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*Lipstick on Tobacco Co.*

## Diamond Cut Diamond

By JANE BUNKER

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I listened—I must have been mistaken—though I'd only barely closed it and was turning out the hall electric. The elevator that was taking Claire and Billy down was still on its way. Could monsieur have walked up?

The raps were repeated—unquestionably on my door. Without waiting—or even thinking to call through and ask who was there—I threw the door open.

Mrs. Delario whipped in and closed it behind her.

Her face was almost concealed by a heavy black veil, but I recognized her and cried out, "Why, Mrs. Delario!" in utter amazement. What under the heavens had brought her there?

She laid a black-gloved finger on her lips to signify silence; she thrust something in my hand; she opened the door and whipped out as she came, shutting it in my face.

She hadn't uttered a word—she had barely caused a sound; even the door closed behind her noiselessly. I tore it open as my first impulse when I got my breath—thinking she'd be waiting for the elevator. In the few seconds of my astonishment she had gone.

I checked a call to her—"Mrs. Delario"—and listened for descending footsteps on the stairs but heard nothing.

I sank into a half chair, quite unnerved—coming on top of what I'd been through that day, I feel I'd have had a justifiable cause for a faint on my own account; only I didn't swoon. I kept asking myself: If it weren't an apparition how did she know which door to knock at? I have no doorplate and she'd evidently not asked George—he was taking the car down with Claire and Billy at the moment Mrs. Delario popped in. It didn't occur to me at first that she'd probably seen me, from the corner of the stairway, close that door after saying goodbye to the others. There had been three raps—classic apparitions always, I believe, rap thrice when they wish to enter your abode—they do not descend to push a button; and then she'd noiselessly whipped in and put something in my hand—

I became conscious of a hard object in my fist; opened the fist and behold—the fatal box.

You could have knocked me over with a feather! Impossible that she'd brought it back! I dashed for the dining room where the light was and pulled off the cover of the box. There lay the diamonds!

With a sweeping gesture I flung them on the table—in one fell swoop I'd been tumbled off my lofty perch and had become a victim once more—just a disconcerted, worried victim, responsible for the fate of nations!

And having thrown them down—one of them fell off the table—I snatched them up—monsieur would return at any minute for that private interview with me, and now what was I to tell him? I no longer had the gem-free conscience of an hour ago—I had the diamonds!

But I might have saved my agonies—monsieur did not return that night—he had other fish to fry.

The canny cleverness of monsieur's next move gave me when I knew it such keen intellectual joy that I forgave him everything.

He had argued it out thus: Either I should succeed or I should fail with Mrs. Delario. If I failed it would be for one of two reasons: either she denied all knowledge of the diamonds, or she had confessed to me yet had been able to bind me to secrecy. But in either case he would read my successor or failure in my face the moment he greeted me.

My face was a blank. He hadn't expected to find it that way, but so it was—not a hint did I give him, first when I opened the door, or later while I talked with Claire. In fact, inside of fifteen minutes he became convinced that so far as I was concerned my mission was a failure and I was hedging for time and unwilling to confess it.

He was prepared for my failure—his chance of trapping her lay in his seeing her before I could communicate with her after seeing him. With a fake telegram, delivered by George at a preconcerted moment to serve as monsieur's excuse to leave the house, and also as a pretext to leave Claire in the house, keeping guard over Billy and my self—none of the three of us suspecting it—monsieur had taken his waiting automobile and swooped down on Mrs. Delario!

And she was expecting him! She had had an "impression" that he would come to her as soon as his interview with me was over, and she was not taken unawares.

The wild-eyed Swedish maid admitted him, showing him into the reception room and asking him to wait, as her mistress was "giving a reading." A moment later Mrs. Delario came in coolly and asked to be excused—she had a sister and could not possibly see monsieur this evening. Of course there was no sitter in the seance room, but a mutt and a box on the chair beside

him conveyed the impression that she was a caller.

Monsieur played his surprise card instantly. Saying he would detain her but a moment he sprung it on her that I had told him she had the diamonds and he had come to apologize for the "unfortunate mistake" that had been made, and to arrange to get the stones "as soon as convenient."

It was a bold move; but Billy and I had taught him one thing—everything now depended on diplomacy, and if she denied having the stones he could do nothing.

It was also a bold lie—telling her I had said she had told me; but he failed to trip her even then: she says she knew before the words were out of his mouth that it was a lie—that "lie" appeared in large white letters over his head.

"You must excuse me this evening—I have a sitter in the next room," she said quietly, and showed him she would not talk.

"But, madame, it is necessary that we make some arrangement—"

"But, monsieur," she returned, "I cannot discuss the matter with you now."

"If you will so kindly permit me to wait—" he began, using all his diplomacy and feeling he net imagine!

She made a move on her own account—drawing herself up, she told him, "After the way you treated me last Monday—the accusations you brought against me of robbing your daughter—I positively will not talk with you for a single minute, unless you bring her with you."

He had not expected this demand, but he met it with a smile.

"It is well!" he cried, determined to humor her to the last degree. "I return to the hotel and bring my daughter back with me immediately. We will then await your convenience for an interview."

"I shall not be through here for an hour."

"Certainly, madame—at your convenience."

She saw him jump into a waiting automobile and dash away in the direction of his hotel. It was from there he dispatched the notes to Claire and me. Hardly was he out of sight before she had on her wraps and whisked out of the house and up to me with the diamonds. Not to let the elevator boy see her she had walked up and down on the opposite side of the street until she saw someone enter and go in the car; then she followed and crept softly to the top, where she remembered I had my flat. She had listened outside the door and had recognized both my voice and Claire's and hid herself on the dark stairway until she heard Claire and Billy leaving. With that she had slipped in, but had not dared to waste a minute in explanations; and she was back again in her own house and her Swedish maid didn't even know that her mistress had been out.

A crafty plan on monsieur's part! He had, by getting Billy to escort Claire back, bottled up our activities as completely as if he had us gagged and handcuffed! And it all fell down because Claire fainted and went into hysterics when she reached the hotel! He did not see Mrs. Delario that night.

Neither did he see me—but then he didn't intend to! I waited for the mysterious visit until half past ten, every minute feeling it more unwise of me to see him. At that hour, using its lateness as my excuse, I locked up, determined I'd not speak to him at all until I had a chance to talk things over with Billy. I went to bed but not to sleep. I knew something unforeseen had happened—something Mrs. Delario must know or "sense" or she wouldn't have brought back the diamonds after the positive way I'd refused them in the morning.

I kept telling myself, "Oh, well—I'll know in the morning and I'll find some way to meet it when it comes. Things can't be any worse," and thus I fell asleep without an inkling of the trouble I'd be in before the sun set on another day.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

### REAL ESTATE TRANSFERS.

Henry C. Dekock et ux to John Bunning et ux, Feb. 6, 1920; pt. lot 1, blk. 3, DeMotte; pt. 27-32-7, Keener twp., \$6,000. W. D.

John Bunning et ux to Henry C. Dekock, Feb. 6, 1920; pt. nw se 27-32-7, \$400. Keener twp., W. D.

John Bunning et ux to Henry C. Dekock, Feb. 6, 1920; pt. se 27-32-7, 45 acres, \$3,600. W. D. Keener twp.

Flora R. Duggins to Joseph R. Fov, Aug. 14, 1919, s½ se nw 22-30-5 and s½ sw ne, 22-30-5, Gilham twp., 40 acres, \$4,000. W. D.

William M. Duton et ux to Frank B. Ham, Feb. 7, 1920, sw 1-31-5, Walker twp., \$10,00. W. D.

Abraham H. Haun to Newton Sundland, Feb. 9, 1920, s½ nw 10-28-6, Milroy twp.

Abraham H. Haun to Newton Sundland, Feb. 9, 1920, w ½ sw 10-28-6, 160 acres, \$15,200. W. D. Milroy twp.

Frank L. Hoover et ux to Eugene W. Lange, Jan. 3, 1920, s½ se 13-28-7 and s½ sw ne 13-28-7, Marion Twp., 100 acres, \$22,000. W. D.

Frank Lessig et ux to Verle Spencer, Jan. 26, 1920, e ½ ne 34-32-6, Wheatfield Twp., \$8,000. W. D.

Fred H. Linback et ux to Arthur G. Cat, Sept. 4, 1919, e ½ se 28-29-6, 80 acres, Hanging Grove twp., \$10,000. W. D.

John Hamstra et ux to Herman Oting, Feb. 5, 1920, pt. sw nw 28-32-7, 38.50 acres, Keener Twp., \$3,500. W. D.

Dennis L. Hogan et ux to Joseph Halligan et al., Feb. 7, 1920, nw ne 20-28-6, Marion twp., \$6,400. W. D.

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Henry C. Jentz et ux to Daniel Geyer, Dec. 2, 1919, sw ne 12-30-5 and nw se 12-30-5, 80 acres, Gilham twp., \$6,000. W. D.

Frances Koza et baron to C. P. Schoon, Dec. 11, 1919, Lot 1, De-  
Motte, Albert Konovsky's add., \$1,-  
000. W. D.

H. A. Watters et ux to J. C. Cloyd, Feb. 11, 1920, n ½ nw, nw  
nw, nw sw, 26-28-6, \$18,400. Mil-  
roy twp. W. D.

J. C. Cloyd et ux to Philip Kraft  
Feb. 12, 1920, n ½ nw, sw nw, nw  
sw, 26-28-6, 160 acres, \$22,400.  
Milroy twp.

Grantham Elijah et ux to A. Cook Drug Co., lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,  
7 and 8, blk 14, and lots 6, 7, 8,  
9, 10, 11, 12, blk 13, Rensselaer  
Sunnyside add., \$1,500.00. W. D.

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