



THE LONE WOLF

LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—At Troyon's, a Paris inn, the youth Marie-Louise, afterwards known as Michael Lanyard, is caught stealing by Burke, an expert thief, who takes the boy with him to his home and makes of him a finished crackman.

CHAPTER II—After stealing the Ombre jewels and the Huysman war plans in London, Lanyard returns to Troyon's for the first time in many years because he thinks Roddy, a Scotland Yard man, is on his trail. On his arrival he finds Roddy already installed as a guest.

CHAPTER III—At a dinner conversation between Comte de Morbihan, M. Bannion and Mlle. Bannion about the Lone Wolf, a celebrated crackman who alone, puzzles and alarms him as to whether his identity is only guessed or known.

CHAPTER IV—To satisfy himself that Roddy is not watching him, Lanyard secretly enters the room in the next room, then comes back stealthily, to find a girl in his room.

CHAPTER V—The girl turns out to be Mlle. Bannion, who explains her presence by saying that she was sleep-walking.

CHAPTER VI—In his apartment near the Trocadero he finds written on the back of a twenty-pound note, part of his concealed emergency board, an invitation from The Pack to the Lone Wolf to join them.

CHAPTER VII—Lanyard attempts to discover the Ombre jewels, but finds that The Pack has forbidden the buyers to deal with him. He decides to meet The Pack.

CHAPTER VIII—De Morbihan meets him and takes him before three masked members of The Pack.

CHAPTER IX—He recognizes Popinot, apache, and Wertheimer, English mobster, but the third, an American, is unknown to him. He refuses alliance with them.

CHAPTER X—On his return to his room he is attacked in the dark, but knocks out his assailant.

CHAPTER XI—He gives the unconscious man, who proves to be the mysterious American, a hypodermic to keep him quiet, discovers that Roddy has been murdered in his bed with the evident intention of fastening the crime on him, and changing the appearance of the unconscious American to resemble his own, starts to leave the house.

CHAPTER XII—In the corridor he encounters Lucia Bannion, who insists on leaving with him.

CHAPTER XIII—Having no money Lucia is obliged to take refuge with Lanyard in the studio of an absent artist friend of his. He locks her in a room alone and retreats to get some rest himself.

CHAPTER XIV—After sleep Lanyard finds his viewpoint changed. He tells Lucia who he is.

CHAPTER XV—Mutual confessions follow. She is Lucy Shannon, not Bannion, and has been used as a tool by Bannion, the crook. The American murderer, Roddy was Bannion's secretary. Both men are members of The Pack and out to get Lanyard.

CHAPTER XVI—Lanyard tells Lucia that he means to reform and she agrees to go with him to return the London loot. Her trunk in a brick is thrown through the skylight.

CHAPTER XVII—A bullet follows the brick. The paper has an account of the total destruction by fire of Troyon's. "All the same," she contended stubbornly, "I'm the stumbling-block. You're risking your life for me."

"I'm not," he insisted almost angrily. "You are," she returned with quiet conviction.

"Well," he laughed, "have it your own way! But it's my life, isn't it? I really don't see how you're going to prevent my risking it for anything that may seem to me worth the risk!"

But she wouldn't laugh; only her countenance, suddenly bereft of its mutinous expression, softened winningly—and her eyes grew very kind to him.

"As long as it's understood I understand—very well," she said quietly, "I'll do as you wish, Mr. Lanyard."

"Good!" he cried cheerfully. "I wish, by your leave, to take you out to dinner. This way, please!"

Leading her through the scullery, he unbarred and swung open a low, arched door in one of the walls, uncovering the black mouth of a narrow and tunnel-like passageway that ran off at right angles from the side of the house.

With a word of caution, flash-lamp in his left hand, pistol in right, Lanyard stepped out into the darkness.

In two minutes he was back with a look of relief.

"All clear," he reported; "I felt pretty sure Popinot was ignorant of this emergency exit—else we'd have entertained uninvited guests long since. Now, half a minute."

The electric meter occupied a place on the wall of the scullery not far from the door. Prying open its cover, he unscrewed and removed the fuse-plug, plunging the entire house in complete darkness.

"That'll keep 'em guessing a while!" he explained with a chuckle. "They'll hesitate a long time before rushing a dark house infested by a desperate armed man—if I know anything about that mongrel crew! Besides, when they do get their courage up, the lack of light will stave off discovery of this way of escape. And now, one word more."

A flash of the lamp located her hand. Calmly he possessed himself of it.

"I've brought you into trouble enough as it is through my stupidity," he said; "but for that, this place should have been a refuge to us until we were quite ready to leave Paris. So now we mustn't forget, before we go out to run God only knows what gauntlet, to fix a rendezvous in event of separation. Popinot, for instance, may have drawn a cordon around the block; if he has, you must leave me to keep them interested and—ah—diverted until you're safe beyond their reach. Oh, don't worry—I'm perfectly well able to take care of myself. But afterward we must know where to find each other. Hotels, cafes and restaurants are out of the question—in the first place, we've barely money enough for our dinner; besides, all such places

nothing but emptiness beneath my feet!"

"And you'd—backslide?"

"How can I tell?" he expostulated. "It's not a fair question. I don't know what I'd do, but I do know it would need something damnable to shake my faith in you!"

"You think so now," she said tolerantly. "But if appearances were against me—"

"They'd have to be black!"

"If you found I had deceived you—"

"Miss Shannon!" He threw an arm across the table and suddenly imprisoned her hand. "There's no use beating about the bush. You've got to know—"

She drew back suddenly with a frightened look and a monosyllabic sharp reprimand: "No!"

"But you must listen to me. I want you to understand. Bourke used to say to me: 'The man who lets love into his life opens a door no mortal hand can close—and God only knows what will follow in!' And Bourke was right.



"You've Got to Know—"

Now that door is open in my heart, and I think that whatever follows in won't be evil or degrading. Oh, I've said it a dozen different ways of indirection, but I may as well say it squarely now. I love you; it's love of you makes me want to go straight, in the hope that when I've proved myself you'll maybe let me ask you to marry me.

"Perhaps you're in love with a better man today; but I'm willing to chance that; a year brings many changes. Perhaps there's something I don't fathom in your doubting my strength and constancy. Only the outcome can declare that. But please understand this: If I fail to make good it will be solely because I'm unfit and have proved it. All I ask is what you've generously promised me—opportunity to come to you at the end of the year and make my report. And then, if you will, you can say no to the question I'll ask you, and I sha'n't resent it, and it won't ruin me; for if a man can stick to it for a purpose for a year he can stick to it forever, with or without the love of the woman he loves."

She heard him out without attempt at interruption, but her answer was prefaced by a sad little shake of her head.

"That's what makes it so hard, so terribly hard," she said. "Of course I've understood you—all that you've said by indirection, and much besides, has had its meaning to me—and I'm glad and proud of the honor you offer me. But I can't accept it. I can never accept it—not now nor a year from now. And it isn't fair to let you go on hoping that I might some time consent to marry you. For that's impossible."

"You—forgive me—you're not already married?"

"No."

"Or promised?"

"No."

"Or in love with someone else?"

Again she told him, gently, "No."

His face cleared. He squared his shoulders. He even mustered up a smile.

"Then it isn't impossible. No human obstacle exists that time can't overthrow. In spite of all you say, I shall go on hoping with all my heart and soul and strength."

"But you don't understand—"

"Can you tell me—make me understand?"

After a long pause she told him once more, and very sadly: "No."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Sheer Impudence.

Though it was not yet eight o'clock when they entered the restaurant, it was something after eleven before Lanyard called for his bill.

"We've plenty of time," he had explained; "it'll be midnight before we can move. The gentle art of house-breaking has its technique, you know, and its ethics—we can't well violate the privacy of Mme. Ombre's strong-box before the caretakers on the premises are sound asleep. It isn't done, you know—it isn't class to go burglarizing when decent, law-abiding folk are wide awake. Meantime we're better off here than tramping the streets."

It's a silent web of side ways and a gloomy one by night that backs up north of Les Halles—old Paris, grim, taciturn, and somber, steeped in its memories of savage romance. But for infrequent corner lamps, the street that welcomed them from the doors of the warm and cozy restaurant was as dismal as an alley in some city of the dead. Its houses, with their mansard roofs and boarded windows, bent their heads together like mutes at a wake, black-cloaked and hooded; seldom one showed a light; never one betrayed by any sound the life that lurked behind its jealous blinds.

Now again the rain had ceased and, though the sky remained overcast, the atmosphere was clear and brisk with a touch of frost, in grateful contrast to the dull and muggy air that had ob-

tained for the last twenty-four hours.

"We'll walk," Lanyard suggested—"if you don't mind—part of the way at least; it'll eat up time, and a bit of exercise will do us both good."

The girl assented quietly.

The drum of their heels on fast-drying sidewalks struck sharp echoes from the silence of that drowsy quarter, a lonely clamor that rendered it impossible to ignore their apparent solitude—as impossible as it was for Lanyard to ignore the fact that they were followed.

The shadow dogging them on the far side of the street, some fifty yards behind, was as noiseless as any cat; but for this circumstance Lanyard would have been slow to believe it was concerned with him, so confident had he felt, till that moment, of having given the Pack the slip.

And from this he diagnosed still another symptom of the Pack's incurable stupidity!

Supremely on the alert, he had discovered the pursuit before they left the block of the restaurant. Dissembling, partly to avoid alarming the girl, partly to trick the follower into a feeling of greater security, he turned this way and that, round several corners, until quite convinced that the shadow was dedicated to himself exclusively, then promptly revised his prior purpose and, instead of sticking to darker backways, struck out directly for the broad, well-lighted, and lively Boulevard Sebastopol.

Crossing this without another backward glance, he turned north, seeking some cafe whose arrangements suited his designs; and, presently, though not before their tramp had brought them almost to the line of the Grand boulevards, found one to his taste, a cheerful and well-lighted establishment situated upon a corner, with entrances from both streets. A hedge of forlorn fir trees knee-deep in wooden tubs guarded a spindling of round, metal tables and spindle-backed chairs, of which few were occupied. Inside, visible through the wide plate-glass windows, perhaps a dozen patrons sat round half as many tables—no more idling over dominoes and gossip—steady-paced burghers with their wives, men in small ways of business in the neighborhood.

Entering to this company, Lanyard selected a square, marble-topped table against the back wall, entrenched himself with the girl upon the push-up hoistered seat behind it, ordered coffee and writing materials, and proceeded to light a cigarette with the nonchalance of one to whom time is of no consequence.

"What is it?" the girl asked guardedly, as the waiter scurried off to execute his commands. "You've not stopped in here for nothing!"

"True—but lower, please!" he begged. "If we speak English loud enough to be heard it will attract attention. The trouble is, we're followed. But as yet our faithful shadow doesn't know we know it—unless he's more intelligent than he seems. Consequently, if I don't misjudge him, he'll take a table outside, the better to keep an eye on us, as soon as he sees we're apparently settled for some time. More than that, I've got a note to write—and not merely as a subterfuge. This fellow must be shaken off, and as long as we stick together that can't very well be done."

He interrupted himself while the waiter served them, then sugared his coffee, arranged the ink bottle and paper to his satisfaction, and bent over his pen.

"Come closer," he requested—"as if you were interested in what I'm writing."

"Disgusted the Minister. 'The new minister called upon the factory superintendent today.' 'How'd he come out?' 'Boiling.' The superintendent thought he was a man looking for a job and told him that he would give him a job in spite of his looks, if he could furnish first-class references and give a bond."—Houston Post.

First American Lace Plant. The first lace plant established in the United States was that of the Jennings Lace Works in Brooklyn, N. Y., about thirty years ago. Other plants have been established from time to time until now there are about twenty-six factories operating 550 lace machines and employing several thousand persons.

Wouldn't Be New to Her. Miss Gigglegum (single and romantic)—"The shower of soot and ashes from Vesuvius must be an awe-inspiring sight. Would you not like to witness it?" Mrs. Pottsman Pans (married and prosaic)—"Oh, I don't know—I've seen my husband take down a stovepipe."—Judge.

How Did He Know? Elizabeth was studying in her history about the discovery of the Pacific ocean by Balboa. "Well," said she, looking up from her history, "what I don't understand about this discovery business is how Balboa knew it was the Pacific ocean when he had never seen it before."—Harper's Magazine.

If She Always Said What She Meant. "Will you be mine?" he asked. "O, no, I will not be yours," she replied, "but I don't object to going through the ceremony that will give you the right to work your head off in order to buy me all the clothes and jewelry and social pleasure I want."—Houston Chronicle.

Daily Thought. Beautiful it is to understand and know that a thought did never yet die; that as thou, the originator thereof, hast gathered it and created it from the whole part, so thou wilt transmit it to the whole future.—Carlyle.

That Little Word "If." Husband (testily)—"Oh, if—if—if! You remind me of what the fellow who got lost in the woods said to his companion." Wife—"Well, what did he say?" Husband—"He said: 'Now, if we had some ham we'd have some ham and eggs, if we had some eggs.'"

Bring Both Hands in Sight—Upon the Table.

ing—and amused; if you can laugh a bit at nothing, so much the better. But keep a sharp eye on the windows. You can do that more readily than I under cover of the brim of your hat. And let me know what you see."

He had no more than settled into the swing of composition than the girl—apparently following his pen with closest attention—giggled coquetishly and nudged his elbow.

"The window to the right of the door we came in," she murmured, smiling delightfully; "he's standing behind the fir trees, staring in."

"Can you make him out?" Lanyard asked without moving his lips.

"No more than that he's tall," she said with every indication of enjoying a most tremendous joke. "His face is all in shadow."

"Patience!" counseled the adventurer. "He'll take heart of courage when convinced of our innocence."

He poised his pen, scrutinized the ceiling for inspiration, and permitted a slow smile to irradiate his features.

"You'll take this note, if you please," he said cheerfully, "to the address on the envelope, by taxi—it's some distance, near the Etoile. A long chance, but one we must risk; give me half an hour alone, and I guarantee to discourage this animal one way or another. You understand?"

"Perfectly!" she laughed archly. He bent over and for a few moments wrote busily.

"Now he's walking slowly round the corner, never taking his eyes from you," the girl reported, shoulder to shoulder and head distractingly near his head.

"Good. Can you see him any better?"

"Not yet."

"This note," he said, without stopping his pen or appearing to say anything, "is for the concierge of a building where I rent stabling for a little, closed car I find occasionally useful. I'm supposed there to be a chauffeur in the employ of a crazy Englishman who keeps me constantly traveling with him back and forth between Paris and London. That's to account for the irregularity with which I use the car. They know me, monsieur and madame of the conciergerie, as Pierra Lamier; and I think they're safe—not only trustworthy and of friendly disposition, but quite simple-minded; I don't believe they gossip much. If so, the chances are De Morbihan and his gang know nothing of the arrangement. But that's all speculation—a forlorn hope!"

"I understand," the girl chuckled at his elbow. "He's still prowling up and down outside the hedge."

"We're not going to need that car tonight; but the home of Mme. Ombre is close by; and I'll follow and join you there within an hour at most. Meantime, this note will introduce you to the concierge and his wife—I hope you won't mind—as my fiancee. I'm telling them we became engaged in England, and I've brought you to Paris to visit my mother in Montrouge, but am detained by my employer's business, and will they please give you shelter for an hour."

"He's coming in," the girl announced quietly.

"In here?"

"No—merely inside the row of little trees."

"Which entrance?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Word "Stunt." A "stunt" is a feat or performance striking for its strength or skill required for its accomplishment; hence it has come to mean any real feat. The word has made its way into both Webster and the New Standard Dictionary, but neither states its origin. Webster suggests a comparison with the old word "stun," which means "a task." It is interesting to note that obsolete provincial English had a word "stunt" which meant "dull" or "stupid."

When Inclosing Stamps. Here is a hint for my own benefit as well as yours: When sending a postage stamp in a letter instead of moistening one corner and sticking it to the paper, moisten a small spot in the center of the stamp and the affix it to your inclosure. The removal of a small part of the center of the glued back in no way impairs the usefulness of the stamp, but the corner often tears off.—Exchange.

Invents a Hilarity Recorder. An English moving picture man has invented an instrument for registering the hilarity caused by comic films. It is called the scopograph and is employed in the halls where new movies are being tried on an audience for the first time. The proprietors of the film can then impress their customers or not, as the case may be, with the surprising result recorded.

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