

The \$10,000 Diamond Ring

Story of a Big Shot "Numbers" Baron who Liked his Girl Enough to Give her One.

A \$10,000 Diamond Engagement Ring was only another Gadget to Chick Smith, the "Numbers" King, but to Lisa Blake it was a Golden Key to Love, Marriage.

By EDWARD H. LAWSON, Jr.



Swiftly the trim little excursion steamer plowed her way through the afternoon heading straight into the narrow road of gold cast upon the rippling water by the hot sun above. Her engines purred softly; her decks vibrated but slightly with the beat of the pistons. Soft, exotic music drifted up from her lower deck, where dancing was in progress. The faint clink of china came from her stern, where luncheon was being served.

Along the high railing which surrounded the upper deck many of the excursionists had gathered, some to look out over the water at the bright foliage upon the shore, some to look at the bright blue sky and feel its spell; some merely to close their eyes and dream.

Lisa Blake stood upon that upper deck. She leaned against the railing where the wind blew strongest. Her tanned brown face was turned into the breeze, which not infrequently lifted up her black-blue hair and twirled it out behind her. When a sudden gust blew across the water, she steadied herself against the railing with long, slender, well-kept hands, and it was then that you saw she wore upon

a certain finger of her left hand—a diamond ring.

A large, beautiful, sparkling gem it was. The strong glare of the sun was reflected from its many facets in a great surge of light. Offhand, you would say that it had cost a fortune. Certainly you would not attempt to estimate how many thousands.

And if you happened to know the girl at all, you would not have a great deal of trouble in guessing the source from which the ring had come. One man—and only one—in this part of the country could have bestowed such a royal gift upon Lisa Blake. That man was Chick Smith, "big shot" racketeer and numbers man.

Chick Smith had money and he didn't care who knew it. Nothing was too good for those whom he prized. Lisa Blake was one of those, and not even her demand for a monstrous diamond ring had dimmed his devotion. The ring had been hers for the asking. That was just like Chick—to give unstintingly when there was much to be gained. And that was just like Lisa—to ask.

Chick was on the boat that afternoon. Lisa had lost him somewhere between leaving the wharf and arriving at Brown's Grove down the Chesapeake Bay, but she knew that if she waited long enough, he would turn up. And she was right.

He greeted her happily, boisterously even, when he spied her leaning against the deck rail after a dip in the bay. She smiled a wan greeting.

He tried to take her in his arms and kiss her but her face was clouded, and she pushed him gently away, as the boat moved out from the shore and started on its way home.

"Wh-what's the trouble, honey?" he asked her.

She freed herself from his arms and turned to look silently out over the water.

"Is there—something wrong, Sugar-foots?" he pleaded.

She nodded wearily.

"The ring—" she said, under her breath.

"What's happened to it, honey?"

"Nothing," she sighed. "Only—I can't wear it any longer. I can't!"

"It's a swell sparkler, ain't it?"

"Oh, it isn't that." She turned toward him now, and there was a faint trace of a tear in her eye. "It's—it's what people think—"

"And what do they think?"

"They think, darling, when they see that ring, that you're trying to buy me. With money, I mean, and jewels, instead of love."

Chick laughed calmly.

"What do you care—what people think?"

"I've got to care, Chick."

"Forget people. Forget everything but just that we're here—together."

"I can't, Chick. It's this ring and nothing else that keeps me—reminded."

The man took her trembling in his arms and held her for a moment. Then, with a sudden wrench, she broke from him.

"It's so wrong," she cried. "You'll never want me to marry you. And as for me, I hate you!"

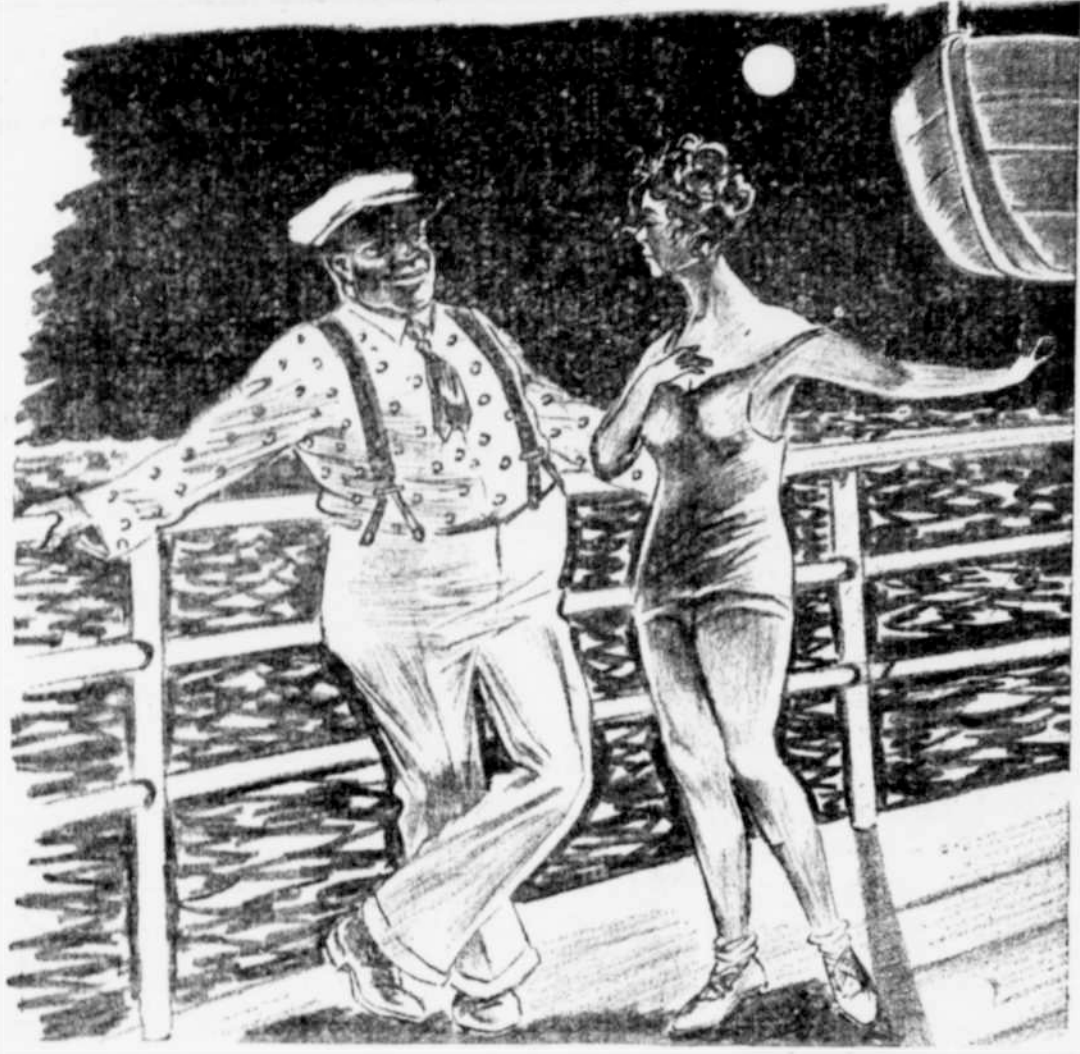
"Darling—"

The girl buried her head in the crook of her arm against the railing and sobbed softly. The man attempted to comfort her, but the task was useless.

"I hate you! I hate you!" she cried over and over.

Suddenly she straightened. "I know—" she said softly.

With a deft twist she drew the ring from her finger. The last beams of a dying sun were caught in its facets and sent out shimmering beams. She looked at it quickly with mingled disgust and anger, then calmly tossed it overboard, where it was quickly swal-



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lowed up beneath the surface of the water.

For a moment the two were silent. The girl spoke first.

"Chick," she murmured, "it's gone."

"It doesn't matter, honey. I simply thought you'd like it. Most girls would. I should have known you were different."

"Chick—?"

"Yes, honey?"

"I'm sorry. Honestly."

"Don't be. I don't mind. It isn't the diamond ring I love. It's—it's you."

"Darling—" She threw her arms about him. He drew her close and, bending down, kissed her lips.

A few moments after the boat docked that night, Chick carried Lisa home in his car after she had politely refused a ride out through the park first.

"I'm tired," she said. "So much has happened today. I don't know where I am or anything. So let's go straight home. I've got some things to do before I go to bed."

She did have some things to do. Not the least of them was the letter.

"Darling Jimmie (it read):

"Hurray! It's happened. Our plan worked beautifully. At last, honey, we'll have enough to run away and get married on. Goldstein, the jeweler, says the diamond ring is worth ten grand. Isn't that sweet?"

"Chick, the poor palooka, never even guessed that the thing I threw into the water was only a cheap paste

imitation of the ring he gave me. And there's no use telling him now, is there, honey?"

"LISA."

ENGLISH

Words Often Misused
Do not say, "Is your work most finished?" Say, "almost finished."

Words Often Misspelled
Comedy; only one m.

Words Often Mispronounced
Hospitality. Pronounce hos-tel-ri, as in "of," not as in "no," accent first syllable.

Synonyms
Refresh, renovate, revive, recreate, invigorate.

Word Study
PERMEATE; to pass through the pores or interstices of. "Water permeates the ground."

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