

LUCILLE LOVE, The Girl of Mystery

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

By the "MASTER PEN"

Copyright, 1914. All moving picture rights reserved by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company, who are now exhibiting this production in leading theaters. Infringements will be vigorously prosecuted.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

An Interrupted Appeal.

OR a long time, Lucille did not trust herself to speak. Her eyes fearfully sought the room which had started to press down upon her and was still suspended midway of ceiling and basement floor. Then she looked at the outstretched palm of the man who stood, so coolly smoking there in the doorway. She clasped the packet of papers to her breast, her eyes darting a defiance to him, a defiance which he affected to ignore entirely.

"The papers, Miss Lucille, if you please." Again that insistent, mildness of tone which she knew there was no successful resisting.

For the fleeting second she wondered what would happen did she refuse, wondered what diabolical thing might enter his brain when he found himself defied. 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 bowed and placed it in his breast pocket.

Slowly he conducted 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. Also I wish to congratulate you on your perseverance and cleverness in the art of disguise. You have," he added with a smile, "made it necessary for the servants to place the sign regarding agents and beggars over the back entrance. But, Miss Lucille, I stood and watched you from this very window, hoping that you would gain access to the house because I knew exactly what has happened would inevitably occur did you succeed. 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 take from me; for whom you were willing to give up life itself to spare me one pang of physical anguish, everything that life holds dear. 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 never fallen and, if you will honestly retrace the path of our conflict since first they started, you will find, will see what I have said is true because—through the papers are in your possession now—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 words tumbling from the tongue with 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 hydroplane of the army aviator and whom he had always recalled as the veriest child, whom he disliked to war with, felt ridiculous allowing her to obtrude upon his plans for one instant, had suddenly become a woman of such capacity for love and hate as even he himself did not have. He read it in the gorgeously glowing eyes, the mantling cheeks, the quivering lines of her countenance as well as her form.

As swiftly she changed, the mood melting back to the one he had always associated with the memory of her mother, 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 greening 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. You cannot deny it even to yourself. You know it. You are working to revenge your self upon the one who won the woman you loved from you. You know love and still you would take it out of the heart of the child of that woman. Can you not see what a frightful wrong you are doing. 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. There was something individual about the light tapping sound that she could almost identify. 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.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Loubeque Loses His Temper.

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. Thompson's face was grave, emotionless, impassive, that of the perfect servant in every colorless detail as he entered the room, standing before his master attentively, with a deferential bow to the girl.

For a moment she was taken aback by his 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 eye lash 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 meting 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. "There are reasons he mentions for inducing him to turn traitor to me which I will not discuss. However," he thumped his clenched fist harshly upon the table, "there is one paragraph which will be of absorbing interest to you. 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. His face retained its expression of dignified calm. 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. There was a dignity about the gesture, about his manner which made the girl hold her breath, so convincing it was.

"The man you speak of evidently did the work in the hope of releasing Miss Love. He succeeded in that design. I do not wish to speak of it, sir, but this scar upon my face is a fresh scar. I would not have mentioned such a trifle had it not been for the subject's being brought up. I gained this scar while trying to prevent the fight, sir."

"It's a lie," Lucille burst forth passionately, meeting the steady calm stare of the butler with eyes that carried such flame he averted his own. Loubeque looked up sharply. For some reason he had felt that the excuse, plausible though it was, carried no truth. He knew the man for a thief and had always mistrusted him, even though he had found him remarkably efficient and capable of great things. He looked curiously at the girl.

"A lie?" he murmured. "A lie," she repeated. "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. But that has nothing to do with it. Thompson did saw through the bars of my window and would have succeeded in stealing the necklace a second time had it not been for the brave man who appeared in the nick of time and shot him. He helped me to escape because he knew I was not safe there."

"A ruby necklace—" Still Loubeque was incredulous.

"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 the window of his compartment. That is why he was detained."

Loubeque fastened his cold eyes upon the butler. The man had nerves steady as a rock. Only a faint smile of pity for the girl who made this charge played about the corners of his mouth. Lucille studied the judge and culprit earnestly. She could see that Thompson was beating down the spy's belief in her story. After all, it did sound ludicrous, unbelievable that she should have such treasure upon her person. Finally she saw that the butler had almost succeeded by his very silence, his physical attitude, in convincing his master of his innocence. Swift as a flash, without a second thought, she darted toward the thief. She had noticed his fingers involuntarily seek the right hand breast pocket of his coat 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 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 clenched 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 fellow crouched away from him, his eyes darting furtively hither and thither about the room, seeking some means of escape. The hands of Loubeque opened and closed. Closer, closer he came.

The cold expression in his eyes had turned to one of grim ferocity, such an expression as made Lucille shudder. Her rage against the cunning thief disappeared in the desire she felt to save him from those terribly hungry hands. Thompson seemed hypnotized, fascinated, unable to lift his hands for defense, to open his lips for pleading. The fingers reached out and gripped him about the throat, pressing—pressing—

Not hurriedly but with cold, definite, murderous purpose the spy slowly forced the struggling figure into limps then cast him from him without apparently making the slightest effort, rubbing his palms slowly together as though the touch had defied 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. Apparently it was one of the methods he used to inspire confidence in the men under him who possessed uncontrollable traits such as the butler's zest for thieving, which came in useful to his master at times. Thompson was groaning when Loubeque impatiently pressed a button and waited for an answer.

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 door bell. Hugo Loubeque sprang to his feet swiftly, the mask of his face dropped and showing that face keen, eager, a bit perturbed.

He sprang to the window, crouching behind the curtains and peering down, his expression that of hawk-like eagerness, measuring the plummet that will land most securely upon the victim. Lucille stood at the opposite window, her heart thudding violently.

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 swaying gently to and fro, her body fighting against the faintness that was causing her knees to refuse support, her eyes wide with delighted recognition and love and disbelief. And then she opened her lips trying to cry out aloud the name of the man she loved, the man she had worked so hard for, the man who stood in the street below, staring up at the very window at which she stood. But all that came from her lips was the faintest sound, tremulous, pitiful: the whisper of his name.

Before she could regain control of herself, even realize that she really was seeing her

ness of her position. Loubeque seemed omnipotent in the opinion of these men upon whom he seemed to have stumbled. And yet she knew there had been nothing accidental about it. It was only another exhibition of the marvelously far reaching power of the man against whom she had arrogantly aligned herself.

Still she would not permit hope to die. The justice of her cause, the growing humanity of the international spy, her very youth and the power of her love forbade this. And Hope is a mightier telescopic lens than even man-created science has been able to invent.

Through the very eagerness and desperation of this feeling she slowly became aware of the attitude toward his master of Thompson. Per-

son's manner under the scrutiny of the man she knew he hated so venomously which made her shudder with his servant's treachery. She had half risen to her feet, still fighting against the ludicrous impulse which the shrill hoot of an owl reached from out the mighty distance of the far reaching desert waves. She reseat herself, cold with a feeling of omnipresent evil. It was not alone her impression of the butler-thief but there was something deadly and surcharged with violence in the artificial owl's call.

And now the very seconds lagged. Every nerve, every muscle flexed for she knew not what. Lucille waited, her ear against the wall, her eyes pools of mirrored terror.

After what seemed an interminable age, came again the sound. Unable, this time to endure the long intermission she was charged to undergo, she softly opened the door, peering out over the sleeping city that the rebel chief had flung up at a mere command. Immediately before her own abode she made out the less pretentious shack of the international spy. A dim light from the partially opened door cast a segment from the darkness. Far more significant of slumber than complete darkness was that light.

A tiny droning sound reached her ears. By main force piercing the thick veil of night, Lucille made out the shadowy outlines of a lean motor car, dimly silhouetted against a pile of lava dust. Something shapeless and dark and furtive of movement crept across the space that intervened between it and the light-cleavage of Loubeque's quarters. Lucille could not resist the impulse that forced her from the door into the open.

Times she paused, fearful that her chattering teeth spell out a warning to the marauder to whom she knew she should feel grateful yet for whom nothing but hatred and fear would enter her heart. So silently the man moved it seemed at times the earth must have opened and swallowed him up.

Something tugged at her feet, fairly drawing her away from the scene. Then a strange wave of pity for the unsuspecting one against whom this furtive attack was being made urged her forward. As the dark figure slipped through the door, Lucille thrust her head cautiously within. Upon the cot lay the long figure of the international spy, his face turned toward the silent, motionless figure that stood in the center of the room, staring at him. The eyes were tightly closed but the girl knew that the man merely feigned slumber.

Thompson turned toward the table upon which the lamp dimly burned. Lucille allowed her eyes to wander for a second in that direction, her heart thudding so violently at sight of the diary and papers there that she was fearful she would be heard. Alongside the papers, its facets sending out a million flashes of reddest blood lay the strand of rubies. She marked the involuntary flexing of the thief's hands as he tiptoed toward them.

Not a sound disturbed the silence. But something caused her to dart a swift glance at the sleeper. His eyes were narrowed but open, lights of amused malice in them she had never suspected could show in mortal eyes, lights so malignant she shuddered even as she would have opened her lips to cry a warning. The butler-thief drew closer to the prize he had worked so hard to gain. His thief's fingers were outstretched to grasp the necklace, when, with a crash, the lamp darted toward him, smashing upon the floor and leaving utter blackness in its wake.

Upon the heels of his startled alarm came a chuckling laugh from Loubeque, a laugh that matched the evil that had glowed from his eyes so scant before. Came a gurgled oath, the heavy breathing of strong men in combat.

Lucille turned as though to run. Came a swift vision before her, one that made her step swiftly within the wall of mantled darkness. She could hear the silent struggle of her enemies clash with the crashes of sound. Some instinct held her silent, motionless. The papers and the necklace had been upon the table, directly before her.

Between her and that table thrashed the two men. She dared not take the chance. Other chances had been as nothing compared to this. This was so deadly, so full of cool thought. She could not—could not do it.

Eyes met her own, eyes that seemed to force their way through the dark interior and cause her to forget everything that had intervened, eyes that mirrored a message of love and faith and hope to her as she looked down from the window of the mysterious house in San Francisco into the eyes of her lover, the man whose happiness could not be insured without those papers so short a space before her.

With the thought she sprang into the room. Her feet met something soft, soft and wriggling and silent. She bounded high, clearing the bodies of the two men and landing squarely against the table. Her hands groped even as she knew her presence had penetrated the consciousness of the combatants, lost as they were to outside things by the fury of their hate. Groping, groping, her hands encountered the cold rubies. She thrust them swiftly into her bodice, her left hand continuing the search. Papers rustled under her fingers. An iron hand was upon her shoulder but she wrenched herself loose and leaped back.

Heavy breathing sounded, heavy breathing and the catlike tread of the one who groped for her elusive figure. Along the wall she moved until her body encountered the swaying door. A faint light trickled through at her and in that flash she made out the tall figure of Loubeque.

Even as he sprang at her she slapped the door shut. Came a cry of pain and rage, the stumble of feet backward.

Lucille fled through the night, fled towards where she had seen the motor car from which Thompson had come to this place. It was a chance, no odds what orders the man had been given.

What commands he had been given? She stopped a second. She had been warned to wait for three hoots of the owl and but two had been given. Impulse directing her, she lifted her hands to her mouth. First no sound came. A second time she made the attempt. Feeble it was at best, but the startled silence took it up and hurried back this offender against restfulness.

The papers warmed through the flesh against which they pressed, warmed through her body and to her very heart itself, setting her pulses throbbing a hal-leluia more glorious than the humming motor that had helped so greatly.

And still she pressed her clenched fists against the precious packet. For Hugo Loubeque knew the method of her departure, knew what she carried with her. And already she knew Hugo Loubeque was working to overtake her.

(Continued Next Week.)



The Fingers Reached Out and Gripped Him About the Throat, Pressing—Pressing.

sweetheart here, in flesh and blood, the hand of Loubeque was about her waist, drawing her gently but firmly away from the window. Instinctively her eyes flashed a last look down, all the frailty of her woman's nature reaching out in that glance to the masculine sweetheart, begging for his strong arm to aid and assist her. Gone from her was all the strength and initiative and courage that had caused her to brave the dangers she had been through for his sake, gone was everything save her desire for him to save her. And, even as the casement shut out her view of him, she caught the lightning flash of recognition as her appeal drew his own eyes to that window. And she knew he had seen her.

Loubeque restrained her firmly. He did not speak but as she flashed a triumphant glance at him, a laughing look that defied him to do his worst, his face was seamed with sorrowful thought. The clanging of the bells throughout the house ceased instantly, just as a loud hammering on the door below came. Came a flying rush of men within the room, filling it completely. Loubeque swiftly glanced about at the anxious faces, then nodded.

"The tunnel," he cried sharply. Lucille sprang once more to the window as his grasp upon her was removed. From below she heard the hammering upon the door but could not see the rescuing party. Suddenly she came aware that the room was shooting downward, like a giant elevator. She glanced about her, sick with apprehension, upon the faces so close to her own in the narrow confines. A breath of rank, cool air fanned her cheek from out the darkness. Loubeque's hand was upon her wrist, his voice softly advising her to follow him. Far in the distance a little speck of light reached out toward them.

For what seemed an endless distance she was led by the spy, with always that rush of feet behind. The light was growing broader, brighter. Loubeque released his hold upon her. She could see him reach and press harshly against something, a door evidently, for the light slowly lengthened and broadened. Daylight and a foreign street.

A strange light from the one upon which she had seen the man for whose sake she was here; a strange street yet close to that man. Close?

A bitter sob broke from her lips as she looked at Loubeque and realized how infinitely far away she was from him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"At the Third Hoot of the Owl, Leave"

DAYS upon the desert—blistering days with merciless sunlight pouring from the molten kettle overhead, burning savagely at the impervious sand and cacti that alone had resisted the fire so many days. Days where the frightful monotony of scene, the brutish stupidity of the humans who lived in the atmosphere of it but made a telescopic lens through which the world was shut out that the memory-picture of home so ever-present with Lucille might be intensified.

Nights of cold, unwinking stars; stars pitiless in their steady undeviating scrutiny as the glow of sun. Nights where the desert breeze searched out the marrow of the bones. Nights surrounded by the minions of Loubeque, by Loubeque himself. Nights of sleeplessness for herself but nights filled with the sounds of the slumbers of her captors.

Save Hugo Loubeque. Loubeque never slept. Tireless, indomitable, a figure apart from everything, intent upon one object and that one hidden from all save Lucille, she saw he had steeled himself against her now, that never again would she be able to penetrate his pitilessness in the pursuit of his previous revenge.

Close at hand was the hour for him to strike; ready at hand were the means. What was his object in seeking Mexico and the constitutional leader she had no means of knowing. That there was a great object, one which she must defeat at any and all costs, she knew.

It was the eighth day he ran into a foraging party sent out by Villa in advance of his main army. Much as she knew of the mysterious spy, Lucille was still surprised to mark the respect and deference paid him by the dark-skinned rebels. Consequently, several days later, days of tireless travel, she was not surprised, on coming with the main body of the army, to find herself being treated with the greatest respect, while Loubeque was in constant consultation with the rebel leader.

Day after day she felt the growing helplessness

of her position. Loubeque seemed omnipotent in the opinion of these men upon whom he seemed to have stumbled. And yet she knew there had been nothing accidental about it. It was only another exhibition of the marvelously far reaching power of the man against whom she had arrogantly aligned herself.

Still she would not permit hope to die. The justice of her cause, the growing humanity of the international spy, her very youth and the power of her love forbade this. And Hope is a mightier telescopic lens than even man-created science has been able to invent.

Through the very eagerness and desperation of this feeling she slowly became aware of the attitude toward his master of Thompson. Per-

son's manner under the scrutiny of the man she knew he hated so venomously which made her shudder with his servant's treachery. She had half risen to her feet, still fighting against the ludicrous impulse which the shrill hoot of an owl reached from out the mighty distance of the far reaching desert waves. She reseat herself, cold with a feeling of omnipresent evil. It was not alone her impression of the butler-thief but there was something deadly and surcharged with violence in the artificial owl's call.

And now the very seconds lagged. Every nerve, every muscle flexed for she knew not what. Lucille waited, her ear against the wall, her eyes pools of mirrored terror.

After what seemed an interminable age, came again the sound. Unable, this time to endure the long intermission she was charged to undergo, she softly opened the door, peering out over the sleeping city that the rebel chief had flung up at a mere command. Immediately before her own abode she made out the less pretentious shack of the international spy. A dim light from the partially opened door cast a segment from the darkness. Far more significant of slumber than complete darkness was that light.

A tiny droning sound reached her ears. By main force piercing the thick veil of night, Lucille made out the shadowy outlines of a lean motor car, dimly silhouetted against a pile of lava dust. Something shapeless and dark and furtive of movement crept across the space that intervened between it and the light-cleavage of Loubeque's quarters. Lucille could not resist the impulse that forced her from the door into the open.

Times she paused, fearful that her chattering teeth spell out a warning to the marauder to whom she knew she should feel grateful yet for whom nothing but hatred and fear would enter her heart. So silently the man moved it seemed at times the earth must have opened and swallowed him up.

Something tugged at her feet, fairly drawing her away from the scene. Then a strange wave of pity for the unsuspecting one against whom this furtive attack was being made urged her forward. As the dark figure slipped through the door, Lucille thrust her head cautiously within. Upon the cot lay the long figure of the international spy, his face turned toward the silent, motionless figure that stood in the center of the room, staring at him. The eyes were tightly closed but the girl knew that the man merely feigned slumber.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

When the Owl Hooted Twice.

HOURS trod upon one another's heels, so fast they moved under the tension of her waiting. Vague forebodings which she could not analyze might be. He was to prove an ally and that was all that counted. She started to speak with him but his fishy indifferent eyes forbade.

"Read," he whispered.

She wondered at the clearness of the command, wondered because steadily though her eyes were fastened upon him his lips had made no move. Again she felt a glow of confidence. As the door closed behind his servile back she eagerly unfolded the crumpled bit of rice paper.

"At the third hoot of the owl, leave."

Merely that—but the delphic words seemed pregnant with wondrous meaningfulness.