

LUCILLE LOVE

The Girl of Mystery

By the
"MASTER PEN"

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SYNOPSIS

Valuable governmental papers are stolen by Thompson, follower of Loubeque, international spy, from General Love, whom Loubeque takes to Manila. Loubeque'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, led by Lucille, Loubeque, also come ashore. Various plans to recover the papers, but in vain.

Loubeque, after 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 a note, an underground passage in the jungle.

Lucille falls into the hands of a tribe of savages, whose leader drops a necklace of precious rubies which she finds. She and Loubeque are rescued from the island by a yacht commanded by Captain Wetherill.

The girl and Loubeque are set adrift in an open boat by Wetherill after she rescues the captain's advances, and he takes the papers.

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

(CHAPTER XIII Continued)

Her fear of being caught had completely faded before the urge of finding the papers. From place to place, careful as any French detective, thorough and keen as though she had been a thief all her life, Lucille worked. As she went through the last of the spy's personal belongings, a little sob of disappointment and chagrin broke from the very heart of her and halted at her lips. For a hand was rattling the knob, turning it slowly, slowly.

"Ah," murmured Loubeque slyly, "I thought I could not be mistaken in our little steward! But why, my dear child, did you wait so long to pay a visit to such an old acquaintance? Why such disregard for the ordinary amount of friendship?"

Slowly, without removing the cigar from his mouth, he moved toward her, the hateful smile still upon his lips. He seated himself and studied her carefully, speculatively.

"Lucille," he said slowly, "I saw you on the deck, saw you go into the hold, saw you when the captain came to you, saw you when you were taken away. Do you know why I did not give you away? It was because I wanted to know exactly when you were all the time, because I wanted the feel of my finger upon you. I have waited for this moment. You recall what I told you in the open boat. It is no quarter from now on. I shall have no mercy hereafter. I will know if you are only safe when you are dead."

He rose and motioned to the chair, an ominousness in word and gesture which compelled obedience. Fascinated, panic-stricken, she obeyed, while from his pocket he drew a long loop of the cord which he bound about her wrists and ankles, then strapped her securely in the chair, then stood off a moment, regarding his handiwork.

"You see I have prepared for the visit," he murmured. "I will just be a little while, so don't be worried—this time." The door closed behind him.

A scant quarter of an hour that to her was interminable, the spy returned, the smile still playing about the corners of his mouth, a smile that matched poorly the agate expression of his cold eyes. He untied the cords that had bound her, watching her curiously as she chafed the blood back to her hands.

"Yes," he answered her unspoken question, "you may go now. I do not care any more whether you heed my warning or not. You have chosen to continue the war. I merely wish you to know what it means to you. I have made arrangements that will look to your being cared for in San Francisco, so the end of this trip means nothing to you. Good night, Miss Lucille Love."

It was as though his mockery, his gibing tones, were giant hands against her chest, pushing her through the door and upon the deck.

His threat of looking after her at the end of the voyage—his mockery—she must appeal to strong hands now.

She could not imagine how, in a free country, he could do anything. Still, she knew Hugo Loubeque and the knowledge terrified her. She decided to rely upon her women's fragility to gain the master's sympathy. She had reached this conclusion as the astonished captain looked at her wan, miserable face when he answered her knocking.

Swiftly, the words tumbling over one another in the nerve racking strain of trying to convince the man of the unbelievable things she had gone through at the spy's hands, she poured out her whole story. Slowly, under the spell of an obvious sincerity, she saw he was convinced.

CHAPTER XIV.

Lucille Finds a Friend.

He summoned a steward and dispatched him for Loubeque, demanding an answer. Evidently the spy had been waiting for some such thing, for he appeared quite promptly, in face worn and harried. He started violently at seeing Lucille, then took both her hands in his own and patted them soothingly, his voice the soothing one with which one soothes a child. The captain's stern countenance had fallen, and the good man looked rather foolish.

"Mr. Loubeque," he began abruptly, "this young lady has made complaint to me that you have threatened her with death. Have you anything to say?"

"Certainly, I shall be more than pleased to look after her if the poor child has escaped the surveillance of her relatives. No friend could do less," the spy answered suavely, and he touched his hand lightly to his head.

The captain nodded, and Lucille, seeing now the maddeningly unbelievable quality of the story she had told regarding her adventures, felt hot rage fairly burning her up. She sprang at the captain, taking his coat in her hands and shaking him fiercely.

"I am not insane—it's the truth—every word"—she sobbed, then lifting eyes in which the clear light of sanity glowed unmistakably. "Captain, I swear to you that every word is true."

The captain turned from one to the other in the utmost extremity of perplexity. Finally he nodded to Loubeque that he might leave, and, with a slow smile, the spy turned away.

"Young lady," the captain said, "you will resume your duties for tonight, and in the morning I will see that you are properly clothed. I will immediately send a wireless to the authorities in San Francisco and see that you are met by them at the pier. No harm can come to you from this man. You understand what I am unable to do for you, 17—"

Lucille extended her hand, grasping his firmly and meeting the troubled eyes of the man with her own—her own eyes, in which glowed gratitude and confidence and truth. And in that hand clasp the pair cemented a common union against any enemy.

Hugo Loubeque stood a little apart from the eager passengers gathered at the Golden Gate creeping about them, scrutinizing them.

To others the sight meant home, but to Loubeque it meant bitterness, gall. It meant the country that had been his, but which had cast him forth an unworthy son unfit to be its citizen. His eyes flamed morosely upon the slender, pretty slip of a girl clinging to the rail, her lips parted as she watched the dock, black with eager friends and relatives, coming closer, closer.

Then a slow crunching as the great ship swung into her moorings. Hugo Loubeque slowly lifted the cigar from his mouth and waved it in a deliberate circle that ended with his tip pointing toward the slender girl. He caught her eyes and smiled at the expression of terror of fear in them, as he saw she had marked his gesture.

Came a crowding forward in the center of the throng upon the deck. The gangplank thrust its nose out, until it rested upon the dock. Some of the passengers looked about in surprise at a sound of a guttural oath. They were a tall, slender passenger smoking a cigar, his eyes flamed upon a squad of blue-coated policemen edging their way from the rear of the throng into the exact center. They wondered.

Lucille tripped down the gangplank. Once more the man who had uttered the oath lifted his cigar. Came a quick unspoken in the throng. The spy smiled to himself, then used toward the plank. He looked down upon the crowd of men surrounding the slip of a girl, surrounding her so closely she was hidden from sight. The policemen were fighting their way to the ship. Came a scream in a woman's voice. Loubeque bent forward, his knuckles showing a blue whiteness from the fierceness of his grip upon the liner's rail.

"Help, help! Cap!"

The officers whirled in the direction of the girl's voice. The crowd of men jammed closer, resisting, without the appearance of resistance, the shoulders of the law. From outside the jam darted a woman clad in deep mourning. Easily the throng of men gave before her. Her arms were about the neck of the girl who had screamed, smothering her lips with kisses.

"My poor, dear sister!" she sobbed uncontrollably, her arms about Lucille's waist, bearing her through the crowd of men.

The captain stood at Loubeque's elbow, his face troubled. The policemen fought their way to the center of the throng to find no woman there. The leader, a sergeant, stepped toward the captain.

"You sent a wireless, sir, regarding a young woman?"

The captain turned to Loubeque, his eyes threatening.

"The girl," he demanded. "What has become of her?"

Hugo Loubeque lazily pointed his cigar toward a black, high powered motor leaping out into the city's street.

"The insane girl!" he smiled. "I believe I saw her step into that machine, captain."

The sergeant waited curiously, knowing there was something between the two men, awaiting the atmosphere of hatred, he waited.

"No use now, sergeant," sighed Lucille's friend.

Something told Lucille as she stood at the ship's rail that trouble awaited her once her feet were set upon the wharf. And her hand closed about the diary hidden in the bosom of her dress, the diary she had read so many times she knew it well, a diary of power and unscrupulousness in the accomplishment of one purpose, the destruction of her father. What chance did the honest, simple minded captain have, what chance did the officers of a mere municipality have when they opposed themselves to one who overthrew nations and their rulers by the lifting of his hand?

Her steps were lagged as she marched down the plank. Almost immediately she felt a pressing forward in the fore ranks of the crowd, a pressing forward that tended in her direction.

She looked about her and found a man's face staring into hers from every direction. There was an enemy on those faces. They were not brutal, not even evil. But there was a fixed purposefulness about them, a grim regard of her that told her instinctively they were the minions of Hugo Loubeque. Yet not a hand was laid upon her, not a voice lifted. She tried to force her way forward, but a steady resistance met her. The just as a heavily veiled woman pressed toward her, with eyes that glittered a menace matching poorly the affectionate pose of her form. Lucille lifted her voice only to have her appeal smothered by the fierce embrace of the woman, who continually referred to Lucille as "her poor sister."

She did not know how it was worked, but the crowd of men opened readily for the escort and herself—not only opened, but assisted them along their way. The door of a great limousine stood open before her. Swiftly she was hustled into the car, and before her companion had closed the door the car shot forward, gaining speed with every rod.

The utility of further resistance made her sink back against the cushions, sick with apprehension of what was to come, a dull apathy gradually closing about her and soothing her tired eyes. After all, she had known that Hugo Loubeque would be able to do as he pleased, there was no enemy on those faces. The car leaped like a living thing through the streets of the city and then doubled upon its tracks so that

she might have no chance to place certain sites and gain some idea thereby what her ultimate destination was. Lucille studied her captor from under cover of her heavy lashes. She could see but little of the face for the heavy mourning veil swathing it. She only made out that she appeared apathetic, disinterested, now her position of the work assigned to her had been carried through. It seemed a characteristic attitude of all who worked for the man. They were but cogs in a vast machine, responsive to the master's touch.

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"Lucille"—The spy's eyes fell before the fear in the steady one that met his own. "Lucille, you are too young yet to know that in the completion of any great work always there are those who must suffer." He stopped, evidently finding it hard to continue.

"I would not harm you, Lucille; would not cause you one moment's grief or misery, physical or mental, for anything in the world. But I would allow not even this—the love I bear you because of your likeness to your mother to stand in the way of destroying you utterly should you attempt to get in my path. And so I am very happy today—very happy for myself, while I am at the same time very unhappy because of your distress. I know you cannot understand my feeling. I only wish you to know that you have stolen the fruits, the sweets of my victory."

"Victory?" She whispered the word aloud.

Slently he put the newspaper in her outstretched hand. She took it numbly, staring at the black, leaded type heading the column, starting at the familiar, the beloved name of her sweet heart there. When she looked up Hugo Loubeque was gone, had disappeared. But that did not matter to her now. The nature of his disappearance did not even impress her. Nothing mattered. The spy's victory was approaching completion.

(To be continued next week.)

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"Lucille"—The spy's eyes fell before the fear in the steady one that met his own. "Lucille, you are too young yet to know that in the completion of any great work always there are those who must suffer." He stopped, evidently finding it hard to continue.

"I would not harm you, Lucille; would not cause you one moment's grief or misery, physical or mental, for anything in the world. But I would allow not even this—the love I bear you because of your likeness to your mother to stand in the way of destroying you utterly should you attempt to get in my path. And so I am very happy today—very happy for myself, while I am at the same time very unhappy because of your distress. I know you cannot understand my feeling. I only wish you to know that you have stolen the fruits, the sweets of my victory."

"Victory?" She whispered the word aloud.

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