

LUCILLE LOVE, The Girl of Mystery

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

By the "MASTER PEN"

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CHAPTER XXXV. A Girl With One Idea.

BEHIND her, Lucille could hear the pursuit. Not a second could she spare for thought of regret.

The moon that had seemed so friendly but a short while before, the stars that had seemed friendly candles placed in their celestial sockets to light her way, had now become dread enemies.

Times, above the ringing of her horse's hoofs, she would hear the shouts of those behind her. Now and then a message of lead would whine its dreadful tale into her ears.

It had been a bitter struggle to hide her time. Often she had felt the temptation to run away from this place, even though she knew her chances for final success were nil.

And just when everything appeared hopeless, when the long road was darkest, love had planned its seed within the heart of Loubeque's follower.

Came the tolling of a bell from the ranch house. There was the unmistakable message of her escape in its brazen tongue.

Desperate though she knew they were, from these signs, a feeling of despair instead of confidence grew steadily in her heart.

As though in answer to the unspoken question, simultaneously with the looming of the bayonet fence before her, two men leaped from the shadows, springing at the horse's bit.

With a hard, trickling, little laugh, she clucked the weapon and drew the sight roughly across her horse's neck, scratching him so fiercely.

Something primitive within her was roused, a wild, fierce joy of combat which she had never felt before.

Hours, it seemed, she rode, with never the slightest slackening of the mad pace to which she originally set her mount.

Before, unconsciously, she had feared the potentialities of Hugo Loubeque's strength. The mental power of her beauty and innocence.

From now on she had every advantage. She was free and she knew where the stolen papers and documents were secreted in the mysterious house of inexplicable disappearing rooms and stairs.

Across the tracks plain she rode with only the moon and stars looking down upon her, a wild, eerie figure of a bareheaded girl.

She heard voices, low pitched, yet carrying far in the silence of the night.

From where she watched she suddenly noticed a stir among the men.

From the interior of the shack stepped a gaudily dressed little Mexican, evidently an officer, from the awkward salutes accorded him by the tattereddemons gathered before the house.

heard their allusions to the United States cavalry they must sift through before hoping for success.

Her eyes were glittering with excitement when she stole cautiously to the adobe shack, peering inside slowly and carefully before entering.

From a chest in the corner, which she hurriedly overhauled, she drew a similar suit to the one the little leader had worn.

Swiftly she changed, for every moment now was precious to others as well as to herself.

She was well pleased with herself when, again, she mounted her horse.

The horse hesitated at the bank of the stream but Lucille boldly urged him forward.

She heard a huge sigh of relief as, dripping and disheveled she stood upon the "right side of the Rio." Up and down the bank she looked for signs of the border patrol.

The chances were it was one of the Mexicans. But something must be done if the ranchman was to be saved from the plot she had overheard.

The three men cruelly dashed their spurs into the sides of their horses. Came a thunder of sound as a great bunch of cattle from the remuda of the American were driven toward her by the fiendish Mexicans.

Lucille felt a shot slash through the sleeve of her jacket. She reined in her horse instantly, for she knew the Mexicans had passed.

"I was trying to get there in time to warn you," she gasped. "There's a chance of driving them into the patrol, if you know where it is."

Without another word, as though complete understanding had been established, he waved to the right. She drew her revolver as her freshet came over the ground beneath his feet.

"They looked hesitatingly behind them. The ranchman's revolver sounded and their leader threw his hands in the air and flopped over upon his horse's neck.

The girl listened silently to the expressions of gratitude bestowed upon her by the ranchman, then watched him as, following the captives he entered the house to which they had been brought.

The young officer's eyes opened as wide as his mouth. He stared dumbly at the slender figure before him, knitting his brows in an attempt at concentration.

"A very tired and hungry ghost," she laughed delightedly. "Just try me and see."

"Liutenant Carmody, don't you remember me?"

"I suppose you know that Gibson was permitted to resign and nobody knows where he went?"

"Hugo Loubeque showed me the newspaper," she nodded. "And father—"

"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."



Lucille's Eyes Were Glittering With Excitement.

"And the people think that I—"

"No," she shook her head firmly. "You have no idea how dangerous a game it is, working against Hugo Loubeque."

"But—" he protested. "No," she shook her head firmly. "You have no idea how dangerous a game it is, working against Hugo Loubeque."

"Please eat," he said quietly, motioning toward the end of the repast of canned meats and vegetables and steaming coffee.

Lucille smiled as she devoted her attention to the repast. It seemed that centuries must have elapsed since she discovered the bars of her window had been sawed through.

"It's too much for me," he muttered. "Of course it is," she laughed heartily.

"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.

She awakened to find herself being shaken violently by the conductor and a porter whose ebony face had changed to a saffron shade.

She staggered to her feet and stood, dazed and bewildered, in the aisle of the car.

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

The reflection made the dreary trip a very happy one, served to while away the time with dreams of such surpassing beauty that, at times, she had to close her eyes to shut out the radiance of them.

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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.

"Robbed!" she gasped. "I have been robbed!" The women looked at one another pityingly, then incredulously and finally believing as they caught the pallor and sanity on the girl's face.

Lucille did not answer. 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.

Lucille turned 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 drug they had been the fingers of Thompson.

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

"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.

"Thompson," she murmured. "Yes, it was Thompson. I was positive from the start."

CHAPTER XXXVIII. The Keen Eyes of Loubeque.

HUGO LOUBEQUE cursed profoundly to himself as he paced up and down the floor of his San Francisco house.

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.

They had been bothered at a great deal the last two days by all sorts of women vendors and peddlers and agents, bothered until he had ordered an explicit sign over the entrance, barring them.

Came a ring at the door bell as the post-man stepped up the little walk. But Loubeque did not heed him.

Before the rush of firemen with their hose the door opened. Their heavy feet slumped upon the stairs, throughout the house.

Loubeque smiled once more, a broader smile this time, as she darted up the walk and into his house. Swiftly he peered over the stairs.

Loubeque quietly moved back to his own room. Slowly his fingers reached out. Came a slight clink of machinery.

CHAPTER XXXIX. The Best Laid Plans.

LUCILLE started violently, just as her hands encountered the packet of begrimed papers and documents.

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

(Continued Next Week.)