

# Diamond Cut Diamond

By JANE BUNKER

(Copyright, by Bobbs-Merrill Company.)

CHAPTER XII.

—12—  
The Capture.

That night nothing happened—at least to me; but somehow the periods when nothing happened were more alarming than when he was boldly attacking. You may imagine, if you can, what I went through on Saturday! My one diversion was to rehide the diamonds. This time—after I had taken them out of the hyacinths and poked a thimble among the stems—I sealed them in an envelope and thumb-tacked it to the bottom of a sideboard drawer. The drawers slid in and out on runners deep enough to allow the envelope to pass. All day long I kept thinking, "What will happen if monsieur doesn't take the bait?" It seems strange to me now, but I never once asked myself, "What will happen if he does?"

The last half hour before Billy came was positively the longest in my life, and when the bell did finally ring I was shot through the heart and ready to die.

I came to life immediately, whistled through the door, "Who's there?" and heard, "Ann Preswick—the password we'd agreed on."

"Then he hasn't killed you!" were my first words.

"Who? Your 'mossoo?' No—I killed him on the stairs last night—or pretty near!"

I didn't see why Billy should bestow the proprietorship on me—he wasn't my "mossoo," as I reminded Billy while he was pretending a pair of handcuffs out of his overcoat pocket.

"A mere detail," he returned. "He will be your own in an hour." He flung off his coat. "Where do you hide these toys?"

"My wardrobe. . . . But he won't come."

"Oh, yes, he will—he told me so." I thought Billy was joking and made no reply.

"Very interesting man," mused Billy. "Not at all the sort of person you'd expect to find in a diamond robbery. Wonderful knowledge of European politics—and American politics, too."

"Billy, what do you mean?" I demanded.

"Why, I took your 'mossoo' home to his hotel last night—and—"

"You didn't?" I gasped.

"Of course I did! Why not? You don't suppose I'd go off and leave him here to murder you, do you?" Billy was making the most out of his story, I could see.

"But—how—did—you—manage—it?" I was still gasping.

"I didn't. He did. He wasn't going to give himself away by going up stairs; he said he was going down. So we went down together, and I kept talking to him. When we got to the street we just kept on till I'd seen him home. We were thick as thieves by that time. I invited him to see Chinatown tonight and he accepted—"

"Billy! You never—"

"Yes, I did! And it's how I know he's coming tonight—see? I went round this morning in time for the first mail. He was waiting for it. Oh, he got the letter all right! And as soon as he read it he came over and told me he couldn't go to Chinatown tonight—he had diplomatic business that might take him to Washington—which means here. See?"

"Billy, you're the cleverest thing I ever saw!" I cried with real admiration.

"Thanks—coming from you I appreciate that." He said it in an offhand way, but I could see he was feeling very set up over himself. And I didn't blame him. He added, "What the 'mossoo' was really after—why he wouldn't let me go out in the dark alone—was to know who I was calling on. I told him it was the people in the front flat and I couldn't get in. I told him it was their cousin from Boston I was calling on and maybe they'd gone to the theater. That led to our talking about plays; that led to an inspiration of genius and I asked him if he'd seen Chinatown; that led to my invitation and—the rest you know."

"Billy, you are positively the cleverest man I know!"

"Didn't think I'd grow up like that, did you? And that's not all. As for the pretty daughter—your little Claire that you think so much of—don't faint now—well, she's in it up to the neck and over her ears. She's his accomplice, all right. Here's her cable message—"

"He drew out a bit of paper on which he'd copied it and read:

"Born a girl. Mother and child doing well. CLAIRE."

"But this is—this isn't—" I stammered.

"Quite so," agreed Billy. "It is and it isn't! It is a code. It isn't a piece of insanity. I've read it—or I think I have. Listen now: 'Born—the precious thing that was expected has come to pass successfully; that is, the diamonds have arrived safe and sound.'"

He glanced at me for approval and then puckered up his brow while admitting, "This next—a girl—puzzles me a bit. It's one of three things: just a filler, to make it read; or a code word with an agreed meaning; or it refers to Mrs. Delario—that is, the

still has the diamonds—she hasn't passed them on to some man. But let that go. The next is too easy—'mother'—the owner, of course; 'child'—the precious things; 'doing well'—got through the customs without being separated. Plain as day—and when you and Mrs. Delario stepped out of the cable office your dear 'mossoo' stepped in and read it."

"Poor little Claire!"

"Poor yourself!" snorted Billy. "You don't need to waste any pain and tears on that outfit. They're slick. Well, let's to work—'mossoo' is downstairs anxiously waiting for you to go out."

"How do you know?"

"Shadowed him. . . . My revolvers all right? And the red pepper?"

"Yes—but I've been thinking about that pepper and how about ammonia instead?"

"H'm-m," considered Billy. "What's the advantage?"

"It wears off quicker, and I think it's probably safer for us if he struggles and we have to hold him down."

"Guess it is," Billy agreed. "Got it ready?"

I took him to the kitchen and showed him half a glass of household ammonia diluted with water and covered with a saucer. Then I hung his coat and hat in my wardrobe. After that he looked at me and I looked at him—the fatal moment had arrived.

"Well?" said Billy. I seemed to know he'd say "well."

"Well!" I repeated after him, trying to pretend to myself I didn't know what he meant.

Billy glanced at the clock. "Your 'mossoo' is wondering why you don't come. By the way—there wasn't a soul in the lower hall when I sneaked in—he's sent his man off for fear you won't leave."

My knees were shaking under me. I was sure Billy knew it, but he affected not to notice. He took one of the revolvers and inserted a blank cartridge for the first shot, explaining that we couldn't have an omelet without breaking eggs. I was to jump out of my bedroom and fire this as soon as monsieur reached the dining room.

"I calculate we'll have him now in about fifteen minutes," was Billy's delicate hint to me to go on with my part, and with knees ready to close up under me like jackknives I rang for George.

I must say that George acquitted himself very creditably—as a spy. Instead of his usual inquisitive "Goin' to be out all the evening?" he put it in this way: "If somebody calls when shall I tell 'em you'll be home?"

"Tell them I won't be home—say I'm out for the evening." I returned promptly; and George's face wore the satisfied expression of a well-earned five-dollar bill.

By the time we reached the second floor Billy was ringing furiously from the sixth—this was to get George out of the way at once so I could slip upstairs—and when we reached the first the luck that is said to favor natural-born idiots and such turned a trick for me by fetching little Mrs. Thing-downstairs slithering along the hall.

The next thing I remember, I was sitting on monsieur amidships and Billy was snapping a handcuff. I gasped and rolled off on the floor; picked myself up from the inelegant position by way of my hands and knees, got a wet towel and sopped monsieur's face as fast as I could—though why I performed this humane act so quickly, I can't say; and as soon as he stopped strangling—for a lot of the ammonia had gone into his mouth and very little in his eyes—Billy and I dragged him to the dining room, propped him against the sideboard and opened a window.

I believe that none of the three of us uttered a word during the entire performance—Billy says he can't remember any; but one of the strangest things was that the firing of the revolver elicited no investigation from the populous house. All this might have happened in the center of Laramie plains in a snowstorm the day after the fall roundup for the amount of notice man or beast took of it.

It was a faultless achievement. And now we had monsieur—we had captured him, as Billy said we should, all by our little own selves. He and I silently regarded the crumpled creature sitting against the sideboard and then for the first time the idea came into our heads, "And now that we've got him, what are we going to do with him?"

I looked at Billy and he looked at me. We asked each other the question with our eyes. As for monsieur, his fears had swallowed up his chagrin at the indignities heaped upon him. Strange as it may seem, he was the first of the three that found his voice.

"Zee has been a great mistake," he began, to which Billy retorted: "It looks that way."

"Ah—'est vous?" breathed monsieur, suddenly recognizing Billy.

"Of course. Who did you think it was?" returned Billy with a tang of pettiness, for which he might on that occasion be forgiven.

Monsieur repaid it by ignoring him and addressing himself to me.

"If madame will permit me a chair and allow me to explain—"

news of my departure "for the evening" and monsieur could creep upstairs, unseen by his all-seeing spy. We therefore took our prearranged places.

The flat was almost dark. One low gas jet lighted the dining room and showed the hyacinths on the table—so monsieur could see the moment he entered the front door; a low light in the bathroom showed at a glance through the half-open door that nobody lurked within. The door to my bedroom stood flat against the wall; the kitchen door nearly so, and behind it Billy, jammed in between the refrigerator and the set tuba, was completely concealed unless one entered the room. A low light burned here, sufficient to show the room's apparent emptiness. We calculated that monsieur would make a dash for the fire escape when I shot off the blank cartridge from my bedroom and Billy was then to greet him with the ammonia.

In my own room I stood pressed against the wall just inside the doorway. In my right hand was the revolver.

Neither Billy nor I uttered a sound. The little metal clock echoed along the hall, horribly loud. It chimed the half after seven. I counted ticks—one minute gone. I counted and thought of hundreds of things I meant to do, or had forgotten to do, all the while counting mechanically. Three minutes gone—four—five—

A key slipped quickly, boldly, regardless of the noise it made—my lock! No—it couldn't be! The lock turned. A quick illumination filled my hall from the gas jet outside and was gone almost before I had realized it. The door closed. My heart jumped out and ran about the floor and tried to hide under the bureau.

I remember thinking, "Suppose it doesn't come back but stays away? Then poor Billy's done for—I can't move a muscle without my heart!"

And all the time I was thinking these idiotic things, I heard the cautious indomitable pad, pad, pad of whispered footsteps. They paused at the bedroom door for a glance within—nothing there; paused at the bathroom door—nothing in there; paused at the kitchen door—nothing in there; then made for the table.

The light blazed up in the dining room and my heart came back with a plop. Monsieur had turned up the light in order to remove the diamonds and leave me to discover it, as it might chance—tomorrow or a week from tomorrow.

With the light, all my fear left suddenly. I popped out of the bedroom—saw monsieur with the hyacinths in his hand—fired the blank cartridge and yelled, "Hands up!" and stood facing him and between him and the door with a smoking revolver in my hand.

He said, "Mon Dieu!"—took in the situation—and bolted for the fire escape—got a smashing blow from the kitchen door as Billy jumped from behind it and then half a glass of ammonia in the face. Two seconds later we three were a writhing strangling heap on the floor.

The next thing I remember, I was sitting on monsieur amidships and Billy was snapping a handcuff. I gasped and rolled off on the floor; picked myself up from the inelegant position by way of my hands and knees, got a wet towel and sopped monsieur's face as fast as I could—though why I performed this humane act so quickly, I can't say; and as soon as he stopped strangling—for a lot of the ammonia had gone into his mouth and very little in his eyes—Billy and I dragged him to the dining room, propped him against the sideboard and opened a window.

I believe that none of the three of us uttered a word during the entire performance—Billy says he can't remember any; but one of the strangest things was that the firing of the revolver elicited no investigation from the populous house. All this might have happened in the center of Laramie plains in a snowstorm the day after the fall roundup for the amount of notice man or beast took of it.

It was a faultless achievement. And now we had monsieur—we had captured him, as Billy said we should, all by our little own selves. He and I silently regarded the crumpled creature sitting against the sideboard and then for the first time the idea came into our heads, "And now that we've got him, what are we going to do with him?"

I looked at Billy and he looked at me. We asked each other the question with our eyes. As for monsieur, his fears had swallowed up his chagrin at the indignities heaped upon him. Strange as it may seem, he was the first of the three that found his voice.

"Zee has been a great mistake," he began, to which Billy retorted: "It looks that way."

"Ah—'est vous?" breathed monsieur, suddenly recognizing Billy.

"Of course. Who did you think it was?" returned Billy with a tang of pettiness, for which he might on that occasion be forgiven.

Monsieur repaid it by ignoring him and addressing himself to me.

"If madame will permit me a chair and allow me to explain—"

We couldn't very well refuse him that—particularly as we didn't know what to do with him anyway—so we helped him to a chair and when we'd set him in it, I took my turn to remark severely: "There's not much to explain. You were caught in the act of breaking and entering my flat—you may make your explanations to the police. We'll have them here in five minutes." That was a fine shot on my part, I felt.

Monsieur's face proved it. "Madame!" he cried. "Ze police—no! For your own sake—for ze avoidance of ze scandal. Madame, you totally misunderstand ze strange situation—"

"It certainly is," commented Billy. —"in which I am placed. But I can explain all—everything—why I am here. I have ze absolute proof zat madame has ze—ze jewels of ze daughter—which do not belong to madame—in her apartment."

Billy and I couldn't help smiling at this and monsieur seemed astonished. I sneered, "Indeed!" in the way that always set him on edge.

"Out—yes—madame. I have ze proof in your own words."

I gave him another "Indeed!" in the same tone. This was the moment I had been waiting for. I slipped a paper out from under a pile on the table—the carbon copy of the decoy letter.

"Is that it?" I sweetly asked, showing it to him. "Yes—I thought so. . . . And is this it, too?" I handed him the copy of the decoy letter supposed to be from Mrs. Delario to him.

"This isn't so bad," mused Carlotta. "I'm beginning to think I'll like it."

"Mr. Doyle?" she inquired, as a young man appeared with her card in his hand. "I am Miss Carlotta Smith."

"Glad to meet you, Miss Smith." Her tones had convinced him that there was much behind the name.

"I beg pardon, Mr. Doyle," interrupted the girl from behind the desk. "I forgot to deliver a message this morning. Mr. Bolton wished you to call him up."

"Did he say when?" asked Doyle. "No," the girl admitted reluctantly. "Then he can wait," which was hardly respectful to the president of the company. "Please be seated, Miss Smith."

"I came to see you—" began Carlotta.

"I say, Tom, I've been hunting everywhere for you." Like a hurricane a young man burst in with this announcement. "I beg pardon, I didn't know you were busy, but you forgot to tell me where that guaranty would most likely be found."

Explanations were brief, for in a few moments Doyle returned.

"I won't take you to my room, for I've been moved upstairs. A number of us have been changed about lately. We can go into Miss Glyn's room. There is no one there, so I trust we can continue uninterrupted."

"Did you say 'Miss Glyn'?" inquired Carlotta.

Doyle's glance followed Carlotta to the hat-rack, on which hung a man's derby.

"Oh, that might mean the general mixed-up state we're in just now. Possibly a caller for Miss Glyn. That's probably it," Doyle spoke confidently.

"She has just taken him somewhere to meet some one. Take this chair, Miss Smith; you'll find it more comfortable."

"But," protested Carlotta, "I know from the way it looks—"

"You mean the way it's worn," suggested Doyle.

"Anyway," continued Carlotta, "it's Miss Glyn's pet, particular chair. It would never do to have her find me using it."

"Even her shoes are distinguished looking," he told himself. "It seems as if I have heard her name before. Undoubtedly, a society girl; it probably figures daily in the papers."

"I think," said Carlotta, "that what people say about odious agents and the way they are treated is all nonsense."

"Have you had the good fortune to meet any un-odious ones?" inquired Doyle lightly.

"I mean the way you have treated me," went on Carlotta.

"I don't quite follow," Doyle sat down suddenly. In case he had understood, he would need support.

"From what I've heard, I always thought agents had doors slammed in their faces, and were sometimes—of course, in extreme cases—thrown downstairs," continued Miss Smith.

"Now, I consider I've been treated royally."

Carlotta waved majestically toward the footstool.

While she was speaking a man had quietly entered the room. As Doyle's attention was not again claimed, Carlotta did not mind.

Doyle was so stunned at what he had just heard that he forgot completely his previous threats of vengeance against the next intruder.

"I am an agent," continued Carlotta, "for Pickwick's Superior Typewriting Paper."

"I never would have guessed it." The irony in Tom Doyle's voice was lost on Carlotta, who continued volubly: "You probably use Tryon's, don't you, Mr. Doyle? Really, a very inferior grade. If you would once try Pickwick's, I am sure you would never use anything else. Its advantages over others in ordinary use are legion. Do you use Tryon's or Black's Mr. Doyle?"

"I don't know."

Doyle felt as if he had been knocked down, and now was being walked on. This girl did not want him to lead the zeman at the coming charity ball—he did not even want a subscription

## PICKWICK'S PAPER

By HELEN A. HOLDEN

(Copyright.)

It was a busy time of the day. The crowd, hurrying to and fro, was too intent on minding its own affairs to bother about the erratic behavior of any particular individual.

Carlotta Smith was one of the throng surging past the Stanwick building. When she came opposite the wide-open door she hesitated, walked toward the entrance, but again turned and passed on down the street.

Coming back, she paused once more, then hurried on.

The third time there was no hesitation. With grim determination she approached the entrance and walked boldly in.

There were three or four men who left the elevator at the thirteenth floor with Miss Smith. She envied them their knowledge of where they wanted to go.

Opening off the hall, there were no less than five doors, each with the name of "Bolton Company" in gold letters.

"My mother told me to take this one," counted Carlotta.

Inside, Carlotta found a girl seated behind a desk. She invited Carlotta to wait while she went in search of Mr. Thomas Doyle.

"This isn't so bad," mused Carlotta. "I'm beginning to think I'll like it."

"Mr. Doyle?" she inquired, as a young man appeared with her card in his hand. "I am Miss Carlotta Smith."

"Glad to meet you, Miss Smith." Her tones had convinced him that there was much behind the name.

"I beg pardon, Mr. Doyle," interrupted the girl from behind the desk. "I forgot to deliver a message this morning. Mr. Bolton wished you to call him up."

"Did he say when?" asked Doyle. "No," the girl admitted reluctantly. "Then he can wait," which was hardly respectful to the president of the company. "Please be seated, Miss Smith."

"I came to see you—" began Carlotta.

"I say, Tom, I've been hunting everywhere for you." Like a hurricane a young man burst in with this announcement. "I beg pardon, I didn't know you were busy, but you forgot to tell me where that guaranty would most likely be found."

Explanations were brief, for in a few moments Doyle returned.

"I won't take you to my room, for I've been moved upstairs. A number of us have been changed about lately. We can go into Miss Glyn's room. There is no one there, so I trust we can continue uninterrupted."

"Did you say 'Miss Glyn'?" inquired Carlotta.

Doyle's glance followed Carlotta to the hat-rack, on which hung a man's derby.

"Oh, that might mean the general mixed-up state we're in just now. Possibly a caller for Miss Glyn. That's probably it," Doyle spoke confidently.

"She has just taken him somewhere to meet some one. Take this chair, Miss Smith; you'll find it more comfortable."

"But," protested Carlotta, "I know from the way it looks—"

"You mean the way it's worn," suggested Doyle.

"Anyway," continued Carlotta, "it's Miss Glyn's pet, particular chair. It would never do to have her find me using it."

"Even her shoes are distinguished looking," he told himself. "It seems as if I have heard her name before. Undoubtedly, a society girl; it probably figures daily in the papers."

"I think," said Carlotta, "that what people say about odious agents and the way they are treated is all nonsense."

"Have you had the good fortune to meet any un-odious ones?" inquired Doyle lightly.

"I mean the way you have treated me," went on Carlotta.

"I don't quite follow," Doyle sat down suddenly. In case he had understood, he would need support.

"From what I've heard, I always thought agents had doors slammed in their faces, and were sometimes—of course, in extreme cases—thrown downstairs," continued Miss Smith.

"Now, I consider I've been treated royally."

Carlotta waved majestically toward the footstool.

While she was speaking a man had quietly entered the room. As Doyle's attention was not again claimed, Carlotta did not mind.

Doyle was so stunned at what he had just heard that he forgot completely his previous threats of vengeance against the next intruder.

"I am an agent," continued Carlotta, "for Pickwick's Superior Typewriting Paper."

"I never would have guessed it." The irony in Tom Doyle's voice was lost on Carlotta, who continued volubly: "You probably use Tryon's, don't you, Mr. Doyle? Really, a very inferior grade. If you would once try Pickwick's, I am sure you would never use anything else. Its advantages over others in ordinary use are legion. Do you use Tryon's or Black's Mr. Doyle?"

"I don't know."

Doyle felt as if he had been knocked down, and now was being walked on. This girl did not want him to lead the zeman at the coming charity ball—he did not even want a subscription

to something else, anything—she was only a plain, ordinary agent.

"I hoped you would be able to help me," continued Carlotta. "I so much want to make a success of it. You don't know what it means to me."

"I've a sick husband and five children to support," quoted Doyle absent-mindedly.

"It's not as bad as that," replied Carlotta. "But if I could make my poor mother comfortable—"

"I'll do what I can for you," broke in Doyle hastily. "Mr. Cruikshank is the man you ought to see."

"But I don't want to see him," said Carlotta. "He is sure to be cross. Even his name sounds so."

"I don't know about that. I don't even know the man. I mean, he's head of that department."

"I shouldn't like to see him," Carlotta spoke decidedly. "I thought you could help me. I forgot to tell you that Mr. Smith gave me your name—Mr. Morton Smith. He is a distant relative, and is interested in helping me."

"You are related to Morton Smith?" To himself Doyle added: "How in thunder does he let you do a thing like this?"

"Yes; he is most anxious to see me succeed," replied Carlotta.

"I'll do what I can."

Doyle felt like a criminal. To aid and abet a girl of Miss Smith's stamp make of herself a successful agent of Pickwick's Superior Paper, was unparadiseable. Yet, considering the poor old mother, he must do what he could.

"I'll see the cranky Cruikshank, as you call him. If I can't urge him, I'll beat him into accepting your paper. In one way or another, you see, I am sure to succeed."

"When shall I call again?" inquired Carlotta.

"What part of the city do you canvass tomorrow?" asked Doyle.

"Around State and Pearl, I think," Carlotta spoke with some hesitation.

"I get my luncheon near there," said Doyle. "I could meet you at Lincoln park, and it would save your coming 'way up here.'"

"Very well," said Carlotta. "You see, I've never been an agent before, so I hardly know what is customary."

As Doyle bade Carlotta good-by, he felt a deep thrill of sympathy.

"Ten minutes late," was Mr. Doyle's greeting when he met Miss Smith the next day. "I hope that means you have had a successful morning."