

# THE DIVA'S RUBY

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## SYNOPSIS.

Baraka, a Tartar girl, became enamored of a golden bearded stranger who was prospecting and studying herbs in the vicinity of her home in central Asia, and revealed to him the location of a mine of rubies hoping that the stranger would love her in return for her disclosure. They were followed to the cave by the girl's relatives, who blocked up the entrance, and drew off the water supply, leaving the couple to die. Baraka's cousin Saad, her betrothed, attempted to climb down a cliff overlooking the mine, but the traveler shot him. The stranger was revived from a water gourd Saad carried, dug his way out of the tunnel, and departed, deserting the girl and carrying a bag of rubies. Baraka gathered all the gems she could carry, and started in pursuit. Margaret, Donna (Margaria da Cordova), a famous prima donna, became engaged in London to Konstantin Logotheti, a wealthy Greek financier. Her intimate friend was Countess Leven, known as Lady Maud, whose husband had been killed by a bomb in St. Petersburg, and Lady Maud's most intimate friend was Lucius Van Torp, an American, who had become one of the richest men in the world. Van Torp was in love with Margaret, and rushed to London as soon as he heard of her betrothal. He offered Lady Maud \$5,000,000 for her pet charity if she would aid him in winning the singer from Logotheti. Baraka approached Logotheti at Veraudles with rubies to sell. He presented a ruby to Margaret. Van Torp bought a yacht and sent it to Venice. He was visited by Baraka in male attire. She gave him a ruby after the American had told her of having seen in the United States a man answering the description of the one she loved. The American followed Margaret to the Bayreuth "Parsifal" festival. Margaret took a liking to Van Torp, who presented her with the ruby Baraka had given him. Count Kralinsky, a Russian, arrived at Bayreuth. Van Torp believed him to be the one Baraka was pursuing. Baraka was arrested in London on the charge of stealing from Pinney, a jeweler, the ruby she had sold to Logotheti. Two strangers were the thieves, Lady Maud believed that Logotheti's associations with Baraka were open to suspicion, and so informed Margaret. Van Torp believed that Kralinsky was the cowboy he had known in his young manhood.

## CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

"I should have thought you were more used to riding," said the American.

"Ah, yes!" The indifferent answer came in a peculiarly oily tone, though the pronunciation was perfect. "I was in the cavalry before I began to travel. But I walked over 2,000 miles in Central Asia, and was none the worse for it."



"It's a Grand Ruby," He Said.

Margaret was sure that she was not going to like him, as she moved on with him by her side; and Van Torp, walking with Mrs. Rushmore, was quite certain that he was Levi Longlegs, who had herded cattle with him for six months very long ago.

## CHAPTER IX.

Logotheti reached his lodgings in St. James' place at six o'clock in the evening of the day on which he had promised to dine with Van Torp, and the latter's note of excuse was given to him at once. He read it, looked out of the window, glanced at it again, and threw it into the waste-paper basket without another thought. He did not care in the least about dining with the American millionaire. In fact, he had looked forward to it rather as a bore than a pleasure. He saw

on his table, with his letters, a flat and almost square parcel, which the addressed label told him contained the Archaeological Report of the Egyptian Exploration Fund, and he had heard that the new number would contain an account of a papyrus recently discovered at Oxyrrhynchus, on which some new fragments of Pindar had been found. No dinner that could be devised, and no company that could be asked to meet him at it, could be half as delightful as that to the man who so deeply loved the ancient literature of his country, and he made up his mind at once that he would not even take the trouble to go to a club, but would have a bird and a salad in his rooms.

Unhappily for his peace and his anticipated feast of poetry, he looked through his letters to see if there were one from Margaret, and there was only a colored postcard from Bayreuth, with the word "greetings" scrawled beside the address in her large hand. Next to the card, however, there was a thick letter addressed in a commercial writing he remembered but could not at once identify; and though it was apparently a business communication, and could therefore have waited till the next morning, when his secretary would come as usual, he opened it out of mere curiosity to know whence it came.

It was from Mr. Pinney, the jeweler, and it contained a full and conscientious account of the whole affair of the theft, from the moment when Logotheti and Van Torp had gone out together until Mr. Pinney had locked up the stone in his safe again, and Baraka and Spiro had been lodged in Brixton jail. The envelope contained also a cutting from the newspaper similar to the one Margaret had received from Lady Maud.

Logotheti laid the letter on the table and looked at his watch. It was now a quarter-past six, and old-fashioned shops like Pinney's close rather early in the dull season, when few customers are to be expected and the days are not so long as they have

been. In the latter part of August, in London, the sun sets soon after seven o'clock, and Logotheti realized that he had no time to lose.

As he drove quickly up towards Bond street, he ran over the circumstances in his mind, and came to the conclusion that Baraka had probably been the victim of a trick, though he did not exclude the bare possibility that she might be guilty.

He found Mr. Pinney in the act of turning the discs of the safe before going home and leaving his shopman to shut up the place. He smiled with grave satisfaction when Logotheti entered.

"I was hoping to see you, sir," he said. "I presume that you had my letter? I wrote out the account with great care, as you may imagine, but I shall be happy to go over the story with you if there is any point that is not clear."

"I am deeply humiliated," said the worthy old jeweler. "I have not only been tricked and plundered, but I have been the means of sending innocent people to prison."

"You had better be the means of getting them out again as soon as possible," said Logotheti. "And you must also make an effort to trace those young men who stole the ruby."

"I most certainly shall," replied the jeweler, "and if it is not found we will make it good to you, sir, whatever price you set upon it. I am deeply humiliated, but nobody shall say that Pinney & Son do not make good any loss their customers sustain through them."

"Don't worry about that, Mr. Pinney," said Logotheti, who saw how much distressed the old jeweler really was. "So they went out and baffled a hansom and drove away."

It would be tiresome to give a de-

tailed account of what they did. Suffice it to say that the prisoners were set at large; Mr. Pinney restored the ruby to Baraka, and all her other belongings were given back to her, even including the smart gray suit of men's clothes in which she had been arrested; and her luggage and other things which the manager of the hotel where she had been stopping had handed over to the police were all returned; and when Spiro appeared at the hotel to pay the small bill that had been left owing, he held his head as high as an oriental can when he has got the better of any one, and that is pretty high indeed. Furthermore, Mr. Pinney insisted on giving Logotheti a formal document by which Messrs. Pinney & Son bound themselves to make good to him, his heirs, or assigns, the loss of a ruby, approximately of a certain weight and quality, which he had lost through their carelessness.

On the day following Baraka's liberation, Lady Maud received Margaret's pressing message begging her to go to Bayreuth. The message reached her before noon, about the time when Margaret and her companions had come back from their morning walk, and after hesitating for half an hour, she telegraphed that she would come with pleasure, and would start at once which meant that evening.

She had just read the official account of the ruby case in its new aspect, and she did not believe a word of the story. To her mind it was quite clear that Logotheti was still infatuated with the girl, that he had come to London as fast as he could, and that he had deliberately sworn that the ruby was not his, but another one, in order to get her out of trouble. If it was not his it had not been stolen from Pinney's, and the whole case fell through at once. If she was declared innocent the stone must be given back to her; he would take it from her as soon as they were alone and return it to his own pocket; and being an oriental, he would probably beat her for robbing him, but would not let her out of his sight again till he was tired of her. Lady Maud had heard from her late husband how all Turks believed that women had no souls and should be kept under lock and key, and well fed, and soundly beaten now and then for the good of their tempers. This view was exaggerated, but Lady Maud was in a humor to recall it and accept it without criticism, and she made up her mind that before leaving town to join Margaret she would make sure of the facts. No friend of hers should marry a man capable of such outrageous deeds.

So she went to Logotheti's lodgings and asked to see him, as regardless of what any one should think of her, if she were recognized, as she had been in the old days when she used to go to Van Torp's chambers in the Temple in the evening.

She was told that Logotheti was out of town. Where? The servant did not know that. The lady could see the secretary, who might, perhaps, tell her. He received every one who had business with Mons. Logotheti.

She went up one flight and was admitted to a very airy sitting room, simply furnished.

The Swiss secretary rose ponderously to receive her, and as she did not sit down he remained standing. His vast face was fringed with a beard of no particular color, and his eyes were fixed and blue in his head, like turquoises set in pale sole leather.

"I am Countess Leven," she said, "and I have known Mons. Logotheti some time. Will you kindly tell me where he is?"

"I do not know, madam," was the answer.

"He is not in London?"

"At present I do not know, madam."

"Has he left no address? Do you not forward his letters to him?"

"No, madam. I do not forward his letters to him."

"Then I suppose he is on his yacht," suggested Lady Maud.

"Madam, I do not know whether he is on his yacht."

"You don't seem to know anything!"

"Pardon me, madam, I think I know my business. That is all I know."

Lady Maud held her beautiful head a little higher and her lids dropped slightly as she looked down at him, for he was shorter than she. But the huge leathern face was perfectly impassive, and the still, turquoise eyes surveyed her without winking. She had never seen such stolidity in a human being.

There was clearly nothing to be done, and she thought the secretary distinctly rude; but as that was no reason why she should be, she bade him good-morning civilly and turned to go. Somewhat to her surprise, he followed her quickly across the room, opened the door for her and went on into the little hall to let her out.

There was a small table there, on which lay some of Logotheti's hats, and several pairs of gloves were laid out neatly before them. There was one pair, of a light gray, very much smaller than all the rest, so small, indeed, that they might have fitted a boy of seven, except that they looked too narrow for any boy. They were men's gloves as to length and buttons, but only a child could have worn them.

Lady Maud saw them instantly, and remembered Baraka's disguise; and as she passed the big umbrella jar

Logotheti did not wish to hear it; he wished to see the ruby. Mr. Pinney turned the discs again to their places, stuck the little key into the secret keyhole which then revealed itself, turned it three times to the left and five times to the right, and opened the heavy iron door. The safe was an old-fashioned one that had belonged to his father before him. He got out the japanned tin box, opened that, and produced the stone, still in its paper, for it was too thick to be put into one of Mr. Pinney's favorite pill boxes.

Logotheti undid the paper, took out the big uncut ruby, laid it in the palm of his hand, and looked at it critically, turning it over with one finger from time to time. He took it to the door of the shop, where the evening light was stronger, and examined it with the greatest care. Still he did not seem satisfied.

"Let me have your lens, Mr. Pinney," he said, "and some electric light and a sheet of white paper."

Mr. Pinney turned up a strong drop light that stood on the counter, and produced the paper and a magnifier.

"It's a grand ruby," he said.

"I see it is," Logotheti answered rather curtly.

"Do you mean to say," asked the surprised jeweler, "that you had bought it without thoroughly examining it—sir—you who are an expert?"

"No, that's not what I mean," answered the Greek, bending over the ruby and scrutinizing it through the strong magnifier.

Mr. Pinney felt himself snubbed, which had not happened to him for a long time, and he drew himself up with dignity. A minute passed, and Logotheti did not look up; another and Mr. Pinney grew nervous; a few seconds more, and he received a shock that took away his breath.

"This is not my ruby," said Logotheti, looking up, and speaking with perfect confidence.

"Not—your—ruby!" Mr. Pinney's jaw dropped. "But—" He could get no further.

"I'm sorry," Logotheti said calmly. "I'm very sorry, for several reasons. But it's not the stone I brought you, though it's just as large, and most extraordinarily like it."

"But how do you know, sir?" gasped the jeweler.

"Because I'm an expert, as you were good enough to say just now."

"Yes, sir. But I am an expert, too, and to the best of my expert belief this is the stone you left with me to be cut the day before yesterday. I've examined it most thoroughly."

"No doubt," answered the Greek. "But you hadn't examined mine thoroughly before it was stolen, had you? You had only looked at it with me, on the counter here."

"That is correct, sir," said Mr. Pinney nervously. "That is quite true."

"Very well. But I did more than merely look at it through a lens or weigh it. I did not care so much about the weight, but I cared very much for the water, and I tried the ruby point on it in the usual way, but it was too hard, and then I scratched it in two places with the diamond, more out of curiosity than for any other reason."

"You marked it, sir? There's not a single scratch on this one! Merciful Providence! Merciful Providence!"

"Yes," Logotheti said gravely. "The girl spoke the truth. She had two stones much larger than the rest when she first came to me in Paris, this one and another. They were almost exactly alike, and she wanted me to buy both, but I did not want them, and I took the one I thought a little better in color. This is the other, for she still had it; and, so far as I know, it is her legal property, and mine is gone. The thief was one of those two young fellows who came in just when Mr. Van Torp and I went out. I remember thinking what nice-looking boys they were."

He laughed rather harshly, for he was more annoyed than his consideration for Mr. Pinney made him care to show. He had looked forward to giving Margaret the ruby, mounted just as she wanted it; and the ruby was gone, and he did not know where he was to find another, except the one that was now in Pinney's hands, but really belonged to poor Baraka, who could certainly not sell it at present. A much larger sum of money was gone, too, than any financier could lose with equanimity by such a peculiarly disagreeable mishap as being robbed. There were several reasons why Logotheti was not pleased.

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"You had better be the means of getting them out again as soon as possible," said Logotheti. "And you must also make an effort to trace those young men who stole the ruby."

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to go out, she saw that with two of Logotheti's sticks there was a third, fully four inches shorter! Just a plain crook-handed stick with a silver ring. That was enough. Baraka had certainly been in the lodgings and had probably left in them everything that belonged to her disguise. The fact that the gloves and the stick were in the hall looked very much as if she had come in dressed as a man and had left them there when she had gone away in woman's attire. That she was with Logotheti, most probably on his yacht, Lady Maud had not the least doubt, as she went down the stairs.

The Swiss secretary stood at the open door on the landing till she was out of sight below, and then went in again, and returned to work over a heap of business papers and letters. When he had worked half an hour, he leaned back in his leathern chair to rest, and stared fixedly at the book-case. Presently he spoke aloud in English, as if Lady Maud were still in the room, in the same dull, matter-of-fact tone, but more forcibly as to expression.



After Five Hours He Had Come Back.

"It is perfectly true, though you do not believe me, madam. I do not know anything. How the dickens should I know where they are, madam? But I know my business. That is all."

## CHAPTER X.

The Erinna was steaming quietly down the channel in a flat calm, at the lazy rate of 12 knots an hour, presumably in order to save her coal, for she could run 16 when her owner liked, and he was not usually fond of going slow. Though September was at hand, and Guernsey was already on the port quarter, the sea was motionless and not so much as a cat's paw stirred the still blue water; but the steamer's own way made a pleasant draught that fanned the faces of Logotheti and Baraka as they lay in their long chairs under the double awning outside the deckhouse.

The Tartar girl wore a skirt and jacket of dark blue yachting serge, which did not fit badly considering that they had been bought ready-made by Logotheti's man. She had little white tennis shoes on her feet, which were crossed one over the other on the deck chair, but instead of wearing a hat she had bound a dove-colored motor veil on her head by a single thick gold cord, in the Asiatic way, and the thin folds hung down on each side, and lay on her shoulders, shading her face, and the breeze stirred them. Logotheti's valet had been sent out in a taximeter, provided with a few measurements and plenty of cash, and commissioned to buy everything that a girl who had nothing at all to wear, visible or invisible, could possibly need. He was also instructed to find a maid who could speak Tartar, or at least a little Turkish.

After five hours he had come back with a heavy load of boxes of all shapes and sizes and the required

maid. You can find anything in a great city, if you know how to look for it, and he had discovered through an agency a girl from Trebizonde who had been caught at 12 years old by missionaries, brought to England and educated to go into service; she spoke English very prettily, and had not altogether forgotten the lingua franca of Asia.

The consequence of her presence was that Baraka was dressed with great neatness and care, and looked very presentable, though her clothes were only ready-made things, bought by a man-servant, who had only her height and the size of her waist to guide him. Logotheti watched her delicate, energetic profile, admiring the curves of her closed lips, and the willful turning up of her little chin. She was more than very pretty now, he thought, and he was quietly amused at his own audacity in taking her to sea alone with him, almost on the eve of his marriage. It was especially diverting to think of what the proper people would say if they knew it, and to contrast the intentions they would certainly attribute to him with

the perfectly honorable ones he entertained.

As for Baraka, it never occurred to her that she was not as safe with him as she had been in her father's house in the little white town far away, nearly three years ago; and besides, her steel bodkin with the silver handle had been given back to her, and she could feel it in its place when she pressed her left hand to her side.

Logotheti had been first of all pre-occupied about getting Baraka out of England without attracting attention, and then for her comfort and recovery from the strain and suffering of the last few days. As for that, she was like a healthy young animal, and as soon as she had a chance she had fallen so sound asleep that she had not waked for 12 hours. Logotheti's intent was to take her to Paris by a roundabout way, and establish her under some proper sort of protection. Margaret was still in Germany, but would soon return to France, and he had almost made up his mind to ask her advice, not dreaming that in such a case she could really deem anything he did an unpardonable offence. He had always laughed at the conventionalities of European life, and had paid very little heed to them when they stood in his way.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Wit Often an Affliction.

Wit is an affliction unless used with discretion and good sense. The habit of being invariably amusing will bring you into great disfavor. The sharp-tongued woman who will have her little laugh at the expense of her neighbors usually pays dearly for her fun. It is as much an art to be quiet and self-possessed as to be vivacious and entertaining, and the woman who can adjust her moods to the occasion is the one who finds herself usually the most popular member of her community.