Monte Bianca take it into her head to

give a ball in the Villa Ariadne Wednesday week when she had loaned the villa definitely to her friend La Signorina?

(To be continued.)

CITY NOTICES.

ORDINANCE NO. 251.

An ordinance declaring the assessment on the property benefited for the cost of laying a water main on outer section of Clark street, West and corporation boundary line south to Jackson street, West, and directing the recorder to enter a statement thereof in the water main lien docket.

The city of Medford doth ordain as follows:

Section 1. Whereas, the city council did heretofore by resolution declare its intention to lay a 6-inch water main on outer section of Clark street, West, and corporation boundary line south to Jackson street, West, and to assess the cost thereof on the property fronting on said portion of said street in proportion to the frontage of said property, and did fix a time and place for hearing protests against the laying of said water main and the assessment of the cost thereof as aforesaid.

Whereas, said resolution was duly posted and published as required by section 116 of the charter of said city; and

Whereas, a meeting of the council was held at the time and place fixed in said resolution for the purpose of considering any such protests, but no protests were at such time or at any time made or received by the council to the laying of said water main or the assessing of the cost thereof as aforesaid, and said council having considered the matter, and deeming that said water main was and is of material benefit to said city and that all property to be assessed therefor would be benefited thereby to the extent of the probable amount of the respective assessments to be levied against said property, did order said water main laid; and

Whereas, the cost of said water main has been and hereby is determined to be the sum of \$1236.50;

Now, therefore, it is hereby further determined that the proportionate share of the cost of laying said water main of each parcel of the property fronting on said portion of said street is the amount set opposite the description of each piece or parcel of land below and that each such piece or parcel of land is benefited by the laying of said water main to the full extent of the amount so set opposite the description of such piece or parcel, and that the respective amounts represent the proportional benefits of said water main to said respective parcels of property and also the proportional frontage thereof on said portion of said street, and the council does hereby declare each of the parcels of property described below to be assessed and each of the same is hereby assessed the amount set opposite each respective description for the cost of laying said water main.

ASSESSMENT FOR A 6-INCH WATER MAIN FROM INTERSECTION OF CLARK STREET, WEST, AND CORPORATION BOUNDARY SOUTH TO JACKSON STREET, WEST:

Assessment No. 1—Elfred and Jennie Barzee, block 3, Mingus subdivision in the city of Medford, Oregon, frontage 802.56 feet and described Vol. 66, page 313, county recorder's records of Jackson county, Oregon; 752.56 feet; rate 80 1/2 cents per foot; amount due \$605.80.

Assessment No. 2—F. W. Hutchason, the west half of lot 7, block 2, Mingus subdivision, in section 24, township 37 south, range 2 west of the Willamette meridian, in Medford, Jackson county, Oregon; frontage 430.76 feet, and described Vol. 28, page 265, county recorder's records of Jackson county, Oregon; 700.76 feet; rate per foot 80 1/2 cents; amount due \$322.60.

Assessment No. 3—Mathias Demmer, commencing at the southwest corner of lot 6, block 2, Mingus subdivision, in section 24, township 37 south, range 2 west of the Willamette meridian, in Jackson county, Oregon, and running thence east on south line of said lot 9 chains 41 links, thence north at right angles to said south line to within 30 feet of north line of said lot, thence west parallel with and 30 feet distance south from north line of said lot to southerly line of said road, crossing northwest corner of said lot, thence south 42.15 degrees west to said southerly line of said county road, to west line of said lot, thence south on said west line of said lot to place of beginning, containing 6 acres; frontage 420.75 feet on east side street, described Vol. 31, page 549, county recorder's records of Jackson county, Oregon; 382.75 feet; rate per foot 80 1/2 cents; amount due \$308.10.

Section 2. The recorder of the city of Medford is hereby directed to enter a statement of said several assessments in the water main lien docket of said city as required by the city charter.

The foregoing ordinance was passed by the city council of the city of Medford on the 23 day of November, 1909, by the following vote: Merrick aye, Welch aye, Eifert aye, Emerick aye, Wortman aye, Demmer absent. Approved November 3, 1909. W. H. CANON, Mayor.

Attest: ROBT. W. TRUPER, Recorder.

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