

# LUCILLE LOVE, The Girl of Mystery

## A Soul Thrilling Story of Love, Devotion, Danger and Intrigue

By the "MASTER PEN"

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### SYNOPSIS OF THE FOREGOING CHAPTERS.

While students together at West Point, and in love with the same girl, Sumpter Love drives Hugo Loubouque a thief, and Loubouque is dishonorably discharged. Love wins the girl. The enemy thus begun finds quiet in later years at Manila, when a butler thief in the employ of Loubouque, now an international spy, steals valuable papers from the Government and sends a wireless message to the Governor of the Philippine Islands. Loubouque, who is in the employ of the steamship Empress and General Love accuses Lieut. Gibson, his aide and the sweetheart of his daughter Lucille, of the crime. Loubouque sends a wireless message cleverly insinuating that General Love had sold the papers to a foreign power. To save the honor of the man she loves and to erase the stigma from her father's name, Lucille prevails upon Harley, a Government aviator, to take her out to the ship, in his aeroplane. To foil Lucille, Loubouque destroys the wireless apparatus on the Empress and is hurt in the resulting explosion. In her search for the papers, Lucille becomes his nurse, and when the ship takes fire, secures them. The vessel is burned to the water's edge and Lucille drifts to a strange island on the car of a crushed steamer. Lucille is rescued by friendly savages. She is given an amulet for curing the Chief's daughter, and it proved potent against the machination of Hugo Loubouque, who likewise cast on the island, plans to get the papers. He burns Lucille's hut, but she escapes with the precious papers. He sends a decoy message asking her to come to the home of a neighboring chief, whose wife is ill and in need of nursing. On the way there she falls into a covered pit dug by Loubouque across her path. Her guide, an old crane, takes the papers from Lucille, and gives them to Loubouque, who goes with them to the jungle. His guide and servant steal them, but is killed by a lion, and Lucille, who had trailed them three days, recovers them from the body. Lucille meets a devil and a woman, who are attacked by monkeys, escapes in a canoe, and is carried into an underground whirlpool. She is rescued by Captain Wetherell and taken aboard his yacht. There she meets Loubouque, who is also picked up by the yacht, which is carrying contraband arms to Chinese rebels. Her warship pursues, Wetherell puts Lucille and Loubouque to sea in an open boat, because they know too much of his plans.

### CHAPTER XXII.

In an Open Boat.

HE great copper ball of sun squatted comfortably upon the horizon's rim, flattening into itself and surveying with tolerant contempt the tiny, bobbing craft in which were Hugo Loubouque and Lucille. The tiny yacht was showing its heels in grand shape to the battleship, and the game from the great boat were roaring in real earnest, now, as it was evident that the fisher had no intention of obeying the signal to haul in.

The pair who had fought one another so cordially stared at the scene until both boats melted into the sun, below the sun, then dropped beyond the horizon. The ocean which seemed so restless from the deck now became the creature of a thousand giant heads, waves that lifted them high then slapped their cockle-shell craft back into the trough behind. And in ever-recurring succession the orderly army of the sea marched upon them, toyed derisively a second with them, then passed by, leaving them to the next rank. The air was growing colder, colder, spray slashing them and searching their clothes, with file-like tips.

Hugo Loubouque was watching Lucille narrowly. Their predicament seemed not to worry him, the fact that the Captain of the battleship had consigned himself and to such a fate was of little account. Life to him, had been a succession of dangers equally appalling. And he was still alive. But the motive of his life, the thought of revenge with which he made a weak body so many times compel itself beyond the limit of endurance was still all-dominating. Warily he studied her downcast face, the melancholy expression given to it by the sweep of lashes fringing her eyes. She started, awake from her reverie, her thoughts which had been speeding homeward—brought back to the boat instantly, her own motive of Love which must compel her to fight on springing powerfully within her.

"The papers, Miss Lucille," Loubouque said quietly, "will you kindly give me the papers to take care of?"

The papers! Then the spy did not know that Captain Wetherell had possessed himself of the precious bag before having her placed in the open boat! Instinctively her hands flew to her bosom, the harsh feel of the ruby necklaces which she had taken from the underground cavern with her meeting her clutch. Rubies of untold, of fabulous value she had and the thought of power, of money—should she ever come safely out of this—gave her a sweeping sensation of elation. Surely, the rubies had been left to her for some object. Fate, that had been so manifested and had always eventually proved so kindly, would not gibe at her now by giving her that which would mean great power among human beings only to allow her to drop without the opportunity of using it.

"Captain Wetherell took the papers," she answered quietly, studying the spy's face to see what effect the announcement made. Again unwilling admiration for the man's imperturbability, his acceptance of circumstances came to her as she met his level, unflinching scrutiny. Slowly he nodded.

"Indeed," he murmured, then, after a long period spent in profound thought, "well, perhaps it is better so. Perhaps it is better so."

For a full hour he did not speak, an hour wherein the stars sprayed themselves over the heavens, as though the great Celestial gardener drew a protecting blanket from off his precious flowers and exposed them to the Nature from which they drew their sustenance. Lucille fancied she caught a glimpse of the long-winded friendly star that beckoned to her when she hid from the leopards in the tree-top, and the thought reassured her. Hugo was speaking, softly, as though to himself.

"Yes, child, perhaps it is better so. It is so much simpler to fight against a Wetherell than against you."

There was a note of pathos, of longing, in his tones that made her lips tremble in sympathy for the man who had so splendidly misjudged the life that had been given him, had so misused the marvelous brain. Again came that feminine instinct to proselyte and again did a glance at his determined face make her desist. She would fight and fight and die fighting to prevent him from losing his aim, but to save her, she could feel no hatred against this one who would wreck those she held most dear.

"You still have hope?" she murmured, anxious to hear him answer in the affirmative.

"Hope!" he laughed aloud. "Child, it is written in the stars that I shall not fail, cannot fail. You have read my diary—No," he lifted his hand in protest as she would have interrupted, "I do not blame you. I admire you the more for doing anything to work out your mission. You know from that diary what I have done to accomplish my ends. I have overthrown nations, have thousands at my feet. And all for what? That when I struck at the man I hated there should be no chance for failure. And now the last chance has been overthrown. I faltered, Lucille. I faltered when I should have put you out of my path forever; when I should have made an end to your interference. And I had

reached the pass when I chose between your life and the papers, and your life was to pay. And now—now that choice has been spared me and the face of the woman I loved shall never look into my eyes with that reproach in her own. No, Destiny has intervened, Lucille. I know it, feel it—in my heart."

She watched him, fascinated, as he coolly rose and examined the provisions apportioned them, counting each biscuit, testing the water keg. For just a second she fancied a shadow crossed his face, then he turned and smiled reassuringly at her.

"By stinting there is enough for three days," he said quietly. "I think it would be better to wait till morning." He drew his coat off and threw it to her, frowning down her remonstrances as he realized for the first time that she had been chilled through by the cold night air and she flashed him a look of gratitude, watching him as he bent over a slip of paper and compass, making strange marks now and then upon the paper after a long scrutiny of the stars. Never moving his splendid body, absolutely absorbed in making his crude reckonings, Hugo Loubouque worked, the eyes of Lucille closed drowsily, opening and shutting as though she would fight away the slumber that would come, and finally closing softly in profound sleep.

She woke to a sensation of pain in her head, as though some giant weight rested there, pressing down as though to crush the forehead. For a moment she did not realize where she was, stared about her perplexedly, tried to identify the gentle, undulating motion of the boat, the soft sleeping sound of the waters. Then her eyes met the melancholy ones of Hugo Loubouque, fastened upon her as though he had not stirred from the position she had marked him when she went to sleep. There was something in their depths which alarmed her now, something of forbidding which made her rise hastily. The spy smiled.

The sun was beating down upon them ferociously, as though it would consume those hardy intruders. Heat rays danced blindingly in every direction, mirroring the waves tantalizingly. Her head ached, when she would have spoken, she found her tongue swollen, her voice thick, her lips parched.

"Water—please," she stammered, then glared in horror at the international spy's downcast face. She half rose, then sank back to her elbow again. Loubouque moved carefully to her side, placing his hand upon her arm.

"There is no water," he said gently. "In their hurry they put an empty keg in the boat."

"No water—no water—no water!" She repeated the words slowly, as does a child interpreting a lesson, meaningless to him. "No water!"

"There—there," he murmured soothingly. "It is the test of Fate, my dear. Try not to think of it—try—"

He did not finish for the pity within him at her brave struggle not to show her fear, her pain. Her lips trembled as she tried bravely to smile, then, with a determined effort, she sat upright. When she would have spoken he shook his head negatively and she knew he wished to conserve the strength that words would expend. Her head ached maddeningly and the sun seemed to fairly sizzle down upon her. Times, when she allowed their dreadful predicament to burst upon her fully she would shake as one with the ague.

"Last night, when I discovered the keg was empty," Loubouque said reassuringly, "I started working out our reckoning. We are well within the fishing zone of the coast. There is always a chance of being picked up. Don't fear, Lucille."

She smiled bravely, the effort only making her realize that the heat was paralyzing her facial muscles. After that, she said quite still, enduring in silence the maddening heat, she was unable to stand it longer, that she must reach into this endless expanse of ocean and drink—drink; that she must plunge over the boat's side and allow the salt water to be absorbed by her body. From watching the heat waves and enduring the sun her head was spinning like a top, mirages of dazzling beauty were dancing before her only to recede and intensify her agony by their illusion. Sanity toppled, reeled, but always would she fight it back, inspired by the silent figure of her enemy.

Night and the stars, but night and stars from which all kindness had fled. Night that should have veiled the endless reach of water that compassed them about, stars that coldly stared upon the pair and brutally revealed their dire catastrophe. Lucille felt something suddenly snap within her throbbing forehead, a little accident that seemed to instantly stop the agony and suffuse her with a delicious coolness that changed slowly to more intense heat than even the sun had brought. She knew it would be impossible to endure the strain longer. Her brain seemed whirling in another direction, like a clock whose springs had suddenly gone mad. She could feel a strange desire to laugh aloud as she looked over the boat's side and dabbled her fingers into the cooling water. Loubouque's silent figure was motionless. In one long, gliding motion she half rose then dropped swiftly from the boat, the water encircling her, cooling her, lapping at her ears in soothing refrain that lulled her senses to a glorious sleep, visionless, profound. A sleep in which there were no voices save a shrill male voice that banged at her ear drums; in which there was no force save the tender grip of the ocean and a minute, alien tightening upon her arm; such a sleep as she had never dreamed of having; a sleep from which all incentive for wakefulness had departed and into which only the panic-stricken, agonized face of her enemy, Hugo Loubouque, intruded. She fought to open her eyes as the spy pinched her arm, tried to shake her head reprovingly at him. And then she succeeded and in a flash of sanity shuddered at the horrified face of the man who was dragging her back into the boat, a face wherein the features were distorted, the teeth bared from the strain of her weight upon his shoulders. Darkness, blank, impenetrable—slumber, goblin-haunted—sun and desert with mirages of water that receded before her lips—

### CHAPTER XXIII.

The Mystery of a Voice.

TIME is a meaningless word when divided into its decimals. It may have been seconds, minutes, months or years, the time that Lucille subdivided in her delirium by two measures—nightmare-haunted fever and blank, icy chill. Dimly, through it all, ran one element, one face, one touch of humanity that would not fade, that always seemed so different from the phantasies fostering within her stricken brain, racking her body. Hugo Loubouque was constantly ministering unto her slightest want, soothing her with tender words, a veritable Goliath in fighting back the hordes ofimps that would have tormented her. Times his voice would grow thicker, weaker; times there were when his legs would crumple up from under him, the hands that smoothed her burning forehead would tremble and the eyes that glowed in the emaciated face appeared more sunken than usual, but always was he by her side—always until the mantle of blackness com-

pletely reached out and swathed her, soothing her to untroubled slumber, a slumber disturbed but once and that when Loubouque stood before her, looking down at her with a light of mingled happiness and triumph in his eyes; a look that brought dimly back to her the memory of certain things yet to be accomplished, but which she had not the strength to completely recall; a look so transitory that when she fought her eyes wide

"There is No Water," He Said Gently. Her Lips Trembled as She Tried to Smile.



open, he was gone and she was conscious of being in a strange place, a black figure rising from the corner, then slumber once again.

Instinct forced her finally from the lethargic slumber, the instinct common to all higher forms of animals of protecting one's treasure. Her hands groped at her neck where a slight tug had wakened her. Something brushed across her hand when she forced her eyes open, the figure she remembered to have seen in the corner was still squatting there, a figure that might have been inanimate save for the burning eyes fastened upon her. Nervously she fumbled at her neck, the feel of the ruby necklace meeting her fingers and puzzling her for a moment, before it started a chaotic chain of recollections that finally marshalled themselves in semblance of order.

Out of the delirium of fever she fought remembrance of all that had happened since Hugo Loubouque dragged her back in the boat, recalled vividly from the subconscious brain that had attained ascendancy during that harrowing period, his tender nursing of her, his denial, his stern self-mastery when the blazing sun, the thirst, the hopelessness would otherwise have compelled him to give up the fight. And then the fishing boat, the blessed relief of water, the breaking of the fever and consequent repairing of burned out nerve tissues, the arrival in this house and the spy's leave taking.

It was dawn of the third day that the nurse slipped from the room, slipped out with a stealthiness that somehow sent a chill through the girl and made her straighten bolt upright in bed, then, as the door closed, spring toward the chair beside the door. For a full minute she listened, her every sense concentrating and lending itself to her hearing. And then the soft patter of slippers fell upon the floor without made her stiffen with resolution, as she hid herself so that the opened door would secure her from sight. She waited, her heart thumping so violently she feared it might be overheard by the whispering pair in the hallway. Then the door opened, an inch at a time, silently, cautiously, while the woman slipped inside the room, looked at the blanket upon the couch where Lucille should have been, then beckoned to a slender, yellow-robed young Chinaman, who entered even more noiselessly than the nurse had done. The girl in hiding shuddered at sight of the vicious knife the young Chinaman passed the woman, shuddered for the fate that would have been hers save for the premonition of impending disaster that had been hers so short a time before. The man muttered a guttural deep in his throat as he crouched, his long, yellow fingers closing and unclosing the while he crouched, watching the woman. Evidently the revolver he carried bothered him for he placed it upon the chair. Lucille's fingers darted out, closing upon the welcome butt. Just as the woman leaped across the distance that separated her from the couch, upon which the blanket bulged deceptively, driving the ugly knife down with a force that sent her off her balance. The man leaped forward with a shrill cry that immediately mingled with the enraged jargon of the nurse as she found she had been fooled. Lucille knew she could hide no longer and stepped from behind the door, the revolver leveled upon the pair, her voice shaking despite herself.

The man cinged, crouched away from her but the sight of the girl there seemed to enrage the woman completely. Brandishing the knife wildly she leaped forward, then halted, stone still, a ridiculous expression of pained surprise on her face as she lurched from side to side, simultaneously with the discharge of the gun, then slipped to the floor in a ridiculous heap. The man crouched still further away and Lucille advanced upon him.

Somehow, she felt no compunction now, felt no fear, only felt the necessity for immediate haste in getting away. She signalled to the fellow that he should get out of his robes instantly. Sounds of activity came from every direction.

She was shaking like a runaway horse with the strain. The young fellow was equally nervous but the revolver at his chest made him hasten. Lucille forced him under the blanket, hissing a warning in his ear which he evidently understood, as it was emphasized by a meaning prod that was more eloquent than any other language—the point of a businesslike gun. Voices were in the hall now. Lucille dragged the body of the

known it anywhere, for it was the voice of Hugo Loubouque, international spy and her enemy, the man who would ruin everyone connected with her.

And, as she crouched away from the sound of it, she noticed that his tones were high, happy; that he appeared satisfied with himself and with life. Finally she looked out to find herself upon a quay, a great boat docking there, its hold being filled by coolie stevedores. And, stopping up the gang plank, a broad smile upon his face, moved Hugo Loubouque.

Lucille shuddered. If Hugo Loubouque smiled, he was happy. If the spy was happy, it was because he had secured the papers once more. If he stepped upon this giant boat it was because the papers were in his possession. If they were in his possession, then she would follow.

But the diary? Her fingers told her that this was no phantasy, no figment of an overwrought brain. She held the diary and Hugo Loubouque was boarding the boat. If he boarded the boat it was because he was not yet aware of his loss. Whichever it was, she must follow him, for Hugo Loubouque could not be fooled for long. He was the man for her to watch, for, watching him, she knew she would see the papers either in, or coming into, his possession.

She watched the stevedores shouldering their bundles into the black, yawning hold. Then she edged closer. She must be aboard the boat when it sailed. Her pretty teeth closed upon her under lip. Closer and closer to the laborers, she moved, cautious, furtive.

### CHAPTER XXIV.

Wherein a Doomed Man Smiles.

THROUGH the tortuous days in the open boat, through the agonizing nights, Hugo Loubouque had tenderly ministered to the girl. The days when he watched her hovering about the black boardwalk of Death in his house to which he had been recommended by his subordinate, the Governor of the province, to which the fishing smack that rescued them bore them, his brain had fed upon one thought, nourishing his body to constantly renewed life. The papers in the possession of Captain Wetherell must be found.

The method of their finding troubled him. He could not, powerful though he was, concentrate sufficiently under the terrific strain upon his body to study out the best method of procedure. The day before he was bested for want of danger, the problem was answered for him by a call from the Governor of the province, in whom he recognized a man he had been instrumental in aiding, and one who feared him greatly.

Instantly it was all clear to him. Here was one he need fear making no confession to. He had found out, aboard the boat, exactly where the shipment of arms was to be made. He knew Wetherell before the vengeful man-of-war, but he also knew that the goods must be landed at the designated place before he received his pay. Likewise, Hugo Loubouque was sufficiently familiar with Chinese officials to know this one would welcome the chance to show his devotion to the government interests by making such a confiscation, as the international spy broached to him.

Leaving a sum of money with the nurse Loubouque decided that when Lucille recovered she would be suitably well provided for to get a word to her people and escape from this, the last of her adventures. With a feeling of intense relief at knowing she could not incur his hatred further, that she had reached the end of her resources, he led a company of picked soldiers aboard the fighting craft provided for their transport and sailed toward the spot where the delivery was to be made.

There in a tiny lair he arrived barely a day before the yacht put in with its illicit cargo. Loubouque trembled at the narrow margin by which he had reached the spot. It made him doubly fierce when, from their ambush, he fell upon the boat's crew with his Mongolian soldiers. The skirmish lasted a scant hour, but already the spy had discovered that Wetherell, the man he wanted, was not with the outfit and he began laying plans for taking the yacht.

Captain Wetherell, impatiently waiting for his men to return for a second load, had finally tired and was bringing it ashore himself, raging at the delay he had been compelled to undergo from the chase they had led the warship and now fairly wild at the dilatoriness of his first mate. His temper had soured completely after his rebuff by Lucille and the mutiny. He knew exactly the terms he was on with his men, knew that this would probably be his last trip, for all the crew had heard the name of Hugo Loubouque, whose power extended over thousands of men in every quarter of the globe. He had determined to lose himself completely that he might escape the vengeance of the spy's friends, when, from the shore, suddenly about the boat his mate had taken in, but instead of the crew he knew so well, the oars were now being manned by Chinese soldiers.

Wakened from the gloomy day dreams in which he had been indulging he tried to put back, but his orders became confused and before he was well aware of what had happened, he found the side of his boat battering against that of the other, with soldiers piling recklessly upon his small crew, laying about them with sword and revolver—but

He caught a flash of Loubouque laying about him, saw that resistance was utterly useless. Swiftly his hand sought the precious bag in which were the papers he had stolen from Lucille. He drew it open hurriedly, the sealed packet of papers—which formed the major bulk of its contents—and the diary falling at his feet. He felt Loubouque's eyes upon him, caught a flash of the spy as he sprang at him, with a derisive laugh hurled the bag with the heavy packet overboard.

Without a second's hesitation, the spy was in the water after it. Wetherell fairly choked with rage as he saw the man he hated close his hand over the bag. Then he was conscious of the diary still in the bottom of the boat and, picking it up, thrust it in his shirt. Loubouque was lifted back into the boat by his anxious men who, having rescued their leader, turned upon the captain to wreak vengeance for the plague that Wetherell scowled heavily as Hugo Loubouque brushed against him, his face smiling grimly as he looked down into the eyes of the yacht master.

"Very foolish, Wetherell, trying to rid yourself of me. Now, I think the sight of you making a little jaunt up a hill with a swordsmen behind you studying the cleanest place to take that head from your shoulders would be about as pleasant as anything I'd care to look at."

Wetherell did not answer. Only, even after being bound, the feel of the diary that had dropped from the bag gave him some comfort. And so, despite the fact that Loubouque described exactly a scene such as the captain had personally witnessed many times in his cruising about these waters; despite the fact that he had failed in his vengeance, in his enterprise—despite all these things Captain Wetherell's lips were curling at the corners in something strangely like a smile.

(Continued Next Week.)