

LUCILLE LOVE

THE GIRL OF MYSTERY

BY THE
"MASTER PEN"

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She Saw Loubeque in the Doorway.

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This story is being shown at the
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SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALLMENTS.

Valuable governmental papers are stolen by Thompson, follower of Loubeque, international spy, from General Love, whom Loubeque hates, in Manila. Love's daughter Lucille flies to a steamer to recover the papers in order to clear the name of Lieutenant Gibson, whom she loves.

Loubeque, tampering with the wireless on the steamer, is hurt. Lucille nurses him in an attempt to recover the papers.

Lucille gets the papers, but the ship is wrecked. She is cast ashore on a Pacific island and is taken by a native chief to his hut to nurse his sick child.

The native child is restored to health, and the grateful natives idolize Lucille. Loubeque, also cast ashore, tries various plans to recover the papers, but in vain.

Loubeque, baffled, forges a message from a neighboring chief to lure Lucille away from her friends. She falls into a pitfall, losing the documents.

Loubeque's native aid steals the papers from his master, and Lucille takes them from the native after he is killed by a lion. She finds and follows an underground passage in the jungle.

Lucille falls into the hands of a tribe of ape men, whose leader drops a necklace of priceless rubies, which she takes. She and Loubeque are rescued from the island by a yacht commanded by Captain Wetherell.

The girl and Loubeque are set adrift in an open boat with Wetherell after she repulses the captain's advances, and he takes the papers.

Saved by fishermen, Lucille and Loubeque are in China. As she passes a house Loubeque's diary is thrown to her mysteriously. She tries to board a vessel bound for America. Loubeque recovers the papers from Wetherell.

Lucille stows away, is caught and dresses as a cabin boy with the aid of the captain of the steamer in order to search Loubeque's stateroom for the papers. He catches her at work.

Loubeque takes the papers from Lucille. Landing at San Francisco she is kidnapped by the spy and held a prisoner in Loubeque's house by Thompson.

She throws a message from her window to the captain of the boat, who passes the house, and a fight follows, which Loubeque wins. He is hurt, and she takes and hides the papers. Thompson tries to steal the rubies.

At Loubeque's ranch in Mexico, to which Loubeque takes Lucille, the girl is befriended by a mysterious Mexican, who helps her to escape after she strikes down Thompson.

Lucille flees across the border and meets Lieutenant Carmody, an army friend. He puts her on a train for San Francisco. On the train is Thompson, watching her.

11th and 12th Installments

Chapter XVIII Continued from last week

with one who could realize what all these things meant.

"The general is under a heavy cloud of suspicion. He has requested an inquiry into his own conduct in the affair. The messages were most important—in fact, their sale could harm us greatly."

"And the people think that I—"

"You have long since been given up for drowned. Harley told of taking you aboard the Empress. The wreck is common knowledge, of course. I must reassure them immediately."

"No," she shook her head decidedly. "I have gone this far, and I firmly believe some influence is at work on my behalf, helping me to do things better than any man could do them."

"But"—he protested.

"No," she shook her head firmly. "You have no idea how dangerous a game it is working against Hugo Loubeque. There is every chance that he may yet defeat me; that I may be killed or injured before I succeed. Father would demand my return, papers or no papers. Can't you see what it

means to me? Can't you see that the man who has ruled and ruined nations, who has compelled thousands to do his will, has every chance of success against anything a man could do?"

The officer smiled a superior smile. Lucille merely took the diary of the



He Got Her Some Proper Clothing.

spy from his hiding place and placed it in his hands, watching the swift changes of expression upon his face as he read. Finally he returned it to the owner.

"Please eat," he said quietly, motioning toward the end of the desk where the orderly was spreading a cold repast of canned meats and vegetables and steaming coffee, "and forgive me if I can't talk now. I must think what is best to be done."

Lucille smiled, as she devoted her attention to the repast. She finally finished to find young Lieutenant Carmody staring fixedly at her, his brow clouded.

"It's too much for me," he muttered. "Of course it is," she laughed heartily. "But I firmly believe that I will win."

"But why?" "Because," and all the mirth had gone from her face, all the laughter from the eyes that were reverently lifted, "because everything I have done has been done for the sake of love and because love has watched over me and helped me. That is the reason, Lieutenant Carmody, Hugo Loubeque can never be beaten or brought to justice because of fear or hate, for his own powers in that direction are greater than those of nations."

"Well?" The officer unwillingly agreed. "What do you propose doing? Isn't there some way in which I can help you?" "Yes," she answered promptly. "You can let me have money. You can tell me how to dispose of one of these valuable rubies, or all of them, and you can help me catch the first train for San Francisco."

Carmody whistled aloud his amazed delight as he regarded the marvelous jewels in the necklace she laid upon the table. Then he loaned her the money he had and insisted upon her lying down and resting until he could skimpish up some proper clothing and find out about the trains.

It was dawn before she wakened, and, though she felt alarm lest he had allowed her to miss a train, his reassurance and the sight of the clothing he had found for her made things seem much brighter. Then, too, the ninety odd dollars in currency seemed far more than even the rubies about her neck. Several hours later she boarded the train, assisted by a worried looking young officer, her heart light and gay, for she felt within herself that the journey that had been so long and so hazardous was finally nearing an end; that the familiar, dear faces would surround her on every side.

With every clamping of the wheels upon the frogs of the track her heart gave up a song of confidence, for Hugo Loubeque had put forward his own strength against her and, added to this, the strength of a portion of his organization. He had imprisoned her in two apparently impregnable places, and still she was here, all unbeknownst to him, speeding toward his house, intent upon beating him once and for all.

And in the compartment at which she stared with unseeing eyes Thompson regarded her in the mirror, his

own eyes glittering with malicious triumph and with avarice.

Thompson crouched back in his compartment, feigning deep slumber while the colored porter made up his bed. Immediately the porter disappeared he became the incarnation of energy. His hands nervously fumbled with the lock of his grip, opening it finally and disclosing a secret trap in the bottom, from which he took an atomizer, a pair of nippers and a bottle of pale viscid fluid.

For an hour he waited, motionless, not even his fixed eyes blinking as he regarded the curtains of the berth Lucille occupied.

He was swift; he was certain; he was sure. Deftly parting the curtains, he looked down upon the sleeping girl. No atom of pity was in his heart. All the thief now, his eyes glittered as he allowed them to rest upon the glowing strand of stones about her neck.

Swiftly he leaned over, applying his pinchers to the gas jet and unscrewing it so that the odor of the gas slowly began filling the stuffy section. Then he gently sprayed the ether across her face, never moving when she unconsciously stirred to fight off the anaesthetic.

Her breathing became heavier while her lips took on a bluish tinge. The gas was becoming stronger, and he knew her condition would be ascribed to asphyxiation when she recovered from the effects of the ether. Stooping, with no appearance of care now, he unfasted the rubies from her throat. A moment he waited, slipping them in his pocket, then he slipped back to his own compartment.

Carefully he repacked his grip, tucking the necklace in his breast pocket. Against the door he crouched, waiting. No trace of anxiety he showed. He was confident of himself. Came a clamping down upon the ties as the air brakes worked. Thompson threw open his window, looking out to discover it was opposite a tiny station. With a pocket knife he cut out from the screen that separated him from the tracks.

Cautiously he looked up and down the track. The train was slowing down. He tossed his bag far out from him, then slipped partially through the window. The lights of the station were almost in his eyes when he jumped, landing on his feet and regaining his balance with an effort. Then he permitted himself the luxury of a smile.

The next train through would be time enough, and the booty in his breast pocket was worth many risks.

Lucille felt herself struggling with a desperate enemy, one whose fingers were of steel as they fastened themselves about her throat, grasped at her breath and held it despite her utmost efforts. Even in the effort to waken, unsuccessful though it was, she seemed to recognize the calm, imperturbable, businesslike features of Thompson.

Then she felt a sensation of ease and comfort and peace such as had not been hers for a long time, and she allowed herself to drift away upon the gentle flowing river that hummed its song in her ears.

She awakened to find herself being shaken violently by the conductor and a porter, whose ebony face had changed to a saffron shade. Her head ached so fearfully that she pressed her feverish palms to her temples to keep it from bursting. Her throat and mouth felt as though she had been subsisting upon a diet of cotton soaked in oil.

She staggered to her feet and stood, dazed and bewildered, in the aisle of the car. The conductor turned her over to two women, who stood with her upon the platform, supporting her trembling figure while the fresh air drove away the fumes of chloroform and gas to which she had been subjected.

First she felt the rush of the train, the dotting of lights in the distance, the rush of the train past the lights, only to come upon a new cluster. And she was rushing, rushing, rushing, just like these lights to a cavernous blackness which she could not describe even to herself.

Suddenly the reason for her being upon the train came to her, and her hands sought her breast, then her throat. With a little cry she staggered back into the arms of the women.

"Robbed!" she gasped. "I have been robbed!"

The women looked at one another pityingly, then incredulously and finally believably as they caught the paler and saner on the girl's face. Summoning all her strength, she turned the knob of the door and sought the conductor. He looked incredulous at the girl's charge, but investigation showed that the light had been tampered with. Nothing, however, could be done before reaching San Francisco except a

search of the car.

Lucille went with him from place to place, scanning every face. But she knew who had done this thing. When she fought against the fingers of the drugs they had been the fingers of Thompson. When she had slipped from peaceful slumber into the drugged stupor it was Thompson she had been bravely fighting.

But Thompson—where had he disappeared? What had become of the man?

"We know who the thief was, miss," reported the conductor a little later. "He had the compartment facing your section. The screen is cut out. He must have dropped out the window after working his game."

Lucille smiled faintly. "A medium sized man, rather dark, plainly dressed, with features that nobody would notice especially and—a livid scar across the side of his face," she murmured.

The man looked at her in surprise. "Thompson," she murmured. "Yes; it was Thompson. I was positive from the first."

As the conductor corroborated her description of the thief she lay back against the dusty cushions of her seat idly watching the train charging across the landscape. She had started badly, but she clinched her teeth firmly. Her purpose was firm as ever, her rage a bit higher.

Hugo Loubeque cursed profoundly to himself as he paced up and down the floor of his San Francisco house. From below came the sounds of his servants searching into every nook and cranny of the mysterious house for the packet of papers and documents he knew Lucille had hidden here.

He frowned heavily as he went to the window and looked down upon the street, deserted now save for the old woman who trudged toward the place. She carried a basket of fruit over her arm and Loubeque smiled grimly as she disappeared from his sight, then reappeared after being turned away from the door by the servant.

As he idly studied the woman something about her caught and held his attention. She moved slowly, but there was an affectation about that slowness.

Loubeque's eyes were fastened, like those of a hawk now, upon the old woman. She had stopped beside the alarm box on the corner lamp-post. Suddenly she bent form straightened and he read the impulsive resolve of youth in every movement of the illly attired old woman. Her hand groped upon the ground. He saw her pick up a stone and smash the fire alarm.

Came the sound of fire engines rolling down the street. Loubeque watched the woman. She dashed toward the captain as he darted up in his light buggy, pointing eagerly toward the house of the spy, her eyes glowing with excitement. Then Loubeque smiled as he pressed a bell and ordered the search to stop immediately.

Before the rush of firemen with their hose the door opened. Their heavy feet slumped upon the stairs, through-out the house. But Loubeque did not move. He watched Lucille as she tossed aside the habiliments she had worn over her girlish clothes. She looked swiftly about to make certain no one was in sight. Then she swiftly approached the extra trunk upon which the slickers and hats of the firemen were laid. Once more she looked about her, then flung herself into a long rubber coat and jammed a helmet over her head.

Swiftly Loubeque peered over the stairs. Without an instant's hesitation Lucille had sped to the basement. He tiptoed to the room that had been assigned her when he held her captive here. Pressing a button, one wall of the room opened. He peered below, watching her as, below, she searched feverishly for the papers.

Loubeque quietly moved back to his own room. Slowly his fingers reached out. Came a slight clink of machinery. Then the spy stepped below and received the assurance of the fire captain that everything was well. His smile was that of a man quite positive that everything was more than well.

CHAPTER XIX.

An Appeal.

LUCILLE started just as her hands encountered the packet of begrimed papers and documents. A faint humming sound mingled with the heavy tread of the firemen above stairs. But she had won, was victorious after many defeats. Still, that sound—

She seemed to have heard it before. With a little cry of horror she looked up, her hands clasping the packet to her breast. The room that had been her boudoir was slowly closing down upon her, was moving down, down, down, its dark floor threatening to crush her like a letterpress closes upon its contents. Then it stopped.

She looked toward the door through which she had entered, her delight at the escape dying before the sight of Loubeque's tall, saturnine figure in the doorway, the glowing cigar tip picking out his every feature, the hateful smile upon his face. He extended his hand, bowing gracefully, sardonically.

"The packet of papers, Miss Lucille, if you please," he murmured.

For the fleeting second Lucille wondered what would happen did she refuse to surrender the papers to Loubeque—wondered what discolored thing might enter his brain when he found himself denied. A glance at the room which had started to descend upon her drove the thought away as quickly as it brought a shudder through her slender frame. Slowly, reluctantly, she held out the packet to him, watching him furtively, as with the utmost courtesy he took and placed it in his

breast pocket.

Slowly he collected her up the stairs. In his private room he motioned her to a chair, seating himself at the desk.

"I am not going to threaten you again," he said quietly. "I wish you to know that this is the last time you can interfere with my plans. Child, can you not be made to see what folly it is—this fight against me?"

"Mr. Loubeque," she said softly, "have you never grieved that it is impossible for the finer feelings you are continually suppressing to be returned because your ambitions are cruel and base? I do not like to wage this constant war with you. I do not like to battle with the man who has been so kind to me in his own way that I could love him as another father. But you would ruin my father; you would wreck my sweetheart's life. You would keep me apart from perfect happiness after I have merely peeked through the door of that happiness only to have it slammed shut in my face. Can't you see that it is you who must go down to defeat? Can't you see that love such as supports a frail girl to battle with you as I have done will not be downed by the most powerful man? Can't you see that I cannot stop even if I do sometimes grow very tired and sick at heart and pray to this soul of mine to let me lie down for a little while and rest? Rest—rest!"

She broke off with a sob of the most acute distress. "There is no such word as rest for me. Always it is go on, go on, constantly go on, until it seems I must fall along the wayside. But I do not fall. I have won from you constantly; I have always won, and I shall always continue to win. And you know it, Mr. Loubeque, for I can see it on your face—now."

Like one inspired she was, as the halting tones of her plea changed to those of passionate conviction, a certainty that expressed itself in utter abandon, words that seemed to come from other lips than her own. And as Loubeque looked back at the beautiful figure of the girl he was surprised to see that suddenly she seemed to have changed, that the slip of a child who had come on board the Empress from the hydroaeroplane had suddenly become a woman of such capacity for love and hate as even he himself did not have.

Came back to him the girl he had loved and whom he still loved as fondly as in the old days of flirtation walk at the Point, from which he had been expelled. Swiftly she came to his side, placing her hand upon his shoulder, her voice low and tender again like the sighing of an April breeze through the greenening baby leaves.

"You think you are working for hate, and all the time you are working for the same reason that I am—you are working because of love. Can you not see what a perversion of love is this thing you constantly seek to do? Can you not?"

Lucille could feel the man's shoulders trembling, could mark the tremendous effort he made at self control. She was almost ready to plead with him for a return of the papers, to give up his entire life work and count it failure, confident that he was well along the road to doing so, when a rap sounded on the door.

For some reason which she could not define a shudder ran through her at the sound. She seemed to recognize a sinister presence close by. She glanced at Loubeque, and her heart sank as she saw the wave of emotion she had bred within him had passed, that he was again the icy, indefatigable international spy.

"Come in," he called briskly. Slowly, cautiously, yet with not the slightest uncertainty, the door pushed open. Before the visitor appeared on the threshold Lucille knew who it would be.

For a moment she was taken aback by Thompson's perfect aplomb. She knew he had been the one who robbed her of her necklace, that he had sprayed her with ether and taken it from about her throat while she slept. And yet not so much as by the quiver of an eyelash did he show any sign of surprise or fear.

"I was delayed, sir," the butler began apologetically, when Loubeque lifted his hand imperatively. "You were delayed," coldly repeated the spy, separating every syllable and noting it out as though it were a death judgment. "It is perhaps better that you were delayed, Thompson. I have just received a letter from a man with whom you are acquainted. In this

letter, Thompson, he informs me he intends turning traitor to my interests, that he intends assisting Miss Love to make her escape."

"Quite so, sir," murmured the butler-thief.

"I am informed by him that he spied upon you while you cut through the bars of Miss Love's window."

Thompson did not stir, but Lucille saw the scar go a sickly white.

"The man lied, sir."

"Men do not lie at such moments."

For just a moment Thompson was silent. The hush upon the room was so profound as to make the ticking of Loubeque's watch strike upon the ears like mallet strokes. Slowly the butler's index finger moved to the scar upon his cheek.

"The man you speak of evidently did the work in the hope of releasing Miss Love. I gained this scar while trying to prevent the flight, sir."

"It's a lie!" Lucille burst forth passionately. "That man tried to rob me here in this very house. That was why I insisted upon a maid to serve me when I took the drug you put in the drink."

"Why did you not mention it at that time?" The spy's tones were dubious. "Because I did not wish you to know I had anything of such value about me."

"Value? You had no money when you left Manila."

"No, but I obtained possession of a wonderful ruby necklace in the cavern of the jungle just before I was rescued by the filibuster. Three nights ago when I boarded the train for here that man drugged me while I slept and stole the necklace from about my throat. Then he dropped out of the window of his compartment. That is why he was detained."

Loubeque fastened his cold eyes upon the butler. The man had nerves as steady as a rock. Lucille studied the judge and culprit earnestly. She could see that Thompson was beating down the spy's belief in her story. Swift as a flash, without a second's thought, she darted toward the thief. She had noticed his fingers involuntarily seek the right hand breast pocket of his coat



His Fingers Gripped Thompson's Throat.

when she made her charge. In one swift movement she had ripped open the coat. With the other hand she plunged toward the place she knew the necklace to be.

At first Thompson was taken off his guard. Then he sprang back with a hoarse cry of rage and alarm, forgetful of everything. The girl clung to her hold like a tigress. He grasped her wrist roughly and thrust her, reeling, across the room, his eyes glaring as, with clinched fists, he stared at her, while, dazed though she was by the violence of him, she held triumphantly in her hand the gorgeously dazzling ruby necklace.

Hugo Loubeque did not utter a sound; did not change expressions for one instant. Slowly, with all the leisurely grace of some giant animal, he rose and stepped toward his minion.

The cold expression in his eyes had turned to one of grim ferocity, such an expression as made Lucille shudder, as she saw his fingers reach out and grip Thompson about the throat, pressing—

Not hurriedly, but with cold, definite, murderous purpose, the spy slowly forced the struggling figure into limpness, then cast him from him without apparently making the slightest effort, rubbing his palms slowly together as though the touch had defiled them.

Lucille was chilled with horror as she watched the spy reseat himself, his face calm and emotionless. Apparently he had quite forgotten the huddled, silent figure upon the floor, whose blackened face was slowly regaining its color. Thompson was groaning when Loubeque impatiently pressed a button and waited for an answer.

CHAPTER XX.

When the Owl Hoots.

IT came even before he expected. A loud clanging of bells through the house punctuated the silence, a clanging that pierced through the treble sound of the doorbell. Hugo Loubeque sprang to his feet swiftly. The mask of his face dropped and showing that face keen, eager, a bit perturbed.

The clanging sound was augmented by the rushing of feet. She had never dreamed there could be so many in the house. More like a warren it was than anything else. Whispers sounded from the halls. But she gave them all no heed. She was away from the door, her body fighting against the furniture that was coming her

Continued to page four