

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 fossils 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 drove 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, located 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 Rufus 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 \$500,000 for her pet charity if she would aid him in winning the singer from Logotheti. Baraka approached Logotheti at Versailles 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 Krainsky, 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 Pinner, 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 Krainsky was the cowboy he had known in his young manhood. Logotheti secured Baraka's release, and then, with her as his guest, went to sea on his yacht Erinna. Baraka explains her plans for revenge on the man who had deserted her and left her to die. Logotheti succeeds in moderating her rage.

CHAPTER X.—Continued.

"But this woman's dressing is very difficult to learn," Baraka went on, leaning back upon the rail with both elbows, and sticking out her little white shoes close together. "Without the girl Maggy whom you have found

amusing. She punctuated her explanations with small gestures indicative of her ignorance and helplessness.

"You will soon grow used to it," he said. "But you must get some pretty things in Paris before you go to meet the man. It would also be better to let your hair grow long before meeting him, for it is hard to wear the hats of the Feringhi ladies without hair."

"I cannot wait so long as that. Only to get pretty dresses, only so long! I will spend a thousand pounds or two—is that enough? I have much money in Paris; I can give much."

"You can get a good many things for a thousand pounds, even in Paris," Logotheti answered.

Baraka laughed.

"It will not be what I paid for the first clothes after I ran away," she said. "I did not know then what the stones were worth! A little ruby to one woman for a shirt and an over-tunic, a little ruby to another for a pair of shoes, a little ruby for a veil and a head-blanket, all little rubies! For each thing one! I did not know; the women did not know. But at Samarkand I sold one for money to a good Persian merchant, and what he gave me was enough for the journey, for me and the old woman servant I hired there, till we got to Tiflis; for the Persian merchants everywhere gave me letters from one to another, and their wives took me in, or I should have been robbed. That is how I reached Stamboul after many, many months, more than a year. The Persian merchants are good men. All fear them, because they are wise in their dealings, but they are honest men. They do not lie, but they are silent and shake their heads, and you must guess what they mean; and if you do not guess right, that is your fault, not theirs. Why should they speak when they can hold their peace? But this is all emptiness! We must talk of the fine dresses I must buy in Paris, and of what I must put on my head. The barbers in Paris sell wigs. I have seen them in the windows, very well made, of all colors, even of the

her, for her taper arms were bare to the elbows, and the pretty little ready-made French dress was open at her ivory neck, and the skirt fitted so closely that she almost fancied herself in man's clothes again. But on her head she would only wear a large veil, confined by a bit of gold cord, and she drew one fold under her chin, and threw it over the opposite shoulder, to be quite covered; and she was glad when she felt cold, and could wrap herself in the wide traveling cloak they had bought her, and yet not seem to do anything contrary to the customs of a real Feringhi lady.

CHAPTER XI.

Lady Maud found Mr. Van Torp waiting for her at the Bayreuth station.

"You don't mean to say you've come right through?" he inquired, looking at her with admiration as he grasped her hand. "You're as fresh as paint!"

"That's rather a dangerous thing to say to a woman nowadays," she answered in her rippling voice. "But mine won't come off. How is Margaret?"

Her tone changed as she asked the question.

"She showed me your letter about Logo," answered her friend without heeding the question, and watching her face to see if she were surprised.

She got into the carriage he had brought, and he stood by the door waiting for the porter, who was getting her luggage. She had no maid with her.

"I'm glad you have told me," she answered, "though I wish she had not. You probably think that when I wrote that letter I remembered what you said to me in London about giving me money for my poor women."

"No," said Van Torp thoughtfully. "I don't believe I do think so. It was like me to make the offer, Maud. It was like the sort of man I've been, and you've known me. But it wouldn't have been like you to accept it. It wasn't exactly low-down of me to say what I did, but it's so precious like low-down that I wouldn't say it again, and I suppose I'm sorry. That's all."

His rough hand was on the side of the little open carriage. She touched it lightly with her gloved fingers and withdrew them instantly, for the porter was coming with her not very voluminous luggage.

"Thank you," she said quickly. "I understood, and I understand now."

They drove slowly up the Bahnhofstrasse, through the dull little town, that looks so thoroughly conscious of its ancient respectability as having once been the "residence" of a duke of Wurttemberg, and of its vast importance as the headquarters of Richard Wagner's representatives on earth.

"See here," said Mr. Van Torp. "I've almost persuaded them all to run down to Venice, and I want to know why you won't come too?"

"Venice?" Lady Maud was surprised. "It's as hot as Tophet now, and full of mosquitoes. Why in the world do you want to take them there?"

"Well," answered the American, taking plenty of time over the monosyllable, "I didn't exactly mean to stay there more than a few minutes. I've bought a pretty nice yacht since I saw you, and she's there, eating her head off, and I thought you might all come along with me on her and go home that way, or somewhere, and what I want you to decide right away is whether you'll come, provided they will—for I don't suppose you and I could go mooning around in the yacht by ourselves."

"And I don't suppose," returned Lady Maud, mimicking him ever so little, "that if they decide not to come, you will have time for a long cruise."

"Now that's not fair," objected the American. "I didn't intend to put it in that way. Anyhow, will you come if they do? That's the point."

"Really, it depends a little on who they are. Do you mean only Margaret and that nice old friend of her—Mrs. Patmore, isn't she? I never met her."

"Rushmore," said Van Torp, correcting her. "Then there's the Russian—Count Krainsky. Ever hear that name?"

"Never. It sounds Polish."

"He might be anything. Sometimes I'm absolutely sure he's a man I used to know out west when I was on the ranch, and then again there's something quite different about him. Something about his legs or his eyes, I can't tell which. I don't quite make him out."

They reached the hotel, and Van Torp went off promptly, leaving Margaret to take Lady Maud upstairs and introduce her to Mrs. Rushmore.

An hour later the two young women were together in Margaret's room, while Potts was unpacking for Lady Maud in the one that had been secured for her in spite of all sorts of difficulties.

The prima donna was sitting at her toilet table, turned away from the glass, and Lady Maud occupied the only possible chair there was, a small, low easy chair, apparently much too small for such a tall woman, but less uncomfortable than it looked.

"Are you going on Mr. Van Torp's yacht?" asked Lady Maud suddenly.

"He spoke to me about it on the way from the station, and asked me to come, in case you accept."

"I don't know. Will you go if I do? That might make a difference."

Lady Maud did not answer at once. She wished that she knew how matters had gone between Margaret and Van Torp during the last few days, for she sincerely wished to help him, now that she had made up her mind as to Logotheti's real character. Nevertheless, her love of fair play made her feel that the Greek ought to be allowed a chance of retrieving himself.

"Yes," she said at last, "I'll go, on one condition. At least, it's not a condition, my dear; it's only a suggestion, though I hate to make one. Don't think me too awfully cheeky, will you?"

Margaret shook her head, but looked very grave.

"I feel as if I were getting into a bad scrape," she said, "and I shall be only too glad of any good advice. Tell me what I had better do."

"I must tell you something else first as a continuation of my letter, for all sorts of things happened after I wrote it."

She told Margaret all that has been already narrated, concerning the news that Baraka had been set at large on Logotheti's sworn statement that the ruby was not his, and that he had seen it in her possession in Paris; and she told how she had tried to find him at his lodgings, and had failed, and how strangely the leather-faced secretary's answers had struck her, and how she had seen Baraka's gloves and stick in Logotheti's hall; and finally she said she had taken it into her head that Logotheti had spirited away the Tartar girl on his yacht, which, as every one in town had known through the papers, was at Cowes and in commission. For Logotheti, in his evidence, had explained his absence from the police court by the fact that he had been off in the Erinna for two days, out of reach of news.

Margaret's face grew darker as she listened, for she knew Lady Maud too well to doubt but that every word was more than scrupulously true; and the deduction was at least a probable one. She bit her lip as she felt her anger rising again.

"What do you advise me to do?" she asked, in a sullen tone.

"Telegraph to Logo and prepay an answer of 20 words. Telegraph to his rooms in St. James' place and at the same time to his house in Paris. Telegraph anything you like that really needs an immediate reply. That's the important thing. If he does not answer within 24 hours—say 36 at the most—he is either on his yacht or hiding. Excuse the ugly word, dear—I don't think of any other. If you are afraid of the servants, I'll take the message to the telegraph office and send it for you. I suppose you have some way of signing which the clerks don't recognize—if you sign at all."

Margaret leaned back in her chair in silence. After a few seconds she turned towards the glass, rested her chin on her folded knuckles, and seemed to be consulting her own reflection. It is a way some women have. Lady Maud glanced at her from time to time, but said nothing. At last the prima donna rose with a sweep that upset the light chair behind her, one of those magnificent sweeps that look so well on the stage and are a little too large for a room. She got her blotter and pen from a shelf, brought it back to the toilet table, picked up the chair in a very quiet and sensible way, as if she had never been on the stage in her life, and sat down to write.

"I shall take your advice, dear," she said, opening the blotter and placing a large sheet of paper in the right position.

Lady Maud rose and went to the window, where she stood looking out while Margaret wrote her message.

"You needn't write it out twice," she said, without turning round. "Just put 'duplicate message' and both addresses."

"Yes. Thank you."

Margaret was already writing. Her message said it was absolutely necessary that she should see Logotheti directly, and bade him answer at once, if he could come to Bayreuth; if important financial affairs hindered him, she herself would return immediately to Paris to see him.

She was careful to write "financial" affairs, for she would not admit that any other consideration could delay his obedience. While she was busy she heard, but scarcely noticed, an unearthly hoot from a big motor car that was passing before the hotel. There must have been something in the way, for the thing hooted again almost at once, and then several times in quick succession, as if a gigantic brazen ass were beginning to bray just under the window. The noises ended in a sort of wild, triumphant howl, with a furious puffing, and the motor took itself off, just as Margaret finished.

She looked up and saw Lady Maud half bent, as if she had been struck; she was clinging with one hand to the flimsy chintz curtain, and her face was as white as a sheet. Margaret started in surprise, and rose to her feet so suddenly that she upset the chair again.

"What has happened?" she cried.

"Are you ill, dear?"

The delicate color came slowly back to the smooth cheeks, the thoroughbred figure in black drew itself up with elastic dignity, and the hand let go of the curtain.

"I felt a little faint," Lady Maud an-



swered. "Did I frighten you? It was nothing, and it's quite gone, I assure you."

"You looked dreadfully ill for a moment," Margaret said in a tone of concern. "Won't you let me send for something? Tea? Or something iced? I'm sure you have had nothing to eat or drink for hours! How disgracefully thoughtless of me!"

She was just going to ring, but her friend stopped her.

"No—please!" she cried. "I'm all right, indeed I am. The room is a little warm, I think, and I've been shut up in that stuffy train for 30 hours. Have you written your telegram? I'll put on my hat at once, and take it for you. The little walk will do me good. Where is the telegraph? But they can tell me downstairs. Don't bother! Walking always brings me round, no matter what has happened!"

She spoke nervously, in disjointed phrases, in a way not like herself, for there was generally an air of easy calm in all she did, as if nothing really mattered in the least, save when she was deeply interested; and hardly anything interested her now except what she had made her work. In all that belonged to that, she was energetic, direct and quick.

Margaret was sure that something was wrong, but let her go, since she insisted, and Lady Maud folded the written message and went to the door. Just as she was going to turn the handle Margaret spoke to her.

"If I have no answer to that by to-morrow afternoon I shall accept Mr. Van Torp's invitation."

"I hope you will go," Lady Maud said with sudden decision. "For if you do, I can go with you, and I'm dying to see the new yacht!"

Margaret looked at her in surprise, for it was only a little while since she had seemed much less ready to join the party, and only willing to do so, if at all, in order to please her friend. She saw Margaret's expression.

"Yes," she said, as if in explanation, "I've been thinking it over in the last few minutes, and I want very much

big fair beard, I suppose? Yes, thank you."

She went out into the dull street, with its monotonous houses, all two stories high, and she soon found the telegraph office and sent Margaret's duplicate message. She had not glanced at it, but the clerk asked her questions about words that were not quite clearly written, and she was obliged to read it through. It occurred to her that it was couched in extremely peremptory terms, even for an offended bride-elect; but that was none of her business.

She resumed her walk, not knowing whither and not caring, always at the same even pace, and hardly noticing the people who passed her, of whom a good many were in two-horse cabs, some in queer little German motors, and a few on foot; and she thought, and wondered, and tried to understand, but could not. At all events, she was glad to be alone; she was glad not to have even Van Torp with her, and she was quite indifferent to the fact that time was passing, and that Margaret was beginning to wonder where in the world she was.

"My dear child," Mrs. Rushmore said, when the prima donna expressed her surprise, "those English people are all alike, when they are once out on a road by themselves. They must take a long walk. They never know when to stop walking. I cannot understand what they can see in it. Perhaps you will kindly touch the bell, my dear, and I will send the tea away. It can be brought fresh for her when she comes. Thank you, Margaret. But she will not come in till it is just time to dress for dinner. Mark my words, my child, the countess will be late for dinner. All English people are. Have you heard from Mons. Logotheti to-day?"

"Not to-day," Margaret answered, repressing a little start, for she was as near to being nervous as she ever was, and she was thinking of him just then, and the question had come suddenly.



"What Has Happened?" She Cried. "Are You Ill, Dear?"

for me—but her real name is Gula, and she is a good Mussulman—without her, Allah knows what I should do! I could not put on these things for myself; alone, I cannot take them off. When I was like a man, buttons! Two, three, four, twenty—what did it matter? All the same way and soon done! But now, I cannot tell what I am made of. Allah knows and sees what I am made of. Hooks, eyes, strings, little bits one way, little bits the other way, like the rigging of ships—those Turkish ships with many small sails that go up the Bosphorus, you remember? And it is all behind, as if one had no front! Gula knows how it is done. But if I were alone, without her help, Allah is my witness, I would tie the things all round me decently and sit very still for fear they should come off! That is what I should do!"

The Greek thought her extremely

Khenna color. I shall wear a wig, so that the beautiful Feringhi hat will stay on. I shall perhaps wear a Khenna-colored wig."

"I should not advise a wig," said Logotheti gravely, "certainly not one of that dye."

"You know, and you are a friend. When I feel rested we will go to Paris, and you shall take me to all the richest shops and tell them in French what I want. Will you?"

"I shall do all I can to help you," answered the Greek, wondering what would happen if his friends met him piloting a lovely barbarian about between the smartest linen draper's and the most fashionable dressmaker's establishment in the Rue de la Paix.

The two dined on deck, with shaded lights, but screened from the draught of the ship's way. The evening was cool, and the little maid had dressed Baraka in a way that much disturbed



Sent Margaret's Duplicate Message.

to go with you all. I shall be back in less than an hour."

"An hour?"

"Say half an hour. I want a good walk."

Straight and tall in her mourning, Lady Maud went down the stairs of the hotel. As she was going out the hall porter raised his cap, and she stopped a moment and asked him which was the nearest way to the telegraph office. He stood on the doorstep and pointed in the direction she was to follow as he answered her question.

"Can you tell me," she asked, "whose motor car it was that passed about ten minutes ago, and made so much noise?"

"Count Krainsky's, my lady," the porter answered, for he spoke good English, and had the true hotel porter's respect for the British aristocracy abroad.

"He was the gentleman with the

"I think it is time you heard from him," said Mrs. Rushmore, her natural severity asserting itself. "I should think that after those very strange stories in the papers he would write to you and explain, or come himself. By the by, perhaps you will kindly pass me the Herald, my dear. What did you once tell me was the name of his yacht?"

"The Erinna," Margaret answered, handing Mrs. Rushmore the sheet.

"Exactly! I think that means the 'Fury.'"

"He told me it was the name of a Greek poetess," Margaret observed. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

Peculiar Family Reunion.

There is a man in New York, a brilliant writer, who, twice divorced, is now living happily with his third wife. Last year he gave a dinner to his three wives, and he said it was really a delightful reunion.