

# Diamond Cut Diamond

By JANE BUNKER

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## OUR HEROINE BECOMES A PRISONER.

Synopsis.—While in Vevey, Switzerland, where the "staid proper spinster" who tells this story is spending a vacation, she is asked to allow Claire de Ravenol to be her companion back to the United States, but because of dislike for the girl's father she refuses. Later on, meeting them on the boat, she discovers Claire in care of a Mrs. Delario, whom she had met when they were purchasing a pair of slippers, exactly alike, and which figure prominently in subsequent events. In the confusion at the New York customs office the spinster carries off one of Mrs. Delario's slippers. She returns the slipper the next day and is shown some diamonds worth a million dollars which Mrs. Delario admits were smuggled. A man claiming to be an officer arrives with a warrant for the arrest of Mrs. Delario's son on a charge of stealing the diamonds. She outwits him and persuades the spinster to take the jewels home for safe keeping. Next day she returns the jewels, but learning that Mrs. Delario's son has been kidnapped she agrees to keep them for a while. She hides the stones in a bunch of hyacinths. Over the telephone De Ravenol informs her Mrs. Delario has met with an accident and urges her to call at once. She is met by De Ravenol, who claims that the diamonds are his, stolen from Claire on the boat, and demands their return. Our heroine defies De Ravenol. Returning home she finds that her flat has been ransacked. She discovers that De Ravenol has an apartment in the same building.

## CHAPTER X.

### A Prisoner.

"Alone at last!" This was my first feeling as I sank into my easy chair to collect my thoughts—alone with a million dollars' worth of diamonds—alone on the sixth floor with monsieur occupying lawfully the flat directly under mine! And what was I to do?

Obviously, the first thing was to hide them, and since they'd been safe once in the hyacinths I wasn't going to tempt fate by changing the place. So I put my fresh bunch in water, placed the diamonds among the stems and threw the old bunch away.

Soon done—but my real problem lay in barricading myself so that monsieur could not get in again. Remember, he had the use of the same fire escape and dumb-waiter shaft, to say nothing of the hall stairs—he could come and go in the house as he pleased.

The dumb-waiter I counted out because I could easily wire up the catch and make it impossible for anyone to open the door from the shaft side without actually breaking the door off its hinges—a most unlikely thing for monsieur to attempt.

Fortunately, I kept a kit of tools in the house—I'm not one of your helpless women who can't drive a nail or sink a screw—and my next act was to take the small chain-bolt that had been on the front door and put it on the back of the kitchen door. Then I changed the keys on this and the bathroom doors to the hall side. From the fire escape, monsieur could enter only those two rooms, and with their doors locked—and one chain-bolted—on him, he would have to break them off their hinges to get at me that way.

The bathroom window didn't give me much concern. The sash was stuck fast by the last painting and I couldn't raise it myself; the glass was too thick to be cut readily and I didn't believe monsieur would advertise himself to the neighborhood by breaking it. But I drove a couple of nails above the sash just for luck and then gave my attention to the kitchen window.

Since he'd gone out that way, he'd very likely try it to come back. The glass was thin—he could cut it out easily; he could even smash it and come through so quickly that nobody

would see him. But all right, monsieur, thought I, I'm going to give you your money's worth—I'll make you stand on the fire escape long enough for the neighbors to get a good look at you.

I had a couple of rolls of picture wire and I tacked this across the sash—not across the frame, because I didn't want to find myself wired in where he was wired out. The wire made a considerable network, almost impossible to get through without a pair of wire nippers, and I doubted very much if he'd be carrying such things in his pocket; and when I had nailed down the sash, as I have said, in the bathroom I felt secure in my retreat. There was now no way for a man to get in while I was in—unless,

that is, he came down from the roof on a rope to one of the other windows. I thought of that and got ready to knock him off with a broom or throw pepper in his eyes if he tried that trick on me. And at last I felt I was safe—so long as I stayed in, of course!

All the time I'd been working, my mind had pounded out dully the question, "What had I better do next?" and the only answer seemed to be I must get help from some one—I had passed the point where I could play a lone hand in the game and save the diamonds. I had tried to telephone several times without getting an answer, which at the moment didn't astonish me. It provoked me, though, that I could not order something from the grocer and the butcher for my dinner. I go out to dinner, but tonight, even had I been so minded, I dared not leave the flat.

Outside the drizzle had settled to a steady downpour. It was dark and gloomy and my feelings were the same as I opened some canned stuff and got as much of a meal as I could with what was in the house. I think it was the skimpiness of the larder at the time that showed me as much as anything else how important it was for me now to get help—I had food enough to last for a couple of days, and after that—if things kept on this way—how was I to get it?

Billy Rivers was, of course, my logical resource. He had seen the flat the night before—he could start all the protective machinery in the city for me. With this resolution, I went to the telephone. It was "dead"—my connection was severed! I didn't need to be told that monsieur had cut my wires!

The full magnitude of my calamity burst upon me and I sat down on the nearest chair with a flop. The bitter fact of the whole situation struck me like a blow on the head—I'd let every chance for protection or flight go by me; the one remaining chance was a letter entrusted to my spy. Well, I'd try that, anyway.

I spent an hour in composing a missive to Billy that would tell him a great deal and monsieur nothing—if it fell into his hands—and this is what came out of it:

"Dear Billy: I'm ready to sell you that story I promised. It is now nearly finished, but I shall need some help from you in arranging the climax. Don't waste time telephoning—the telephone is out of order—but attend to it personally. This is an ambulance call."

It all hinged on the words "ambulance call" and if Billy would read them "hurry up" and then, taking them in connection with what he'd seen of the flat robbery, read, "My life is in danger."

And would monsieur see it if the letter fell into his hands? That was my risk—and there you are!

I made three copies. I directed one to Billy at his office—I inclosed one in a letter to Philadelphia to my brother asking him to mail it there—I dropped the third, carelessly, into the manuscript of a short story, sent to a magazine, hoping the editor would think it an accident and kindly mail it for me.

It was half past ten and I was fagged out. My last chance had come. "Would George mail the letters?" I got a quarter of for him—I was afraid to give him more and make him think the letters were important and not the sort of thing he mailed for me almost every night.

I dragged one weary foot after the other along the hall—I hated to let the letters out of my hands now that I had them ready. "Well, he's got to do it," said I firmly, and took hold of the door knob and the Yale latch.

I turned and pulled; turned the other way round and pulled again. I was locked in from the outside and the key was in the lock! I was hard and fast a prisoner in my own flat!

The immediate effect on me of this discovery is hard to describe. My head swam and the room went round, and everything was all mixed up, and I kept repeating: "Fire! If there's a fire tonight I'll be burned like a rat in a trap!"

And with that I went to bed—there was nothing else to do. I was nearly as much astonished in the morning to find the key gone from the lock as I had been to find it there. Apparently I was free to take that eleven o'clock train for Philadelphia that the fake telegram from my

brother had requested me to—I was free to put the diamonds in my stocking and step out into the Great Unknown! Only—I wasn't such a fool as to do it! I could and did, however, give George my letters to mail.

One thing was now clear to me—as long as I stayed in the flat I was comparatively safe—I must make my main play that Billy had got my letter or that somebody would call. Though of course George would say I was out—he was paid for that by monsieur.

In this manner of living—afraid to go out and being unable to communicate even with the grocer—two days wore away; to be exact, from Tuesday night to Friday morning. And they were enlivened by some interesting experiences. On the second night I was awakened by the sound of a latchkey working at my front door. I tiptoed into the hall and listened. I can't say I was frightened. The chain-bolt was on and the only way it could be got off was by first shutting the door tight—which meant it could not be worked back with a wire. I had seen to that when the locksmith put it in.

Nothing came of this attempt to fit a key to my new lock, and I got comfort out of the thought that if monsieur regarded the fire escape as much too public for his performances, I had given George my letters to mail on Wednesday morning, but as Thursday wore away and Billy didn't come I saw what I was in for—I was to be starved into leaving the flat. I was already weak for want of food; I suppose my belief in imminent starvation had something to do with it, but as a matter of fact I had had nothing that could be called a square meal since Monday night at the restaurant, and I hadn't eaten much then—I was too excited over my encounter with monsieur. Oh, how I wished I'd eaten that egg Mrs. Jimmonn balled for me! It might have saved my life! Yes, I was weak with hunger, and by Sunday night there would not be a mouthful in the house to eat. It was now Thursday evening.

That night monsieur picked the new Yale lock on the front door! How long he'd been working at it before I woke up I can't say, and I might never have known it at all if he hadn't accidentally dropped his bunch of keys on the tiled floor. Their tinkling awoke me. I knew on the instant what it was and lay perfectly still while I felt him listening for a sound from me to show that I was awake. I should say I lay there fifteen minutes before he went on with his job.

Softly I crept out of bed. I tiptoed through the hall and placed myself back of the door where he could not see me should he get it open. We stood thus possibly five minutes, his work lighted by the hall gas jet, I in total darkness, while keys slid into the lock, slid out and clicked against the bunch he had in his hand. It was a large bunch, judging from the sound.

The sixth key did it. The Yale lock turned once—twice. He withdrew the key and I heard him taking it off the ring and dropping the bunch into his pocket. He put the key once more in the lock and tried again to make sure. It was not till then that he unlocked the lower lock—the one he kept me prisoner with. He'd never once given me the chance to pop out on him till he was ready to pop in on me!

And now he was ready. The key turned—the door handle turned. A strip of light showed over his head and slowly withdrew. The chain-bolt slid and slid, almost noiselessly, along its socket. Then it stopped.

I think he hadn't noticed it at first—he had turned the gas low and as he stood he cut off the light. When the door suddenly stopped he moved aside to see what was happening. He saw the glitter of the brass chain. He saw it too. Then darkness again, and I felt rather than saw his fingers come through the crack and feel the chain.

Next came the whole hand and worked at the chain—but the farther he pushed it back the tighter closed the door. It was meant to be that way, but he didn't yet know it!

He bared his arm and thrust it through the crack and felt along the slot to the hole in the end. This was my chance to give him one with the hairbrush—but I didn't. Truth to tell, I was too paralyzed with excitement. I had my chance and let it go.

I did nothing—said nothing—scarcely breathed the whole time he was there. And to this day I don't know if I could have bettered the situation by doing anything but what I did—nothing.

He wasted very little time on the chain. It took him not more than two minutes to learn that he couldn't get the bolt out at the end of the slot without first shutting the door—which meant it couldn't be got out except from the inside. He withdrew his hand. There was a dead pause in which he seemed to be considering what to do next. Then he crossed the door and locked me in again. I did not hear him leave—only, when the door closed on him all was silent. He probably crept up and down the stairs to get a glass of water. And with my teeth

chattering I asked myself my now favorite question, "What next?" I was to have it answered in a way I didn't expect.

## CHAPTER XI.

### One of the Slippers.

I went back to bed, and thus ended Thursday night. Friday morning found me pretty desperate. I felt I must now get help or literally die of starvation, if nothing worse; for if I went out, now that monsieur had a key to my flat, he could slip in and lock me out and stay till he found the diamonds. And if I took them out with me—well, that was something I simply couldn't think of. Nothing had come of the letters I had given George to mail—he has always stuck to it that he put them in the box immediately; well, he put them in the box—but not until Saturday, as I happen to know by the postmarks on two of them. But let that go. On Friday morning the one person I could positively trust to mail a letter for me popped into my head—the postman.

I rang for George and it was a solemn face I showed in exchange for his ivory smile.

"George, I seem to have lost a check in the mail," said I soberly. "I want

you to bring the postman up on his next trip so I can see about it."

"I don't know nothin' about it," he exclaimed excitedly. "If it come I bring it up—that's a sure thing."

"Nobody says you took it," I reminded him. "But I must see the postman on his next trip."

"Well, I ain't take no letter and no check," George still protested. But I held my peace—George had done something about my letters he was afraid I'd find out. And I did—by the next delivery. He brought up one with my brother's business address on the outside, the postmark in New York three days old!

He hurried down to catch the man on his next trip, and through the top of the disappearing car sung out to me, "I ain't take no letter and no check!"

I rushed to my study, and this is the letter I dashed off to Billy:

Dear Billy: That affair is now life and death. Come at once—but tell nobody till you've seen me. Bring two good revolvers. Don't bother with the telephone—my wires are cut and I'm a prisoner being starved to death in my own flat.

Billy—this is the biggest story—and romance—you ever struck. When you get to the house the water boy will tell you I'm not at home. It's a lie—I'm upstairs. If he refuses to bring you up, walk. If he tries to prevent your coming up—or if he calls on the detective sitting in the lower hall-go to the nearest police station and get a couple of men. But don't do this till you've tried every other possible way of reaching me. Try it by the roof of the flat house next door.

Drop everything and come—only don't drop the revolvers—mine was taken that night. And Billy—you'd better leave a sealed envelope with some friend telling where you are and that if you don't telephone in—say—three hours he is to come to the house with the police. But keep this secret, and for heaven's sake hurry, and if you can as easy as not bring me something to eat—I'm out of everything but four rolls and three sardines. Only hurry.

I addressed this to Billy at his office, found a ten-cent piece for special delivery, and hadn't more than just got it ready when George spryly brought up the postman.

A reporter gets into the game.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Useless.

Next to a silver loving cup our notion of the most useless thing in the world is one of those elaborately jeweled swords that are presenting to touring generalists everywhere.

## TONY THE FLORIST

By DOROTHY DOUGLAS

(© 1919, by McClure Newspaper Syndicate.)

Tony stood in his little florist shop and gazed longingly at the window across the avenue. His dark eyes, that held the tragedy and beauty of Italy in their brown depths, gazed during all idle moments in that same direction.

But the girl in the shop behind that window was not aware of Tony's gaze nor in any way conscious of the florist's existence.

Had both the tiny fragments of shop been rolled into one there would not even have been a space worth calling a shop—not a real Broadway shop. But within the heart of Ruby Vale was an ambition and sense of the artistic quite big enough to fill far greater space than her slim means could measure in actual possession.

Ruby was not exactly one of the great herd of interior decorators that were filling all available basements with oddments of antiques and orange candlesticks, but she carried an assortment of accessories to the home.

As Tony gazed across the avenue each morning when he opened his own fragrant shop he knew that some new exquisite color scheme would greet him in Ruby's window. Try as he might to rise early, the girl opposite always managed to be down earlier and to have arranged her display for the day before he could get there.

He would then arrange his own beautiful flowers and was beginning to take his color effects, as far as was possible with reasonable blossoms, from the window opposite.

Only the day before there had been an exquisite twisted silver candlestick with an amethyst chignon shade, and lying carelessly beside it a cushion of amethyst taffeta with great silver tassels. Tony had sighed rapturously. Asters were in season and within ten minutes after seeing Ruby's window Tony had a display of lavender asters, with here and there a touch of silver birch.

Today the color was softest maze, and Tony had glided in the palest of chrysanthemums, with a few nasturtiums for character.

Had the two shops been side by side they would have lured the most indifferent passer-by and drawn many a customer, first to buy a dainty lamp shade and then into Tony's shop for a cluster of flowers to match it.

How Tony longed to go across the street with just a flower or two and thereby add the necessary finishing touch to Ruby's window display no one but himself knew. And perhaps had Ruby been other than an amber-eyed, golden-haired girl to make one dream of, Tony would have found courage to make his small contribution. But the heart of the florist beat thunderously at the very sight of Ruby and he feared to seem foolish in her eyes.

Had Tony been a scheming lover he could easily have gone boldly into the shop opposite and purchased any amount of lovely things for the little apartment that was perched high up on Riverside drive, with its windows turned toward the broad Hudson. He could have had endless trips to the shop, first for hangings for those windows, then for candle shades and finally for cushions, and in the end he might have carried Ruby herself out of the shop and into his heart. But Tony was not wise in the art of wooing. He was far wiser in the art of making and investing money, and braver at fighting, as a medal or two pinned on his old uniform could vouch, than he was at winning a girl.

Modesty forbade Tony even supposing that Ruby had cast eyes in his direction.

But modesty was greatly in error, for Ruby had not only cast many admiring glances at young, good-looking Tony, but she sent many a longing eye at the wonderful flowers that so often matched the color of her own window decoration.

Ruby had put all her small hoardings into a very lovely stock and could not afford to buy the few flowers she would love to have had daily to adorn her window. She, with Tony, realized that the few living blossoms would add a touch to her color scheme that would attract even the most elusive eyes. But flowers in the city were too expensive for struggling decorators to buy, so Ruby contented herself by planning for the day when she should not only have all she wanted but a full garden of her very own.

The morning that gave Tony a time advantage over Ruby was a record day. He arrived at his shop before the blinds opposite were even drawn or the color scheme there for him to copy. Tony wondered whether he should wait, but decided to develop a window effect of his own and was not without a faint hope that Ruby would see it and take his lead as he had so often taken hers.

Chrysanthemums were in from the market—great shaggy wonders of the flower kingdom, and Tony, unable to resist the warmth of pink, threw himself with characteristic swiftness into the arrangement of a window that sent its glow along the entire block. Certainly it cheered the early business humans as they dashed into the subway's yawning mouth.

Had Tony been anywhere but in the extreme back of his shop he would have seen Ruby emerging hurriedly from that same subway, stand for a

moment entirely absorbing the exquisite color of his flowers, then flit across and insert the key to her own door and pass within.

When he next looked across the street his heart jumped joyfully. In Ruby's window, with its soft background, was a luster were lamp of exquisite pink with a chiffon shade that fairly took one's breath away by the chiffon softness of it. A pink wastebasket and billowy cushion completed the dainty picture.

Tony was no longer shy. With swift fingers he selected the most wonderful of chrysanthemums—pink and shaggy and exhaling that strange fascinating odor that was neither sweet nor bitter, but just fresh and pure.

He faced the little door opposite now with the same feeling of a conqueror that had been his when facing the enemy guns. Boldly he crossed the street with his huge pink blossom, a splash of color amid the Broadway traffic.

Ruby flushed brilliantly when she saw Tony in her doorway, but her smile went deep into the florist's heart.

"Oh-h!" she breathed softly, "what a wonderful, wonderful flower!"

"I wanted you to have it in your window," Tony told her simply.

"It will bring me in clients by the dozen," Ruby accepted the flower so graciously that Tony chided himself for not having come over weeks before. "Let's put it in this pink vase."

Together they stepped outside to get the full effect and both marveled at the artistic whole.

"I will bring you flowers each day," said Tony, "and as I am supplying many hotels and restaurants with flowers I know I can get you orders for candle shades for the same places—that is—if you want me to." Tony's habitual modesty rushed to his rescue. "Perhaps you don't."

A swift tremor of emotion seized Ruby. She had a desire to cry, but decided to laugh instead. The idea of her not wanting orders was amusing, but Tony was so innocent in his doubts. She knew that the coming of the florist into her life meant great big work and something even bigger than work. The quiet expression in Tony's eyes as they looked into hers told Ruby many things.

"Of course I want them," she told him, "and in return I shall send every client I get straight over to you to get flowers to match every color scheme."

Tony laughed. "I see people swarming to my shop now, so good-by for the time being." He was out before Ruby quite realized that he had been there. Only the pink chrysanthemum reminded her throughout the day of Tony. She carried it home to her small room at night rather than to leave it alone in the shop, and as the evenings wore on a different flower was added to the collection, having served its duty during the day. And each morning that Tony came over with his flowers and his orders found Ruby curiously ready to receive him.

A scant three weeks had passed, busy weeks, however, before he told her about the apartment with the windows looking far up the Hudson.

"Whenever you design anything especially artistic," he said, "just smuggle it away for me. There are just five rooms, but I'll say there won't be five more wonderful rooms in the world when they are decorated with some of these chiffron things."

"And many flowers," Ruby suggested.

"One wonderful flower," said Tony.

## Fishing Frog Hideous.

There is a hideous reptile, known as the fishing frog, which angles for its game as expertly and with as great success as the most adroit fly fisher. He is a clumsy, awkward swimmer, but nature has compensated him for his awkwardness by furnishing him with an equivalent for a rod and line, with bait always ready for use. Two elongated tentacles spring from his nose, which taper down like actual fishing rods. To the end of them is attached, by a slender filament, which serves the purpose of a line, a bait in the form of a shiny bit of membrane. The hooks are set in the mouth of the fisherman below, and in order to induce the fish to venture within reach of them, the angler stirs up the mud at the bottom with his fins and tail. This attracts the fish and conceals him from their observation. He then plies his rod; the glittering bait glows in the water like a living insect. The dazed fish are taken in great numbers, perfectly encircled by the trick of the crafty angler, who can give pointers to the best trout fisherman.

## Had to Wait for Fame.

Dryden and Scott were not known as authors until each was in his fortieth year. Thomas Carlyle was thirty-nine before he published "Sartor Resartus," and forty-three when he produced his "French Revolution."

Richard Hooker was forty-one when his famous "Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity" was first published. Dr. Samuel Johnson was thirty-eight when he announced the plan of his Dictionary of the English Language, and was forty-six when, after a heroic struggle against penury, he succeeded in publishing the work.

## Little Guam's Expensive Pests.

The rat and iguana campaign is still continuing. Rat catching has become almost a habit with the natives, as a line of them with their quarry is always in evidence in front of the jail on rat days. From the inception of the campaign in September, 1916, up to and including December 18, 1918, 1,571,643 rats and 49,053 iguanas were destroyed at a total cost to the island government of \$37,940.25.

## Guam News Letter.