

PEG O' THE RING

By WALTER K. HILL and JO BRANDT

Novelized from the Motion Picture Play of the Same Name by the Universal Film Manufacturing Co.

Thursday, May 10th, 1917



MAN WOUNDED

being wounded after prominent... by subscriptions the... on behalf of the Brit... have been accepted by... anada.

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your best horse is just as... develop a Spavin, Ringbone, Curbs or lameness as your poorest!

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Flip did not wait after watching young Lund speed away in pursuit of the motor-car bandits who had kidnapped Peg from the circus lot, but hurried to organize a rescue party and follow Lund to the relief of the circus girl. The performers commandeered three automobiles that were standing near the circus grounds, and bribed the drivers to hurry along the road the motor truck had taken.

Young Lund was so far ahead, by the time the circus folk had started their pursuit that there was no sign of his machine along the dark road ahead. Flip was in the first of the three cars carrying the show folks to Peg's relief; they had nearly reached the edge of town when their brilliant headlights disclosed a motor vehicle coming toward them from the opposite direction. Flip turned to one of his companions and said:

"Look ahead, here comes a motor truck. It'll bet it's the same one." And as the cars approached each other, Flip called to the driver of the motor truck to stop. The man seemed at first undecided to act upon Flip's request, but, after a moment's hesitation, he finally halted the truck.

"I don't know whether you are the man who helped kidnap a girl from the circus, a little while ago," said Flip, "but if you are, and will tell us where you left the girl—"

"Well, use I don't tell you. Suppose I'm not the man you want, what the?" the driver of the truck gruffly interjected.

When the other two machines behind Flip's car halted they drew into the roadway, his blocked the way in front of the motor truck. Most of the showmen jumped to the ground and now surrounded the truck driver, listening to the colloquy.

"Well, I've been paid for my work and I have no interest in those other guys getting away with it, so I'll tell you all I know," said the truck driver. "I drove them right straight out this road until we came to a clump of trees. They dumped the box off and carried it inside the grove. They paid me, and I came back to town. That's all I know."

"That's enough," shouted the circus men in chorus as they scrambled back into their machines. And in a few seconds they were speeding along the road, leaving the truckman to proceed undisturbed, upon his way to town.

"The showmen made no lost time by running full speed, being required only to be on the watch for the grove mentioned by the truck driver, and when the clump of trees were discernible the machine young Lund had deserted was pulled by the roadside. Tumbling fell men from the cars, the road leaving the truckman to proceed undisturbed, upon his way to town.

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"You must come back again," said Mrs. Lund. "I cannot take the time now to talk with you for Doctor Lund is very low and I must be at his bedside. At any moment he may be so weakened by his heart attacks that his death may be easily hastened. Go now, and come back later."

Utterly heartless, to begin with Mrs. Lund's aversion had entirely unsettled her judgement. She had so many times been thwarted in her main purpose to be rid of Peg through Chocho's endeavors, that she decided the time was approaching for her to do something herself to speed the issue and bring matters to their definite climax.

Ever since his arrival in California Doctor Lund had steadily failed. His health had been the object of physicians on the coast, with but one expression of prevailing opinion—Doctor Lund's death was a question of only a few weeks.

"It's time to take your medicine, my dear," said the heartless woman Doctor Lund's suspicions had long before been aroused, but the woman had previously been careful to avoid detection. This time, through either nervousness or excitement, she dropped a small vial on the floor.

Doctor Lund was attracted by the incident and watched her closely, as she recovered the bottle and began dropping a portion of its contents into the medicine that had been prescribed to be given regularly to the afflicted man.

"The weak old man supported himself by grasping the brass rail that formed the end of his bed. His sudden exertion aggravated his heart trouble and when he again lunged forward to grapple with his wife, his strength abruptly failed him.

Stilled by the violent pain in his chest, Doctor Lund wavered for an instant, clutched with both hands at his throat as if by this means to secure his breath, and then crumpled in a heap upon the floor. The woman turned him over on his back, and listened with her ear against his heart.

Doctor Lund was dead. There was a cold smile of satisfaction on the woman's face as she knelt there for an instant beside the body of her husband. Then Mrs. Lund rose to her feet, her eyes stretched to a look of relentless hate, and dragged the body around until it was lying flat upon the floor.

Proceeding as complacently as though she were alone in the room, the heartless woman began a search of her late husband's belongings. Finally after opening several drawers and looking into various bags and bundles of papers, Mrs. Lund discovered the document for which she was searching—the will of the dead millionaire.

In nervous haste she scanned its contents. The more she read, the more she was justified. Doctor Lund had left all of his wealth, save only enough for Mrs. Lund to satisfy the law concerning the widow's share, to his only child, Mrs. Lund.

And Mrs. Lund was aware that La Belle Le Steur's letter would speedily establish Peg O' the Ring as the legal claimant for the Lund millions.

Learning her husband's body as he had arranged it upon the floor, Mrs. Lund, attracted by the sound of voices in another room, hastened to investigate. Young Lund, accompanied by Peg and Flip, had come to the door and home to accuse the woman and expose her in the presence of her husband.

The instant Mrs. Lund discovered who was in the room, after stealthily peering through the portiere covering the door, she contorted her face

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into signs of agonizing grief and tearfully approached her son with the information that Doctor Lund had just that moment died. Her moek anguish instantly swerved Peg and Flip from their purpose, and young Lund's sincere sorrow made quick appeal to the girl's sympathies.

Peg spoke a few consoling words to Mrs. Lund and then drawing young Lund gently aside, went with him to the chamber where his stepfather lay dead upon the floor. Left alone for the moment with Mrs. Lund, the old clown added his own condolences in expressing his regret to the deceitful and heartless woman.

Peg constantly withdrew from the high-backed rocker and observe through a series of connecting doors that Mrs. Lund was in consultation with the Hindu and his man. Watching her opportunity, she slipped from room to room until she could hear the conversation.

"This will leave everything to his only child," Mrs. Lund was saying as Peg came close enough to overhear. "Peg is the rightful heir and must be got out of the way," the woman continued.

"But me in charge of the show," said the Hindu, "and I'll find a way to get the letter, and that will settle the girl's claim on any of the estate."

"That's a good idea," Mrs. Lund replied. "I'll give you command of the situation, anyhow."

Although Peg had heard with her own ears what Mrs. Lund had said, she only calmly noted the import of the information, as she watched and listened the Hindu became restless and began looking suspiciously around the room.

Having gained the hallway in safety, Peg crept silently to the door and passed out of the house. Her hurrying feet soon carried her beyond fear of discovery, and then she proceeded to the show grounds.

Over and over the girl considered what Mrs. Lund had said. The more she was mystified. She was eager to see thought of the matter, the more she reached the circus lot and told Flip of what she had heard; to find out if he could or would solve the problem that was puzzling her.

While the girl was returning to the show, Mrs. Lund and Chocho continued their deliberations. The plan to put the Hindu in charge of the outfit seemed the most feasible, and having written the letter, Mrs. Lund gave it to Chocho.

Flip carried the news of Doctor Lund's death to the circus folk, and the information quickly spread to all departments. The manager of the show made a hurried start for the Lund home, but when he arrived Mrs. Lund was so overcome by grief to see him.

"Mrs. Lund has appointed a new man to take charge of the show," was the message the maid said she had been instructed by her mistress to give to the manager.

to them the contents of Mrs. Lund's letter. When Chocho had left the dressing tent, to assert his authority in other departments and sections of the show, Flip made a little speech to the performers who gathered around him.

"I'm an old man, and I've been a long time with this show," said Flip. "Never mind about this new change in management. It's really none of our business, and all we have to do is give our performance, and earn our salary. It's late in the season, anyhow. Perhaps the show will never go on again, and we had better make the most of the little time we still have to go on with the outfit. Take my advice, boys. Make good your share of the show just the same as though nothing had happened."

Flip's advice carried immediate weight with those who listened to him. When Peg came to him, filled with curiosity and bubbling over in eager impatience to be enlightened, the old clown had a harder task than he had accomplished in pacifying the other members of the show company. The death of Doctor Lund had not only precipitated a crisis that Flip knew was immediately at hand.

"What in the world is all the mystery about?" said Peg as she put her hand around the old clown's neck and laid her cheek close to his. "Won't you tell me now what you have so many times promised you would?"

"You must wait a little longer, my girl—I cannot tell you now," Flip responded. And despite the girl's insistent pleadings, the old clown remained silent.

"When the time comes, you will know all about it, Peg dear," he said. "You must be patient a little longer and understand that I know what is best for you."

The performers were gathered in little groups discussing the death of Doctor Lund. There was a general air of discontent and restlessness unusual with the well regulated organization. Particular resentment was felt toward Mrs. Lund for placing Chocho in charge of the show's affairs.

The Hindu was arrogant, and disagreeable in the exercise of his new authority and before he had been on the lot five minutes he had come in contact with enough of the employees to start a mutiny.

Chocho was particularly offensive in his manner toward Peg when he entered her dressing tent to display his authority. The Hindu seemed to take great delight in being able to move freely about on the circus lot, where he had been compelled to sneak his way through on former visits.

"On the boss here now, young lady," said the Hindu upon entering Peg's dressing tent, and I'm going to give you to understand that in the future you must obey my orders and not act as though you owned the show."

"Well, even if you are the boss you have no right to be here in my dressing tent," said the circus girl, and I want you to leave at once."

When the Hindu hesitated, Peg made a move toward him. Chocho evidently had no desire to start a scene just then, and turned to go, but he halted as he reached the entrance to Peg's tent and with a sneer said to the girl:

"Never mind, young lady, I'll get you yet!"

There had been a report circulated during the forenoon that there would be no performance that day, but the Hindu, under Mrs. Lund's orders, had no intention of this showing respect to the dead showman. Exactly as though nothing had happened the afternoon performance began on time

and proceeded as usual. So it was that the clowns carried on their various stunts with the same degree of frivolity that always marks their antics; the various acts in the show proceeded without halt or interruption, and there was not the slightest indication that the owner of the show was the lying dead, right in the same town where the performance was going on.

Chocho and his henchman took advantage of the activities in the circus ring to search for the letter that was now so important to Mrs. Lund—so vital to Peg if her birthright was to be established. The Hindu and his man ransacked Flip's trunk, but found no trace of the document.

"We must go through the girl's trunk, when she gets into the ring," said the Hindu. "Come on and we'll get our bearings."

When the two men again entered Peg's dressing tent for the ring, it was about time for her turn to be called, and she was sitting on her trunk, waiting for her summons.

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measure prepared for them. "Get out of here, you greaser," she cried as the Hindu approached her. The girl at the same instant sprang to her feet and was ready for the attack.

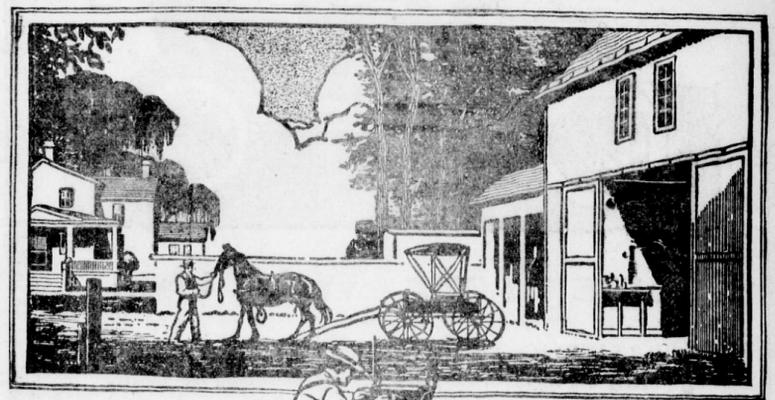
The two men made an effort to overpower her by a combined assault, but the girl, with supreme agility, avoided their rush, deftly tripped Chocho's henchman from his feet and sent the Hindu sprawling over a trunk. Without waiting for a renewal of the attack, Peg ran for the "big top" just at the instant the music started for her number.

Chocho and his man quickly recovered themselves. Thwarted in his original purpose, the Hindu sprang to Peg's trunk for the purpose of searching out the letter. It was locked securely and resisted all of his efforts.

"Get a sledge, quick," was Chocho's hurried order to his man. And when the heavy implement had been secured the Hindu began beating it to the top and sides of the trunk. When an opening had been made sufficient to expose the contents, Chocho delved rapidly into the heaps of feminine belongings.

"Good—here it is!" cried the Hindu as he snatched a letter from his hiding place.

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