

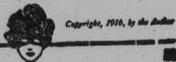
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The PURPLE MASK

by Grace Givard

Novelized from the Motion
Picture Play of the Same

Name by the Universal Film
Mfg. Co.



SIXTH EPISODE.

The Queen's Necklace.

Crackling flames were devouring the tinderlike superstructure of the airplane, before it had fairly landed in the tree-top. The terrifying position they were in, compelled the three passengers to act with extreme promptness to save their lives. Phil Kelly, who had been stunned by the blow that knocked him onto one of the wings of the machine just as it began its ascent, was now regaining consciousness.

Pat hauled the Sphinx from his recumbent position on the burning wing of the airplane. Then she clambered into the branches of the tree herself.

The girl crawled down to the lowest branches and jumped to the ground. Kelly followed her, and there immediately appeared upon the scene a group of excited and astonished farmers who had been attracted to the scene by the brilliantly burning airplane. Willing hands assisted the girl into a nearby house, while other carried the partly unconscious detective into another farmer's home.

Pat soon recovered her composure and aside from a few scratches that would soon be forgotten, discovered that she had escaped miraculously from a terrible death. Then, rejoicing in her good fortune, the girl left the friendly shelter her good Samaritans had provided and made her way, in the early dawn, to the hangar where her automobile was waiting.

When Kelly had collected his senses and started to investigate, he found in the room where Pat had been sheltered, only one sign that she ever been there. On the sofa was a purple mask.

"Fooled again, and by this slip a girl," Kelly said to himself as he started back toward Paris, walking to the nearest railroad station. The morning safely at home, Patricia regarded her aunt with an incomplete version of her adventure.

But it was several weeks before Patricia again entered a contest of wits with the Sphinx.

However, unknown to the beautiful Patricia, there were certain conspiring elements at work that would soon bring her into activity—that would give her a chance to exercise her charitable instincts and do something for the interest of the oppressed. Patricia's fame had extended beyond the confines of Paris. She was becoming known, among certain classes throughout France.

In the principality of Dufrane there were certain conspiracies fomenting. King Fergus had aroused the enmity of his people, by appropriating for himself a necklace of great value that his queen, upon her death a few months before, had bequeathed to fund she intended should be used to relieve the distress of the poor.

These were the outward conditions when there came one morning to Patricia a message from King Fergus to appear at once at his palace. Taking with him his two most trusted assistants, the Sphinx set out immediately for Dufrane. King Fergus had detailed his son, Prince Angus, to meet the famous detective and have him brought at once to the council chamber in the palace.

"I have come, sir, at your command," said Sphinx Kelly when he was ushered into the presence of the king. "What are your further orders?"

The king fixed his steel-gray eyes upon the famous detective and said:

"The life of my dynasty is threatened. The people are conspiring against me, and I want you to father the plot and report to me your findings. Prince Angus, who has brought you here, will give you the full details." Then the king indicated that the audience was at an end and Kelly, accompanied by Prince Angus, repaired to another room in the palace.

Prince Angus proceeded to impart the details of the plot against the king. He spoke rapidly, and was evidently ill at ease.

"My mother died a few months ago and willed to the peasants a valuable necklace—the jewels to be sold and the proceeds to be placed at the disposal of the People's league for distribution among the needy. The king, my father, has decided that he should keep the jewels, and has locked them in his private safe."

"I must know every part of the story," said Kelly, "or I cannot proceed with intelligence."

"The fact is," Prince Angus resumed, "Duke Hestor covets the throne, and he is very popular with the people. There may be an uprising at any hour and the king may be dethroned. This would bring Duke Hestor into power."

"This Duke Hestor," Phil began—"does he know the combination to the safe?"

"Yes, he does," the prince replied, "and, unfortunately, he and the king are the only ones who can open the door to the vault."

"If the duke were able to procure the gems, could he sell them readily?" was Kelly's next question.

"Yes, indeed," was the immediate answer. "Only a short distance from the palace there is an immensely wealthy banker who has made it known publicly that anyone who will bring him the gems may have the money."

"Who is the leader of the People's league?" the detective next asked.

"They have never had a real leader

Men are to be