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LUCILLE LOVE
THE GIRL OF MYSTERY

BY THE
"MASTER PEN"

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She Was Lowered into the Boat.

Wetherell halted uncertainly, held back by her charge. Then her helplessness gave him courage and he moved closer.

"Want?" he repeated, then with a short, barking laugh, "I want the papers and I want you."

He leaped forward, clasping her about the waist with his great arms, the right hand moving toward her mouth, closing over the delicate lips and smothering her cry of wild alarm.

He sprang back with a low toned oath of surprised incredulity even as her brittle laugh echoed through the cabin. Slowly, a step at a time, inch by inch, Lucille forced the man toward the door. In smothering her screams he had freed her right arm and her tiny fist, fighting against his, beating at his body, had encountered his revolver, which she deftly abstracted and had pressed against his chest.

"The papers are quite safe where they are," she murmured sweetly, the glint in her eyes betraying the tones. "Come, captain; let's see how the men you have bullied like the sight of you now."

Wetherell opened his lips to curse, but there was an expression of icy determination on the girl's face, in the tense lines of her figure, in the tremulous feel of the gun against him that made him do her bidding. Only when he felt the cabin threshold beneath his feet and knew another step would bring him in sight of the crew did he halt.

It was a scant fifteen seconds the man and girl stood there, their eyes challenging. But the eyes of Lucille were steady, determined; those of the captain were truculent, defiant. Wetherell finched and dropped his murderous expression. Then he marched across the threshold and upon the deck before his men, while Lucille felt the joy of such a triumph as she had never known before.

As the sailors looked up and saw Captain Wetherell sullenly marching under the impetus of the revolver in Lucille's hand they straightened and stared, open mouthed, unable to believe the evidence of their own eyes. Gradually it dawned upon them that the tyrant, the brutalizer, the man they all hated and feared, had been subjugated, cowed by this slip of a girl. Whispers grew louder, louder, and she caught the approval in the eyes that constantly drew closer to her own until she was surrounded by a cordon of sailors.

Only through winning the crew to her side could she maintain her position. Backing away, but still holding the revolver level upon the captain, she cast an appealing glance about upon the men.

"Friends," she whispered, then, surprised at finding how low her voice was, swallowed the lump in her throat and continued bravely: "Friends, I am just a weak girl, and I need your help. I have two enemies upon this ship. One of them I was more afraid of than anything or anybody in the world until a short half hour ago. He will do anything to steal from me some papers I have rescued from him after he stole them from my father. My sweetheart, the man to whom I am engaged, was

accused of the theft and arrested. And I have fought so hard to keep them. Her voice broke a trifle, but she straightened bravely, tears still glistening on her lashes. "I'm so tired—so tired of fighting."

The murmur of sympathy from the men died down before a still more menacing silence, a silence that broke before a shout from one on the outskirts of the crowd. All eyes were turned in the direction of his pointing finger, and from out two great smoke spirals that seemed to come from the other side of the ocean rose slowly, majestically, the thin outlines of a huge boat. The girl, scenting disaster from that sight, read it on the sneering face of her victim.

"But I am more afraid of your captain, men," she cried, her voice thrillingly vibrant. "He came to me in my cabin and demanded the papers. He threatened me, seized me in his arms and tried to make love to me. He did this to a weak girl, men. He would treat me as he has treated you. I ask you all to protect me and yourselves from this man's brutality. You see what a coward he is. You see how he

does not dare."

Her voice was drowned in the chorus of shouts that rose at the welcome announcement. Wetherell's shoulders sloped still more, while his eyes darted from face to face, triumphant, cunning, ferocious. A faint booming sound reached out to them across the waters, distracting their attention. Something dark and round described a parabola and round described a parabola from the speck of a ship and leaped

through the air toward them; came a splash of water not 100 yards away, a splash followed by a cry of alarm.

"They're firing on us!" Wetherell, needless of the pointing revolver in the hands of the girl, sprang forward, facing the puzzled, frightened men.

"Mutiny!" his great voice rose in derision. "Mutiny now when you hear a girl lying to you! Mutiny now when

we have a cargo of arms and ammunition in the hold for the Chinese rebels and a government warship is pursuing us! Mutiny now and put the man and woman in command who hired me to carry this cargo!"

"It's a lie!" Lucille's voice was shrill now.

"Lie, is it? Very well. Where did I pick you and Loubeque up? On the same bit of land, as the men know. If he is your enemy, how did you two happen to be at the place where I picked up the cargo? Tell them what the Chinese government does to a sailor on a boat carrying arms and ammunition which cannot be accounted for. My brave men, let this girl get you out of the noose you are running your heads into, but don't bother me any more!"

Again the fatal booming sound from the warship whose outlines were growing more and more distinct each moment; again that splash, followed quickly by a ripping hiss of air as a great cannon ball sped across their bows. The proximity of their danger threw the men into a panic. All thoughts of injustice, of chivalry disappeared instantly before the omnipresence of the menace that threatened their lives. They rushed upon Wetherell in a body, pleading, fairly on their knees, for him to take command and avert the disaster that was upon them.

Of them all he alone knew the position of the yacht, the fine points of navigation, the crooks and turns of the ocean in this vicinity.

Wetherell straightened as another cannon ball hurled across the path of the yacht. His voice rose stentorian as he whirled, pointing a finger toward the girl.

"Take that passenger's revolver from her. Bring the Chinese passenger on deck. They must not be found aboard if we are captured. Lower a lifeboat from the davits and set them adrift with provisions for three days and a cask of water."

Lucille felt arms about her, the pistol whirling from her grasp and ricocheting toward Captain Wetherell, who, with a malicious smile, picked it up and thrust it in his pocket.

She did not protest—there seemed no use for protest, for anything. In a haze she found herself in the tiny boat that was being lowered. As through a thicker haze she glimpsed the face of Hugo Loubeque, facing her. The creaking of the davits ceased, and the tiny craft bobbed about on the bosom of the waters. She did not move. It seemed a dream, a nightmare. Hugo Loubeque silently, grimly, seized an oar, motioning her toward the second.

"We must get out of the firing zone," he said quietly, reassuringly, almost gently. Singularly enough, as she tugged at the great oar she almost felt kindly toward the spy.

CHAPTER XI
In an Open Boat.

THE great copper ball of sun squatted comfortably upon the horizon's rim, battenning into itself and surveying with tolerant contempt the tiny bobbing craft in which were Hugo Loubeque and Lucille. The tiny yacht was showing its heels in grand shape to the battleship, and the guns from the great boat were roaring in real earnest now, as it was evident that the filibuster 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.

Hugo Loubeque was watching Lucille narrowly. Their predicament seemed not to worry him. The fact that the captain of the filibusters had consigned himself and his enemy to such a fate was of little account. Life to him had been a succession of dangers equally appalling, and he was still alive.

"The papers, Miss Lucille," Loubeque 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 necklace 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.

"Captain Wetherell took the papers," she answered quietly, studying the spy's face to see what effect the announcement made. Again came unwilling admiration for the man's imperturbability.

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

For a full hour he did not speak—an hour wherein the stars sprayed themselves over the heavens. Then he spoke again as though to himself:

"Yes, child, perhaps it is better so. It is so much simpler to fight against 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 accomplishing 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. You know 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. 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.

"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 passed it to her, frowning down her remonstrances at the deprivation. The warmth of it made her realize 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 after a long scrutiny of the stars. Then she slept.

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 sweeping sound of the waters. Then her eyes met the melancholy ones of Hugo Loubeque.

The sun was beating down upon them ferociously, as though it would consume those hardy intruders. Her head ached, when she would have spoken, she found her tongue swollen, her voice thick, her lips parched.



"There is no water," he said gently.

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