

# **HEARTS AND MASKS**

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Hearts and Masks by Harold MacGrath

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**HAROLD MACGRATH**

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AND MASKS**





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# HEARTS AND MASKS

by

HAROLD MAC GRATH  
Author of *The Puppet Crown*  
*The Grey Cloak* *The Man on the Box*

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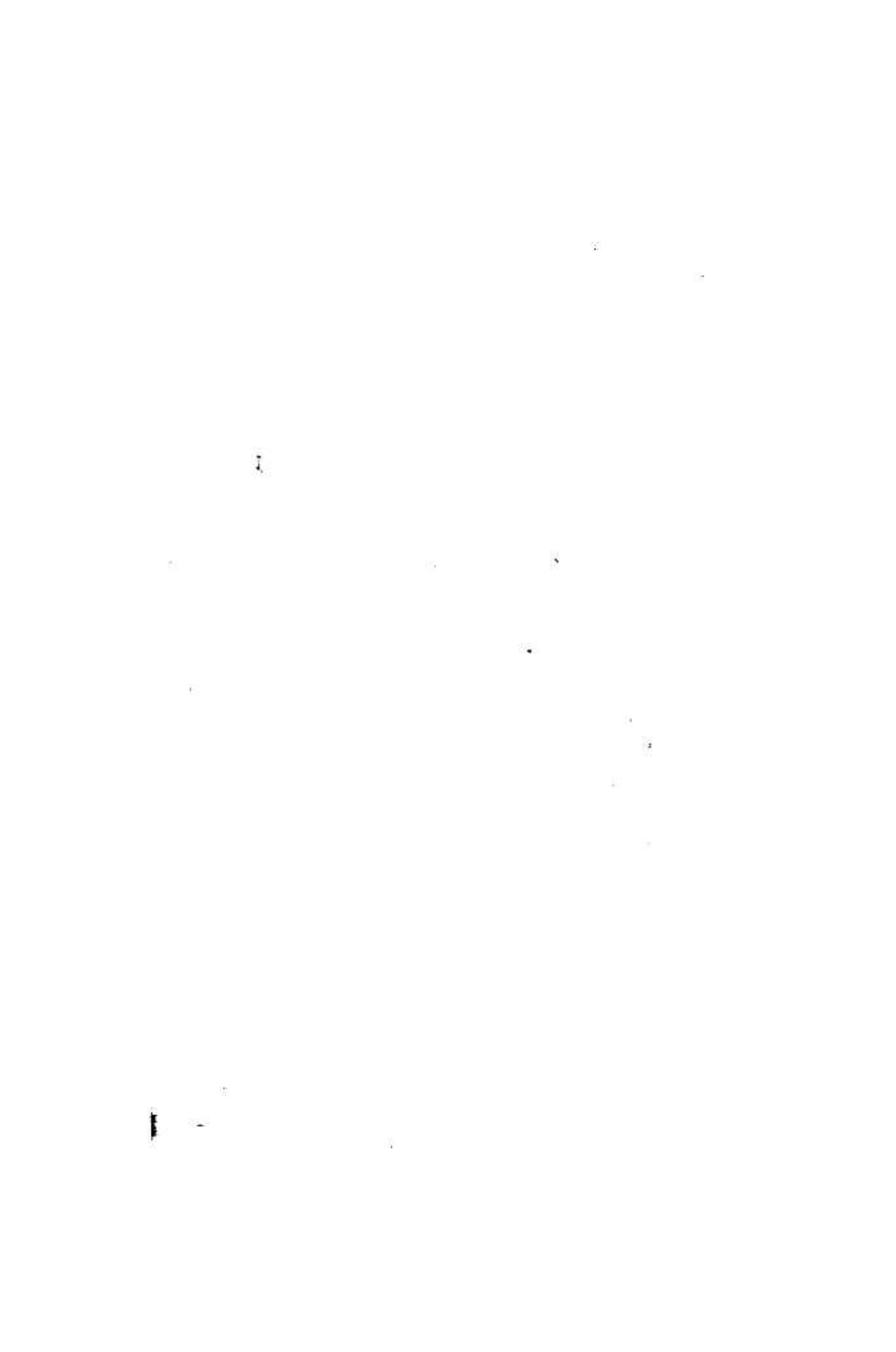
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### I

**I**T all depends upon the manner of your entrance to the Castle of Adventure. One does not have to scale its beetling parapets or assault its scarps and frowning bastions; neither is one obliged to force with clamor and blaring trumpets and glittering gorgets the drawbridge and portcullis. Rather the pathway lies through one of those many little doors, obscure, yet easily accessible, latchless and boltless, to which the average person gives no particular attention, and yet which invariably lead to the very

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heart of this Castle Delectable. The whimsical chatelaine of this enchanted keep is a shy goddess. Circumspection has no part in her affairs, nor caution, nor practicality; nor does her eye linger upon the dullard and the blunderer. Imagination solves the secret riddle, and wit is the guide that leads the seeker through the winding, bewildering labyrinths.

And there is something in being idle, too!

If I had not gone idly into Mouquin's cellar for dinner that night, I should have missed the most engaging adventure that ever fell to my lot. It is second nature for me to be guided by impulse rather than by reason; reason is always so square-toed and impulse is always so alluring. You will find that nearly all the great captains were and

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are creatures of impulse; nothing brilliant is ever achieved by calculation. All this is not to say that I am a great captain; it is offered only to inform you that I am often impulsive.

A *Times*, four days old; and if I hadn't fallen upon it to pass the twenty-odd minutes between my order and the service of it, I shouldn't have made the acquaintance of the police in that pretty little suburb over in New Jersey; nor should I have met the enchanting Blue Domino; nor would fate have written Kismet. The clairvoyant never has any fun in this cycle; he has no surprises.

I had been away from New York for several weeks, and had returned only that afternoon. Thus, the spirit of unrest acquired by travel was still upon me. It was nearing holiday week,