# 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 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 by 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 kidnaped 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 flies 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.

Thompson steals the necklace from Lucille, and Loubeque takes the papers from her after she enters his house to recover them. Loubeque accuses Thompson of being a traitor to him.

Loubeque chokes Thompson into submission. He takes the girl again to Mexico, but she flees again with the aid of her mysterious friend, taking with her the papers and the rubies.

Lucille, stunned in an accident to her strange friend's automobile, is recaptured by Loubeque. In San Francisco she escapes again and pledges the rubies for $10,000.

To win Loubeque's admiration Lucille dances as a cabaret performer in a hotel, shocking Lieutenant Gibson. She intercepts a message telling Loubeque to deliver the papers to an officer of the U. S. S. Terror. Thompson tries to take his master by surprise.

(CHAPTER XXII Continued)

The butler-thief's upper lip curled back from his teeth, giving him the expression of an angry mongrel dog.

"And you thought to play with me!" Loubeque murmured wonderingly, more to himself than to his captive. "The man who knows me better than any one else thought to catch Loubeque sleeping. You dared come near me after the second affair. If I but had the time I should strangle you with these hands. They itch for the feel of your throat once more. I have a little favor to ask you"—

The thief growled something inarticulate, and his eyes glittered venomously as he fastened them upon the toes of his boots.

"Now, Thompson, just step to the telephone and call up the desk downstairs." He made a significant little gesture with the revolver in his hand, and the man hurriedly took down the receiver, his face a pasty yellow.

"Say there is a hotel sneak thief in Mr. Loubeque's apartment waiting to be arrested. Mr. Loubeque has no time to make charges now, but will return shortly or meet the procession downstairs."

The receiver dropped clattering from the thief's hand. Loubeque waved the automatic quietly toward it and, as the pitiful eyes of his former servant met his own, they read no pity there—nothing save a cold, vindictive intent. The trembling hand took up the receiver once more and, word for word, transmitted the message as it fell like icy particles from the spy's lips. Then Thompson whirled toward him.

"Turn me over, will you! Well, listen to what's coming to you when you do it. I know a thing or two"—

"You know too much," smiled the spy coolly. "That is exactly the reason I am disposing of"—

"And I know about her." The thief's hand waved toward the corridor. "Maybe I can't tell a thing or two about you and her. What's she doing here—what's the reason she got on the Empress and stuck to you ever since"—

The revolver slapped against the opposite wall as Loubeque hurled it at the man's head, following it with his flying body, his frame crashing the man to the floor, his fingers groping for the vile mouth that spluttered on.

"I ain't saying as what you and me know—I'm saying as what I can tell and what it'll look like. What"—

Loubeque turned his head suddenly, his ears fairly peaked with the eagerness of his listening. The rattle of the elevator outside reached his ears. He sprang to his feet, dragging the butler after him.

"We must get out," he breathed hoarsely. "We must away before they come. I'll—I'll kill you—for this"—

Swiftly the pair darted through the door and down the hall. Loubeque hurriedly twisted the knob to Lucille's door. It flung open. With a gasping sob of relief he dragged Thompson after him and slapped the door shut, maintaining his hold meantime.

"And that is what you would say—would tell?" His voice was not harsh, not even indignant, merely curious.

"That's what!" Thompson straightened, a touch of braggadocio about his very figure.

Slowly, inexorably, the fingers of Hugo Loubeque reached out and grasped the man's wrists. Slowly, inexorably, he pressed the cold metal of the automatic iron into the useless palm. Slowly, inexorably, that weapon bearing hand was lifted, lifted until it pressed against the bluing lips of the thief, then stopped. Loubeque's voice was soft, purring, soothing.

"Open the teeth, my old friend—open them or I'll knock them out! Put the gun inside your mouth. It's simple—only a second then a longer trip than you've ever taken before. Don't fight—it's useless—you should know that. Surely you won't resist and make it hard for your master. Just think—if you don't—I might be called a murderer—while—if you follow instructions—it's—just—suicide"—

With every syllable he rendered the wrists of the struggling man more feeble, forced the steel muzzle of the gun more and more harshly against the tender gums. As he pronounced his final judgment, the judgment he hoped would prove that of a coroner, the muffled shot beat against the walls of the room. Thompson writhed, then straightened. Loubeque held tightly to the wrists until rigor mortis gripped them about the weapon.

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As Lucille stood in the doorway of Loubeque's room, her eyes always keenly suspicious to the slightest trifle when about the man, observing that as he talked with her his eyes were fastened upon the gloved hand, instantly it had struck her as strange he should wear a glove in his room. Then she caught the reflection of his eyes and saw the mirror flashing in that palm—the eyes of the man watching the curtains leading to his bedchamber. They swayed slightly. Then she made her adieus, for she knew Loubeque was not alone.

In her own room she paced the floor nervously. What did it mean? Some one had entered Loubeque's room, was spying upon him, and the surreptitious presence had been discovered. The visitor was under surveillance. But who could that visitor be? What was his motive?

Thompson—Gibson; Gibson—Thompson. Her sweetheart and the butler-thief both might have motives for such an entry. That it related to the stolen papers she had no doubt. Suppose they were taken by some other just at this last moment? But the man behind the curtains had little if any chance against Loubeque.

It was not curiosity merely that made her place her head outside the window. She heard the mocking voice of Loubeque, but dimly. Still it was his voice and surcharged with menace. But how could she gain an entrance, how see what was transpiring?

She quietly stepped to the fire escape. Two high and wide ledges separated her from the fire escape outside the spy's suit. She dared not look down, dared not think, dared do nothing save heave a sigh of relief when she found herself safe once more outside the spy's window. It had been easy after all. She peeked within the room, strangling a little expression of rage and shame as Thompson's threat came to her ears. Breathlessly she watched the men struggling upon the floor, unable to understand the hurried retreat of both from the room. She opened the window and slipped inside, her bosom heaving tumultuously at this opportunity to search the man's suit.

The door slapped open just as she was exploring the drawer of the table. She felt herself seized by the wrists, uttered a cry of protest and dismay and pleading, only to look into strange,

She Opened the Window and Slipped Inside.

brutal faces, the faces of house detectives and not the sardonically friendly one of Loubeque.

"Nipped in the act!" grated one of them, as he dragged her toward the door. "The cabaret dame too!"

Protesting, weeping, hysterical, Lucille was dragged to the elevator and bundled into a cab. Unable to think, to reason, she only realized the full extent of her calamity when the green globe before the grim police station loomed before her eyes.

She might have been unconscious, so little was she actually aware of what was transpiring. Acute, yet merely subconsciously so, she knew she defended herself stoutly against the charge of being a hotel sneak thief. She feverishly cited the obvious ridiculousness of Hugo Loubeque's making such a charge against her. The sergeant was frankly puzzled.

Obviously this girl was not a thief. The brilliant idea struck him of summoning the jeweler from whom she claimed to have received the money. Also the failure to produce Loubeque argued heavily against the house detective's case.

And all the while Lucille paced up and down the floor, white faced, miserable, her lips moving as she muttered:

"Five-thirty this afternoon—Ensign Howell calls for the papers. Five-thirty—5:30—I must be there must be—must—must"—

And the station house clock grinned wide derision at her, its hands pointing ironically toward the hour of 4.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

**An Ensign Feels His Dignity Offended.**

IT lacked but fifteen minutes to 5 before she found herself upon the street with the jeweler who had rushed to her assistance and, after a short conference with the officers and detectives, had arranged her release, personally agreeing to produce her when desired.

"If you know Loubeque has the papers," he demanded, "why don't you call on a policeman to protect you and to rescue them?"

Lucille smiled faintly at his commonplace advice, realizing the absolute impossibility of impressing anyone with the power of her enemy. And she must hurry to the mysterious house where Ensign Howell was to call at 5:30, even as she thanked her friend, bidding him goodby at the door of her motorcar.

Hurriedly she searched the streets for the mysterious residence of Hugo Loubeque. She had ten minutes leeway before the ensign was due to call, ample opportunity if she had not forgotten any details of the message. The house was vacant, just as she had thought it would be, for Loubeque would never trust himself for a long time to the place that had once been raided. It would suffice for this short bit of business—that was all.

She let herself easily in by the door, the smashed lock of the raiding party never having been replaced. Swiftly she rushed through the familiar rooms. In the desk drawer of the spy she found a medium sized automatic, the silencer still fastened on it. The front door bell clanged.

The last act in the play was about to be begun. Ensign Howell was at the door, unless the spy had detected her trick in tampering with the message of the carrier pigeon.

Her right hand, which had been clasping the revolver concealed beneath her coat, unclasped, and a sigh of obvious relief came from her lips as she opened the door to greet a young ensign in uniform. She did not quite know what she would have done had it been Loubeque.

"Ensign Howell?" she murmured, flushing prettily at the admiration and astonishment on the officer's face at being greeted by such a vision. "I am very sorry," she murmured hurriedly, as he started to enter, "but Mr. Loubeque was obliged to leave hurriedly. He left word that he would surely be at any place convenient after 8:45."

"Any place convenient?" The officer's tones were more of surprise than vexation.

"That is," she hesitated, "where it would be convenient for a cutter or boat of some sort to take him to the Terror. That matter is of such importance he does not care—that is"—

The young man straightened himself, his face wearing an expression of wounded dignity. Lucille heaved a sigh of relief.

"That is quite Mr. Loubeque's privilege," he snapped. "I shall write the address on a card where the cutter will lie so there can be no further mistake."

Lucille accepted the card negligently, holding her eyes averted that he might not read the ecstasy that fairly flooded them. She watched his ruler straight back as it disappeared down the street, then clasped the card feverishly to her breast. The first move had been made, and she had more than taken the honors. High hope beat in her heart because of the little victory. She snapped her teeth tightly shut. Yes, the papers would be taken aboard the Terror, but not by Hugo Loubeque. Neither would there be any affidavit with them from the arch spy. She was ready for anything now.

Laggard time for once flew while she waited the long interval that was to elapse before the arrival of the spy. Lucille found once more the tunnel through which she had been led, found mysterious passages and explored them, studied out the position she would be in when she completed her work with the enemy who was to come.

A step sounded overhead, slow, measured, methodical. She pressed close against the switchboard to the house of mystery, the emanation of the mysteries. Her fingers trembled slightly. The feet moved up the stairs. She waited, fingers outstretched toward a little ivory button. The cool surface kissed the finger pad, the pad upon which depended the honor of father and sweetheart, which spelled home, life, love to her.

* * * * * * *

Hugo Loubeque moved slowly to his private office on the second floor. He shivered slightly as he went up the stairs. Ghosts were in the house, ghost memories that he was about to slay finally and forever.

He seated himself at his desk to wait, wandering off in a day dream of pleasanter memories. Lucille—how her very presence here had made the place bearable. He took the precious packet of stolen papers from his pocket.

The sweet he had longed for was his now and yet it was not sweet.

He slapped his fist heavily upon the table, cursing himself for a fool that such thoughts should oppress him.

What ailed the ensign that he did not come? It was past the time appointed. That was most unusual. He strode nervously up and down the floor. Suddenly the floor gave way violently beneath him, flashed down with lightning speed, bringing up upon the basement floor with such violence that everything in the room was overturned, while he himself lay half stunned against the table.

He staggered away, finding himself so weak and dazed he was obliged to clutch the table edge to keep from toppling over. Something cool and soft brushed against his hand, then the softness grew as iron and his fingers were loosened from their clutch. He staggered back, back against the basement wall. He heard Lucille's voice uttering a little cry of delight. His hands encountered the light switch, instinctively pressing. The room was a flood of yellow light, in the center of which, slowly retreating toward the tunnel exit from the house, revolver pointed steadily at him, with eyes sighting behind the revolver that were harder even than the glint of metal, stood Lucille Love, the precious packet of papers in her hand.

Slowly, without a word, she disappeared from view, departed as abruptly, as unexpectedly as she had appeared, making use of the spy's ingenuity to turn it against him in this, his greatest hour. For a moment he could not think or do anything; then he darted toward the tunnel, staggering back as a white hot iron seared his brow even as an orange spurt of flame leaped out the darkness at him.

He could not charge that way. He dashed to the stairs, rushing into the open, hatless, wild, dishevelled. An automobile stood before the door. He directed it wildly toward the tunnel entrance, arriving there barely in time to see Lucille step inside another motorcar and dart forward like a living thing.

Helpless, hopeless, yet fighting on with bulldog ferocity, Loubeque continued the chase. Times he would lose her, only to pick the car up again in the most unexpected place. Then, for a full five minutes, along the water front, she disappeared.

A husky, irate chauffeur stepped before his driver and slammed open the door.

"Hey, youse," he brawled angrily, "whatta yuh mean chasin' a loidy like dat?"

Loubeque did not answer. Instead he put a question, snapping it in a tone of authority that made even the man cringe.

"Where did she go?"

The driver passed him a grimy card. The international spy turned it over in his hand, reading the address upon it and marking that it was not a block away. On the obverse side he read Ensign Howell's name. The chauffeur was pointing out upon the harbor. Loubeque looked, marked the slim figure of Lucille standing upright in the briskly manned cutter approaching the big ship. He turned away.

His shoulders seemed to have slumped in the half hour, his face to have undergone a chiseling process by the sculptor Suffering, but a smile crossed his face.

Once in the cutter, Lucille for the first time heaved a huge sigh of relief as she glanced back toward the shore and saw Hugo Loubeque jump from the car in which he had been pursuing her and glance hurriedly up and down the harbor front.

She clambered over the sides of the waiting government vessel, being met at the deck by the captain himself. His eyebrows rose in surprise as he regarded the slender slip of a girl facing him, her eyes wet with tears.

"Ensign Howell informed me that Mr. Loubeque"— he began, when she interrupted.

"The papers are here, captain. I have them. They are safe now."

For a moment he studied her meditatively. She felt an icy chill running up and down her spine. Would he turn back and force her to return the papers? At the very suggestion her face flexed in every muscle, while her eyes met his coldly and steadily, a purpose in their depths which even the officer turned away from, convinced that all was well.

And now that she was safe, the nervous reaction came upon her. In her own tiny cabin, safe finally from the man she had last seen upon the shore, it seemed the very air was fraught with terrors, horrible fears reaching toward her, gibbering at her with threats of perils greater even than those she had come through already. A light tapping on the door brought her to her feet, heartily ashamed of the false terrors she had allowed to unnerve her. She opened the door, and Ensign Howell entered.

Lucille regarded him coldly, in far different manner from the coquettish young woman who had put him off at the house of Loubeque.

"Miss—Miss"— he stammered, "why did you send me away from the appointment? The captain wishes to speak with you, and when you tell him the truth it will appear as though I"—

"You need have no fear," she answered quietly. "Will you kindly conduct me to the captain? I will explain everything."

The captain of the Terror regarded her steadily as she was brought before him. Seated at his desk, in the very throne of his authority, Lucille felt him a very much more formidable being than when she met him on the deck. This man was her enemy, would

"I am Lucille Love, daughter of General Love."

be her enemy until the question of possession of the papers had been thoroughly thrashed out.

"Your name, please?" queried the commander shortly.

Lucille felt a thrill of pride running through her.

"My name, sir," she said quite simply, "is Lucille Love—daughter of General Sumpter Love, United States army."

The commander held out his hand.

"I am in receipt of orders from Washington," he said quietly, "to meet Hugo Loubeque, who would turn over to me certain papers and orders which he received from General Love while in command at Manila, and which he sold"—

"It's a lie!" Lucille's voice rang against the sides of the cabin with vibrant force.

"Yes, a lie," she repeated, quieting the fury which was racking her. "My father did receive the papers. There was a military ball in progress at the time. He gave them to his aid, Lieutenant Gibson, my fiancee, to put in the safe. That night they were stolen by a servant in the employ of Hugo Loubeque; stolen, I tell you, not sold."

The commander nodded coldly.

"Your contention is a matter for the court of inquiry to thresh out. I am under orders to receive the packet of papers and take them to that court, together with the affidavit of Hugo Loubeque that they were sold to him. If they are in your possession, I will take them; if not, I shall be forced to turn back and find Mr. Loubeque."

"The papers are in my possession, sir. They belong to me until I can turn them over to my father, to whom they were sent. What he will do with them is a matter for the court of inquiry to decide."

"That is quite impossible," the man snapped sharply. "In the first place, your story is quite incredible—Lucille Love was drowned when the Empress took fire."

"Lucille Love is here, sir. Lucille Love was aboard the Empress, flew there with Mr. Harley, the government aviator, because she knew from a message she cut in on upon the telephone that Hugo Loubeque was aboard the Empress and that he had the papers. Ever since, through jungle, desert, land and water, I have followed him. I have seen the spy's diary. It is here with the papers—always. That will show his hatred for my father. That will explain. That will prove my story."

Even as the captain nodded, rising to his feet to eagerly watch the girl's frantic search through the packet, a little, dry sob broke from her lips.

She recovered herself with an effort, shaking her head as though to drive away the mists of faintness which this, the crowning misfortune, had delivered her. The diary of Hugo Loubeque was not among the papers she had recovered.

The captain nodded toward his ensign, who, with a glance of sympathy toward the stricken girl, scooped up the papers and laid them before his commanding officer.

Lucille turned and slowly left the room. Her eyes were fastened directly ahead but she walked as one who journeys in slumber, unseeing, benumbed. And her lips repeated over and over again:

"Too cruel! Cruel! Cruel!"

(To be concluded next week.)


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W. W. BROWN Fife, Oregon.