

# PEG O' THE RING

By WALTER K. HILL and JO BRANDT



Novelized from the Motion Picture Play of the Same Name by the Universal Film Manufacturing Co.

### SYNOPSIS.

La Belle Le Fleur, animal queen, fatally injured by tigers, dies after giving birth to a baby. Doctor Lund, owner of the circus, and La Belle's husband, refuse to recognize the child. La Belle instructs baby to Flip, a clown. Flip rears Peg as a circus rider. Later, Doctor Lund's second wife determines Peg shall not share Lund's millions and sends Hindu servants to dispose of her. Doctor Lund sends thugs to get from Flip letter that proves Peg's parentage. Lund, Jr., follows the show determined to marry Peg. After being at the mercy of lions on the occasion, Peg, while in her dressing tent, is locked in a wardrobe chest by the Hindu who has stolen the letter from Flip. Peg is carried to the den of a band of counterfeiters of which Mrs. Lund is the head. Peg releases herself from the chest when it is carelessly left unlocked, but before she can escape from the house she drops through an opening in the floor, created through a secret elevator, is dropped from under her feet. She manages to grasp with her hands the edge of the opening in the floor and hangs there. Young Doctor Lund, who has come to the rescue of Peg, is overpowered by the Hindu and the counterfeiters carry him bodily from the house.

### SIXTH EPISODE

Peg dangled in the air for a few seconds, her frail hold upon the floor surrounding the opening through which the trap had just descended giving her a perilous grip on temporary safety. But the girl's strength in forearm and hands was not sufficient to sustain her weight for very long.

She felt her hold slipping and despite every effort she was finally compelled to drop, precipitately, down to the room below. She landed with her feet on a chair upon which she had been sitting when the trap fell. Before she could recover her bewildered gaze she was grabbed from behind by strong arms that rendered her helpless.

In a twinkling she was thrown to the floor of the trap, the chair was sent spinning by a kick from the foot of her new captor, and with a sudden jolt the trap again started downward with Peg pinned by strong hands to its fast-descending floor. Her cries fell upon deaf ears. She was at the mercy of Chockro's burly henchman.

The elevator trap quickly descended to a subcellar, dark and musty. Before Peg could realize what was happening, the floor of the elevator was mechanically tilted, and the girl rolled helplessly on to the damp, soapy ground. She knew that her descent had finally ended—and as the elevator was drawn up, she realized that she was alone and defenseless.

The damp subcellar was still as death. When she cried out her voice gave forth a strange sound. Not a sound of the struggles and commotion in other parts of "The House of Mystery" reached the girl's ears. She was utterly alone, prisoner in unknown confines and helpless—utterly helpless.

Meanwhile young Doctor Lund was fighting bravely to free himself from the grasp of his opponents, the thugs Chockro had set upon him in the room through which Lund had first entered the counterfeiters' den. Chockro had



She Was at the Mercy of Chockro's Henchman.

given orders to his men that Lund should be carried into the yard. But a new idea had struck the Hindu and he told his henchmen to carry Lund into another room in "The House of Mystery."

The thugs were numerous enough, with their combined strength, to hold Lund under control until they had carried him to the room Chockro had designated. Then they freed him, untying his bonds. He took advantage of a brief respite to get his breath—and to gather his strength for a new resistance.

The gang was after him in a twinkling, and in the larger room the scrap was renewed.

Lund dropped to the floor and the gang of counterfeiters fell upon him as one man. They well-nigh knocked him breathless. This time Chockro took pains to do the trying himself, and in short order had young Lund bound hand and foot, and with strong cord fastened a gag over the mouth of his

prisoner. Then the gang threw Lund into a corner.

The four thugs left the scene while Chockro remained to taunt and bully the victim he had caused to be rendered utterly helpless.

Peg was in the subcellar beneath the room where Lund was detained, helpless. As she looked upward the glaring face and snake-like eyes of the Hindu glared tauntingly upon her. She cried in the bitterness of her helplessness. Her sobs reached Lund's ears faintly, but sufficiently audible to let him know that someone was in distress.

Lund felt, intuitively, that it was Peg, and as he strained at the lashings which bound him, the Hindu smiled tauntingly and increased Lund's agony by jeering remarks.

The open trap through which the elevator ran was less than a yard from where Lund's manacled feet rested upon the floor. On the wall above him he noticed an electric switch.

Chockro stood where he could look down into the open trap, reach out his hand and touch the switch, or face about and address his taunts to young Lund without further effort than to turn his body by a slight movement of his feet upon the floor.

"I've got your girl in a trap, and I'll pay you both off at once," Chockro fairly shouted. "I'll turn the water in and let you listen while she drowns."

Young Lund desperately tugged at his bonds. He dreaded the Hindu's threat and as Chockro reached over and threw down the handle of the electric switch, the sound of rushing water came to Lund's ears.

Peg screamed in terror, Chockro looked down upon her and laughed with fiendish derision. Lund writhed upon the floor, and to Chockro his efforts seemed purposeless. But Lund's brain was at work, even if his body was made temporarily useless by his relentless bonds.

The girl in the trap below saw the waters rushing in to overcome her. A great pipe in the wall was emptying a flood into the cement-walled pit, and the rising tide bid fair soon to submerge the hapless Peg.

The higher the tide rose in the pit the more fiendish were Chockro's heartless taunts. Past her knees, soon waist-high the water rose, until it lifted Peg from her feet. Then she noticed a peculiar fact—there seemed to be a slight current in one main direction as the water eddied around her.

When Peg permitted herself to float upon the water she realized that she was being carried slowly across the surface of the pit toward the side of the wall opposite the intake.

Peg moved in the direction the current took her, and when she had arrived against the wall there was a noticeable undertow that drew her legs and feet against the side of the well-like pit. Instinctively Peg kicked with her feet against the wall, and made an unexpected discovery.

Through the cracks in a sluice gate the water was running out of the pit.

Lund had worked his body across a few feet of the floor until by raising his feet, bound together as they were, he could reach the electric switch. He shoved the handle up and as Chockro, attracted by the lessening of the rush of water, leaned far over the edge of the trap-hole in the floor, Lund continued his maneuver.

Working fast Lund was able to cover enough floor space to make up sufficient distance to give him a leg-length chance to reach the Hindu as he bent low over the edge of the open trap. In a final effort Lund kicked straight out with his bound feet, and landed in the middle of the Hindu's back.

The unexpected impact threw Chockro off his balance, sent him through the opening and splashing down into the water below. And at that instant Peg kicked loose the sluice gate that she had discovered near the floor in the wall and on a rushing flood of water she was carried into an adjoining room.

His utterly unexpected drop into the pit found the Hindu unprepared for the involuntary plunge. He went under, came to the surface and floundered around just long enough to give Peg a brief breathing spell before he followed her through the sluice gate.

Peg's wet and bedraggled clothing retarded her movements and she was slow in gaining the foot of a steep flight of ladderlike steps that led from the room into which she had been fairly catapulted by the sudden rush of water. Chockro followed her.

Peg continued her flight upstairs, and slammed the door behind her. Then she hurried on, seeking an outlet at the end of a long corridor which she had suddenly entered. Good fortune was with her—the door was open, and Peg was soon running through the yard toward shelter and safety in the pile of lumber.

The Hindu roused, by lusty shouts, his gang of confederates, as soon as he had made his way out of the flooded cellar. The thugs were quickly advised of Peg's escape and Chockro led

them into the yard and scattered them into individual searching parties.

While the counterfeiters were beating back and forth among the piles of lumber, Peg was making her way swiftly, but cautiously, out of the maze of timbers which served her so well as shelter and also effectively to baffie her pursuers. She soon found herself at the end of the lumber yard and near a network of railroad tracks, upon which freight cars stood in long rows.

On she ran, out into the railroad yard, and made her way among the cars. She fled without purpose other than to escape her pursuers, but kindly fate was guiding her steps. As she rounded the end of a long row of cars her delighted gaze suddenly fell upon the circus train, lying on the opposite side of the main line of tracks.

When Peg dashed into the sleeper where she hoped to find Flip, the car was crowded with performers.

Old Flip was seated on the edge of his berth. He had been out all night searching around the lot, inquiring about Peg from everyone he met, and had just returned to the show train, utterly discouraged. The other performers were trying to comfort the disconsolate old clown when Peg dashed through the door of the car and with a wild cry of joy threw herself into the arms of her daddy.

Their fond embrace was of short duration, for Peg made haste to tell, in brief and excited sentences, of her adventures in "The House of Mystery." She begged the show people to follow her back to the counterfeiters' den and rescue the person, whoever he might be, that was being held prisoner there.

Flip insisted that Peg stay close to him as the party dashed across the freight yards in the early morning. They ran through the lumber yard, Peg retracing her steps as best she could, without, of course, climbing among the rows of up-ended timbers.

Chockro and his gang had given up hope of finding Peg and had assembled in front of the den to discuss immediate plans, when the sharp-eyed Hindu discovered Peg and her rescuing party rapidly approaching.

"Quick, into the house, and lay low," cried the Hindu. And he led his gang into "The House of Mystery."

The advance guard of circus folk saw the door through which Chockro had entered, and were not surprised when they found it locked. Two of

turned to the show cars, young Lund had decided upon his immediate plans. He told Peg and Flip that he would go home, for a few days, as his father would probably want to advise with him about the future of the show.

When Mrs. Lund returned home from her hurried automobile trip to the counterfeiters' den she owned and controlled, she was greatly surprised to be informed by the butler that Chockro had returned during her absence, and left word that he had an important letter to give her.

This information came to her early in the morning following the fire at the circus, and only a few hours after she had reached home from her all-night ride. She was passing through the entrance hall, on her way to make preparations again to go to "The House of Mystery," when she heard Doctor Lund in conversation with someone in the library.

Mrs. Lund stealthily approached the door and listened while her husband talked with Jack Boygne, the man he had sent to the circus for the letter Flip possessed—the very letter that Mrs. Lund had reason to believe was right then safe in the possession of Chockro, her Hindu servant.

"How could I get the letter," she heard Jack Boygne exclaim, "when the circus burnt up? There was so much excitement that I couldn't do a thing on the letter job."

"I don't care if the show did burn, the letter means more to me than the circus does," said Doctor Lund. "You've got to get that letter, I tell you—and just to give you another chance I'll newly outfit the show and open it again right away."

Mrs. Lund indulged in a smile of quiet satisfaction as she passed on upstairs to her room. When she was leaving the house to take her automobile, Doctor Lund and Jack Boygne departed through another door and took the train for the disabled circus.

With all speed Mrs. Lund proceeded again to "The House of Mystery."

When Mrs. Lund reached the parlor she intuitively felt that she was being followed. When she closed the door, after entering, she sensed that someone had observed her.

She immediately suspected that her counterfeiting operations had been traced to headquarters.

There was but one way out—the



"There is Your Man! He is the Leader of the Counterfeiters!"

athletic showmen threw themselves against the panels and burst the door from its hinges.

Then the rescuers crowded into the house and followed close to Peg as she cautiously directed progress toward the room where young Lund was still lying, bound helpless, on the floor.

Thus the rescuing party found the object of their search, and quick progress was made in loosening the rope that bound Lund so securely. When the show folks were about to retrace their steps, Chockro and his gang burst in upon them, running pell mell down a short flight of stairs, and engaging the rescuers in a rough-and-tumble fight. The counterfeiters were matched in strength by the athletic circus performers, and the battle was proceeding recklessly when matters suddenly took an utterly unlooked-for turn.

Four men with drawn revolvers appeared at the head of the stairs, down which the counterfeiters had just rushed to pounce upon the showmen, and the leader of the new arrivals sharply commanded the combatants to hold up their hands.

"We are members of the secret service," declared the leader of the new arrivals. "Nobody leaves this room until they stand a search." Then the officers proceeded to make all hands identify themselves.

The circus crowd easily explained their presence. Chockro had sent his gang into the fray and then, without risking his own skin, had made his getaway. Taking the counterfeiters with them, the secret service men left the house, and permitted the circus people to return to their train.

When young Lund and Peg emerged, with the show folks, from "The House of Mystery," the young Doctor, Peg and Flip walked slowly along in a little group by themselves. As they proceeded toward the show train, Lund and Peg briefly compared and gave Flip the benefit of their combined experiences.

By the time the circus folk had reached the show cars, young Lund had decided upon his immediate plans. He told Peg and Flip that he would go home, for a few days, as his father would probably want to advise with him about the future of the show.

The three Lunds resumed their usual method of individual life at home, just as though nothing had happened. Mr. and Mrs. Lund either knew or suspected the game the other was playing. Neither of them ventured even a word to their son regarding his brief absence from home. There was an open truce of three-cornered dimensions in the Lund mansion.

Young Lund resumed his athletic training under his instructor, Jack Boygne, and exercised his accustomed freedom of action in his daily life. With a desire to avoid scandal of gossip in his home town, young Lund denied himself the pleasure of Peg's society.

He made one trip to winter quarters, where everybody was busy with the new equipment, and although he made no special effort to find or communicate with Peg, there was eagerness in his gaze as he watched for the girl he loved. Young Lund did not know that, for the purpose of avoiding complications, Flip had prevailed upon Peg to go with him to a quiet resort in the country and rest the few days that they would be at liberty.

Peg consented rather reluctantly—and Flip understood why. He soothed her with his fatherly caresses and told her that the days would quickly pass and insisted that rest, after her exciting experiences, would be vastly beneficial. And, accordingly, they repaired to a quiet resort in the vicinity where Peg immensely enjoyed her restful vacation and once more became her natural, buoyant and ingenious self.

The opening performance of the rehabilitated show was little more than a tryout of the equipment. The new canvas was raised and "rehearsed."

The big working organization was re-assembled and the places of those who had wandered away during the layoff were filled. For it was coming harvest time in the surrounding country and higher wages than the circus paid were attractive to some of the "razor-backs" and workmen in minor positions.

Doctor Lund ordered that there should be only one performance and that the show should begin earlier than customary in the evening—for he had planned to give another party to celebrate the reopening of his show. The "towns" (as circus folk call people who are not connected with the show) decided that Doctor Lund was "becoming eccentric." The stirring events that marked the lawn party he had just previously given were fresh in memory.

Flip, among all the performers in the show, took the announcement of the festivities seriously. To the others it meant another jolly night—for they were all too sympathetic to refer to Peg's unhappy affliction and the distressing incident occasioned by her attack of convulsions at the first Lund party. But Flip had been too keenly affected by the circumstances to look upon the coming event with anything short of apprehensive dread.

Peg, light-hearted and gay, heard the announcement with real delight. Completely restored in health, nerves and spirit by her brief rest, the girl could see nothing but an evening of pleasure in prospect. And then, too, "he" would be there!

This last confession of her inmost thoughts Peg made to no one but herself. She had even avoided discussing young Doctor Lund with Flip save only when the old clown insisted. But Flip understood, and realized without his little girl telling him that she dearly loved the handsome young physician—and Flip wondered how it would all end.

The reopening of the show passed off without unusual incident, so well are such organizations usually managed and equipped. Everything worked smoothly and as far as the actual performance was concerned there was nothing to indicate that the tour had been interrupted. The performers were glad to be in harness again, and there was an atmosphere of happiness and satisfaction on every hand.

The Lund mansion was again brilliantly lighted and the grounds decorated for the celebration. Most of the guests who had been in attendance upon Doctor Lund's previous party were again assembled. The circus people arrived soon after the performance had concluded, and with dancing, music and gaiety the affair was progressing splendidly.

An observant person would have discovered a change in the attitude of Doctor and Mrs. Lund toward each other since their last public appearance. Instead of receiving their company together, they kept apart during the entire evening and although their attitude was not conspicuous it was clearly apparent that they were not congenial. Flip, in particular, noticed this and he was further perplexed.

Young Lund sought Peg's society immediately upon her arrival. She was escorted by her daddy, but Lund soon engaged her attention and, directly, the young sweethearts found a secluded spot in the conservatory. For them time passed on fleeting wings thereafter.

When the party had been in progress for a considerable time, there appeared at the door of the Lund mansion three men who demanded admission. The butler protested that he must first see Doctor or Mrs. Lund, but the strangers disregarded him and forced their way into the entrance hall. From there they passed to the parlor where the guests were dancing.

While the men stood in the door surveying the crowd, the butler hurried through the rooms and sought out Doctor Lund. When told of the intruders Lund approached them and demanded what they wanted and why they had entered his house uninvited.

One of the men, talking for all three, said in reply to Doctor Lund's demands for an explanation:

"We are secret service operatives and our visit here is the result of our having received this letter, by special delivery, only a few hours ago."

Taking the letter in hand, Doctor Lund read: "If you will be at the circus party at Doctor Lund's tonight you will find the ringleader of the counterfeiters." There was no signature.

Doctor Lund was astounded. He protested that there could be no likelihood of truth in the assertion conveyed in the letter. But the secret service men were insistent, and their actions and loud talk attracted the attention of the guests. In a twinkling there was an atmosphere of suppressed excitement everywhere. The dancing stopped, the musicians ceased playing, and the guests began to gather in groups around the excited men.

Young Lund and Peg had left their seclusion in the conservatory and were on the point of indulging in a dance



The Rising Tide Bid Fair to Submerge Her.

when the music stopped. They noticed the crowd around Doctor Lund and the three strangers, and quickly joined the group of curious and excited guests.

From another room Mrs. Lund entered, and working her way through the group crowding around Doctor Lund and the secret service men, soon caught the drift of the discussion. Her face blanched for an instant, and then, by an effort recovering her self-possession, Mrs. Lund said in a commanding voice:

"Doctor Lund, why don't you have these intruders bodily ejected from the house. They have no right to come here in this way and disturb our guests."

Before Doctor Lund could make reply the spokesman for the secret service officers responded:

"We are officers of the law, come here to find the leader of a gang of counterfeiters, and we are going to stay here until we are ready to leave. The first person to lay a hand upon one of us does so at his peril."

And three revolvers were whipped from the pockets of the officers in a simultaneous move.

Peg screamed, as if in terror at the sight of the revolvers. Old Flip sprang to her side, his face paling with apprehension. He looked at his watch—it was close to the midnight hour.

"Do be careful, Peg dear," said Flip. "Don't excite yourself. We must hurry away from here." And he attempted to gently draw her aside, with the intention of leading her from the room.

But it was too late. Peg's voice raised to a hysterical scream as she cried:

"I sent a letter to the secret service, Doctor Lund. A member of your family is the head of a gang of counterfeiters." Then the circus girl laughed wildly, as Flip struggled to restrain her.

The secret service men were quick to reach Peg's side. Doctor Lund's unfeigned astonishment made him speechless under the girl's accusation. Mrs. Lund's face was drawn instinctively into hard, set lines, as she stood within a few feet of the excited girl, rigid as a statue.

"Who do you mean?" the officer shouted, putting his hand on Peg's shoulder with a rough clasp.

When the secret service operative grabbed Peg, young Lund got into action. He struck the forearm of the officer, loosening his hold upon the girl, and shouted:

"Keep your hands off that girl, you big bully. I'm able to protect her from your kind."

Peg's hysteria was now at its height. Poor old Flip tried with what strength he had to restrain her, but her natural vitality, augmented by the nervous ferocity of her affliction, made the old clown's efforts utterly useless.

The girl screamed again and again, striking out with her hands and feet after the manner her attacks usually took effect, and before young Lund could realize her purpose, she caught him by the hair of the head and vigorously shook him back and forth, despite his struggles to resist.

Then she threw him from her grasp and pointing an accusing finger straight at young Lund the girl cried out:

"There is your man! He is the leader of the counterfeiters." Then Peg gave one more wild hysterical laugh, and swooned in Flip's arms.

(END OF SIXTH EPISODE.)