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Is it a curse?... Or just coincidence?

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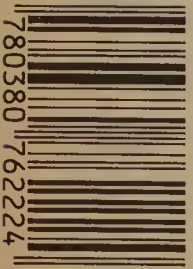
THE CURSE OF THE HOPE DIAMOND



JANET HUBBARD-BROWN

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THE CURSE OF THE HOPE DIAMOND

JANET HUBBARD-BROWN

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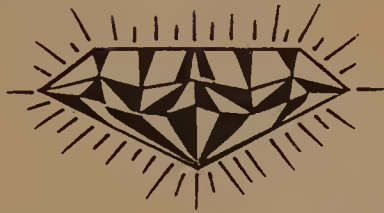
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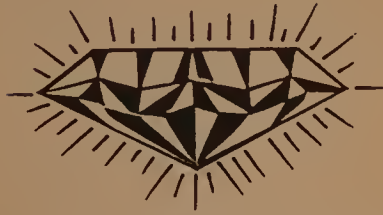
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The Hope diamond in its setting, surrounded by smaller white diamonds.

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Chronology



70,000,000 B.C.—

Diamonds are formed deep under the earth's surface from intense heat and pressure.

750 A.D.—Diamonds are discovered in India in Golconda. India becomes the world's only source of diamonds.

1665—The Frenchman Jean Baptiste Tavernier travels to India to trade gems. While he's there, the Indian Emperor Aurangzeb gives him a "large but dull blue diamond." Tavernier calls the diamond "The Great Mogul."

THE CURSE OF THE HOPE DIAMOND



- 1667**—Tavernier, who has returned home, sells the large blue diamond to King Louis XIV of France. Louis has the diamond cut into a heart shape and renames it the “French Blue.”
- 1715**—Louis XIV dies of gangrene. His great-grandson, Louis XV, inherits the “French Blue.”
- 1725**—Diamonds are discovered in Brazil, but they are still extraordinarily rare.
- 1760**—Around this date, Louis XV has the “French Blue” reset into “The Order of the Golden Fleece,” which he wears around his waist on a sash.
- 1774**—Louis XV catches smallpox and dies a horrible death. Louis XVI is crowned King of France.

CHRONOLOGY



1791—Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette are driven from the throne. They face trial on a number of counts and have their heads cut off. Later in the year, “The Order of the Golden Fleece” is stolen from a guard house outside of Paris. The large blue diamond is never recovered.

1812—A large, unusual blue diamond is offered for sale in England by a gem merchant named Eliason. It is smaller than the “French Blue” and rounded, but people think it is the same stone, only recut.

1830—Henry Hope, a rich banker, buys the large blue diamond for his collection of rare and unusual gems.

1866—Diamonds are discovered on the De Beers farm in South Africa. It is the largest and richest discovery of diamonds in the world, leading to a “Diamond Rush.”

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1888—Henry Hope's great-great nephew, Lord Francis Hope, inherits the diamond from his mother. He becomes a playboy and spendthrift. He marries a showgirl who later runs off with another man. Finally, he is forced to sell the Hope diamond because of financial problems.

1902—Cecil Rhodes, the English expatriate who founded the De Beers cartel, dies. The cartel continues, growing even stronger as time passes.

1905—The Cullinan diamond, weighing 3,106 carats, is discovered in South Africa. It is the largest diamond known to man.

1908-

1911—The Hope diamond, as it is now called, changes hands several times. Several owners have freakish or unnatural deaths. Rumors that the stone is cursed begin to surface.

CHRONOLOGY



- 1911**—The Hope is purchased by Evalyn Walsh McLean, an American heiress. Her happy life slowly changes to tragedy. Her husband becomes an alcoholic and goes insane, her son is killed in an auto accident and her daughter dies from an overdose of sleeping pills.
- 1947**—McLean dies, leaving the stone in a trust for her grandchildren. Unfortunately, the stone must be sold to pay debts. Her entire jewelry collection, including the Hope, is bought by Harry Winston of New York.
- 1958**—Harry Winston donates the Hope Diamond to the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. It forms the centerpiece of the Gem Collection, where you can still see it today.



A map of North and South America. The landmasses are shaded in a dark, textured grey, while the oceans are a lighter, solid grey. The text 'NORTH AMERICA' is printed in a bold, sans-serif font across the northern part of the continent. The text 'SOUTH AMERICA' is printed in a bold, sans-serif font across the southern part of the continent. Two black dots are placed on the eastern coast of North America. The first dot is at New York, NY, with the text '• New York, NY/1906, 1946' to its right. The second dot is at Washington, DC, with the text '• Washington, DC/1912' to its right. Below the Washington, DC text, the text 'Smithsonian Institution/' is printed, followed by '1958-present' on the next line. The text 'Atlantic Ocean' is printed in a serif font to the east of the North American continent. The text 'Pacific Ocean' is printed in a serif font to the west of the North American continent.

NORTH AMERICA

• **New York, NY/1906, 1946**

• **Washington, DC/1912**
Smithsonian Institution/
1958-present

Atlantic Ocean

Pacific Ocean

SOUTH AMERICA



**The Hope diamond's various homes around the world,
with dates.**

(Bonnie Atwater, Whitbread Books)



A Mysterious Gift



Jean Baptiste Tavernier leaned against the ship's railing and squinted at the horizon. He had left France weeks ago. Soon he would be arriving in India. His servant Jacques stood nearby. This was their sixth trip to India together.

It was very hot. The food had been very bad the last few days. There were no fresh fruits or vegetables left. Several passengers had already died from scurvy and other illnesses.

The year was 1665. International travel was very rare, but Jean Tavernier was a trader. His specialty

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was gemstones. He traveled between Europe and the East trading gems, silks, and spices. Today he was on his way to India to collect diamonds mined there. Back in Europe, he would sell them to kings, queens, and other rich people. His trunks below held the goods that Tavernier would barter for the gems. It was part of Jacques's job to make sure the trunks remained dry and that the rats on board did not get into them.

Tavernier had a special goal on this trip. Only a few trusted people like Jacques knew about it. Tavernier hoped to view the collection of jewels belonging to India's Emperor Aurangzeb.

Aurangzeb's jewel collection was famous throughout the world. He was a Mogul. The Moguls were the most savage conquerors the world had ever known. They had set out from Mongolia in the year 1250 to enlarge their kingdom. By 1665, their empire covered much of India. Along the way, they had stolen the gems that belonged to the Indian rajs, or princes. People said it would take an expert fourteen years to go through the collection and determine its value. But as far as Jean Tavernier knew, no European had ever seen it.

A MYSTERIOUS GIFT



The collection contained the fabulous Peacock Throne. Tavernier was almost certain that a very special, very old diamond was also there. The diamond would later be called Koh-i-noor, or "Light of the World." It had once belonged to an Indian raj and was rumored to be the most beautiful and brilliant diamond in the world. Wars had been fought over it.

Getting an invitation to see the collection would be difficult. Tavernier had carefully planned the gifts he would give Aurangzeb and his family. Tavernier hoped that the gifts would act as a bribe.

One week later, Tavernier sat propped against a pillow in his tent. Jacques prepared dinner outside. A coach driven by oxen stood a few feet away. The bodyguards stood nearby, sipping cool water.

They had been traveling for three days now along the road that ran through the middle of India. It ran for four hundred miles. Tavernier wrote about his bad sunburn. "My hands and face have completely peeled off," his journal read.

In a few days they would arrive in Agra. It was the home of Aurangzeb and his family. It was also the

THE CURSE OF THE HOPE DIAMOND



home of the Taj Mahal. The Taj was a white tomb built in honor of Aurangzeb's mother, Mumtaz Mahal. Tavernier believed that it was the most incredible building on the planet.

Tavernier had made good time. He would arrive at the castle for Aurangzeb's birthday celebration. It would be a perfect moment to present his gifts. Whether the bribe would work was another question.

He had long ago stopped trying to figure out the Mogul rulers. They were some of the most cruel people he had ever met. They could also be the most polite and refined. Tavernier thought about his amazing experiences in India.

Thirteen years earlier, he had dined with Shah Jahan's general in Golconda. They heard the shah's prisoners tortured while they ate. But they had gone to Golconda for a reason. Golconda has some of the largest and most profitable diamond fields known at that time.

Tavernier thought of Aurangzeb. He had killed his three brothers. Then he made a prisoner out of his father, Shah Jahan, just for good measure. Shah Jahan wasn't in a dungeon, but he could do nothing

A MYSTERIOUS GIFT



without Aurangzeb's permission. Shah Jahan had been locked up for eight years, but he was lucky compared to his son Dara. Dara had been Shah Jahan's favorite son. When Aurangzeb had him killed, he delivered his brother's head to his father in his private prison.

In truth, Shah Jahan had not been smart about Dara. Or any of his sons, for that matter. He had never declared an heir. The throne was available to whoever was willing to kill for it. And Aurangzeb was the one.

As emperor of India, Aurangzeb enjoyed a fabulous life. His days were full of luxuries and splendor. Nothing in Europe could compare with India's white marble castles, with their huge domes, and their gems, spices, and silks.

Tavernier hoped he had brought enough to please Aurangzeb. Who could predict what Aurangzeb would do when he was angered?

Two charging elephants started Aurangzeb's birthday party. Elephant fights were a favorite entertainment among Indian royalty. Excitement was in the air. Servants ran back and forth, leading the ele-

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phants and horses that nobles were presenting to their emperor. Others brought rugs. But those who wanted to please Aurangzeb the most gave him gems.

Aurangzeb leaned over a balcony watching the action. He was about the same age as Tavernier. He was thin and hard. Someone had once said his nose and chin looked like knife blades. His eyes were piercing and cold. When he saw Tavernier in the crowd, he asked one of his servants to summon him.

Tavernier was wearing a special cloak and turban. The Indian nobles had given it to him because he was so honest. He strutted around like a peacock. He was curious about everything.

Aurangzeb went inside. In a few moments, there was a knock on the door. A servant opened it. Tavernier stood there smiling, his servant next to him. He was accompanied by many gifts specially chosen for Aurangzeb and his family. Aurangzeb motioned his servant to call in the few family members he had left. Tavernier spoke to Jacques, who scurried off. In a few minutes, Jacques returned with other servants, who were carrying a large trunk. Aurangzeb's uncle came in and sat.



An etching of Jean Baptiste Tavernier, the French diamond merchant, wearing a cloak and turban in India. He received the Hope diamond as a present from the Emperor of India. The emperor's servant warned Tavernier's assistant that the diamond might cause bad luck. But he ignored the warning.

(Smithsonian Institution)

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After Aurangzeb gave the signal, Tavernier reached into the trunk and took out a watch in a painted case. He handed it to Aurangzeb, telling him it was for his sister, who was not there. He took a ruby ring from his pocket and handed it to Aurangzeb's uncle. On command, his servants brought forth an Italian chest that had gemstones set into the design. Tavernier also gave the chest to the uncle. He handed money to the keeper of the treasury.

Now it was Aurangzeb's turn.

Tavernier first reached into the trunk and brought out a brass belt made by the best workmen in France. The expression on Aurangzeb's face didn't change, but he took it and put it beside him. Next Tavernier brought out a battle-ax of crystal set with rubies and emeralds and encased in gold. He walked over and put the treasure in Aurangzeb's hands. Aurangzeb looked at it closely and nodded his approval. Tavernier signaled to his servants. They lifted a beautiful saddle embroidered in gold and silver out of the trunk. Aurangzeb could not hide his pleasure. Tavernier had done well. The gifts had worked. Aurangzeb decided to let Tavernier see his collection of jewels.

A MYSTERIOUS GIFT



The next morning, Jacques helped roll the turban around Tavernier's head. He wrapped his cloak around his shoulders. They hurried through the huge palace to their appointment.

Tavernier entered the foyer of the jewel room. Aurangzeb was waiting. He told Tavernier to sit. Before they could enter, Aurangzeb was having all his jewels counted by three counters. Tavernier waited calmly. Inside, he was a bundle of nerves.

When he was finally invited inside the jewel room, Tavernier was greeted by the sight of thousands of jewels of all shapes and sizes. It was the most awesome sight he had ever seen. There was the Peacock Throne, built by Aurangzeb's father. It looked like a bed with a canopy. The canopy was held up by twelve emerald pillars. At the top of each pillar were two peacocks on either side of a tree set with rubies, diamonds, emeralds, and pearls. Tavernier counted 108 rubies and 116 big emeralds. Altogether, there were 26,733 gems on the throne. When Aurangzeb seated himself on the throne, a large diamond dangled in front of his eyes.

There was a smaller throne in the shape of a bathtub, which the king liked to bathe in. The outside of

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it shone all over with diamonds and pearls. There were bracelets, earrings, necklaces, belts, table settings, even furniture. The whole room went far beyond Tavernier's wildest dreams.

Tavernier spotted the ancient diamond that would become the Koh-i-noor. It was the thrill of a lifetime. It was famous more for its long and bloodstained history than for its beauty. But it was very beautiful. Tavernier sighed with happiness. Afraid he might overstay his welcome, he thanked the emperor for showing him the jewels.

Before Tavernier left, Aurangzeb stopped him. Aurangzeb presented Tavernier with a gift. The keeper of the gems came over to Tavernier and placed a lump in his hands. It was called the Great Mogul.

He did not know it at the time, but Tavernier was clutching the world's largest diamond. When Tavernier later studied the diamond, he could not hide his disappointment. "It looks like half of an egg, cut in the middle," he wrote. "It's very poorly cut."

Tavernier continued, "This diamond has no history. I have never heard of it. It must be new."

His servant told him a story. "I'm not so sure of



Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother's crown, which contains the famous Koh-i-noor diamond. Tavernier was the first Westerner to see this diamond. He viewed it the same day that he was given the large blue diamond that later became the Hope.

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that. I was speaking with Aurangzeb's servant outside the door, and he told me a strange story. He said that the Indians believe this diamond served as an eye in a statue of the Hindu goddess Sita. When the stone was stolen by a priest, the angry goddess proclaimed that anyone who wore her eye as jewelry would attract bad luck."

Both men were quiet for a moment. The servant spoke again. "Aurangzeb's servant told me that if I told you, I would surely die."

"That's nonsense," scoffed Tavernier. "Don't believe a word of it! These Indians are always making up stories!"

Tavernier wondered what would happen to this stone if it was properly cut. "Our dear King Louis just might be interested," he thought.

One night, on his way back to France, Tavernier sat writing in his journal. He was older and he felt more tired after trading than he used to. He was looking forward to getting home. His bodyguards were sleeping. Jacques sat nearby. Suddenly some men moved out of the shadows into the light of the fire. Tavernier dropped his journal.

A MYSTERIOUS GIFT



“What do you want?” he demanded. There were at least four men. One of his bodyguards awoke and jumped up. One of the robbers pushed him down. No one else moved.

“We want what is in your trunks,” stated the robbers.

“I am a friend of Aurangzeb’s,” said Tavernier. “He will have you put to death if he hears of this.” The robbers laughed. They went through the trunks, taking Tavernier’s gold and silver. They left the rug he had traded. In a few moments they were gone.

Tavernier’s servant stood trembling. “Where is it?” he asked.

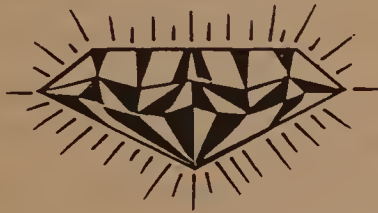
“The diamond?” asked Tavernier. “I had it sewn into my clothes.” With that, he pulled the large stone out from a pocket under his arm.

“It’s already bringing us bad luck,” his servant said.

“Don’t be silly,” replied Tavernier. But privately, in his journal, Tavernier admitted that he was scared. Was the diamond really bad luck?



Fabulous Gems



There are over two thousand known minerals. Of these, fewer than one hundred are called gemstones. The four most precious gemstones are diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds. All four are harder than steel. The diamond is the hardest of all. In fact, it was named for its hardness. Diamond comes from the Greek word *adamas*, which means “unconquerable.”

It took many years before scientists understood how diamonds were formed. In Tavernier’s time, no one knew. The earth is in layers. The center of the

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earth is like a gigantic, bubbling stew. That stew is made up of ninety ingredients called elements. Cobalt, copper, and iron are all elements. Minerals are made up of different combinations of the elements.

A diamond is the only gemstone that consists of just one element. That element is carbon. Nothing can scratch a diamond, but it can burn. A blow from a hammer can shatter a diamond, but not even acid can dissolve it.

The diamond's journey out of the center of the earth is amazing. It takes millions and millions of years. Diamonds, including the Hope, were formed at least seventy million years ago. All the heat deep inside the earth builds up a huge pressure. When that happens, a volcano erupts. It is like a pressure cooker that explodes when left on the stove too long.

Diamonds reached the outside layer of the earth after such an explosion. They stick in a rock called kimberlite, which forms pipes that twist for miles through the earth's crust. After millions of years, the kimberlite is crumbled away by wind and rain. The diamond hidden inside can now be seen by the human eye.

What Tavernier knew, which many people don't,

FABULOUS GEMS



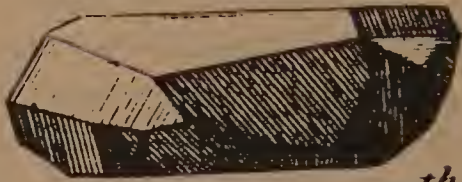
is that diamonds do not sparkle and are not pretty when they come out of the ground. They are glassy and rough and have no shape. It is only after being cut and polished that they look the way they do in store windows. For the Hope diamond to transform from the milky half-egg in Tavernier's hands to the magnificent stone it is today, it had to be cut by someone who knew what he was doing.

Diamond experts concentrate on the "four Cs": color, clarity, cut, and the number of carats, or weight. The word *carat* comes from carob. A carat weighed about the same as the seed of the carob tree. Most diamond engagement rings weigh one carat or less. One ounce of diamonds equals about 142 carats. The Hope diamond was 112 carats when Tavernier sold it to King Louis XIV. Its weight today is 44½ carats, after being cut twice.

Clarity refers to the inside purity of a gem. It takes an expert to examine the inside of a stone and give it a rating. A flawless diamond is one that has no markings or carbon spots. There are many fakes on the market today. One sure way to tell if a gemstone is real is to have an expert look at the inside.

Diamonds are found in all colors. During Taver-

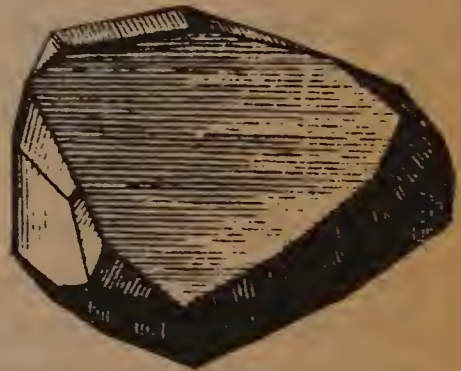
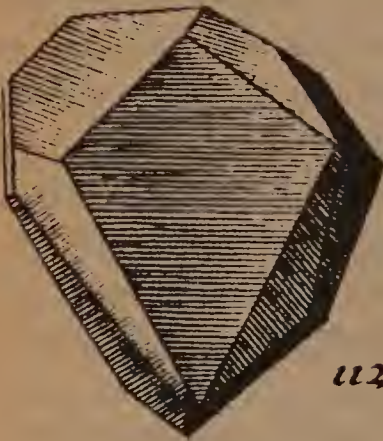
The Thickness.



A

The upper Part

the under Part



112 $\frac{3}{16}$ Caratts

A drawing of three views of the large blue diamond sold by Tavernier to King Louis XIV of France. (Smithsonian Institution)

FABULOUS GEMS



nier's day, they judged the color by comparing the stone to clear stream water. The finest stones had no color and were known as gems of the "first water." Most diamonds are yellowish to white. The rarer ones, like the Hope, have strong colors called "fancy" colors. They can be green, red, blue, violet, brown, or yellow. The steel blue color of the Hope diamond is extremely rare. A tiny amount of a substance called boron gives it that color.

The cut of the diamond brings the color out. The craftsman who cuts a diamond is called a diamond cutter. A step above the ordinary cutter is a lapidary. Lapidary comes from the Greek word *lapis*, or "stone." These artists must understand the play of light on color.

The first Indian cutters found that when they ground one diamond against another, both dull surfaces could be made to shine. It wasn't long before they had invented a wheel that could be turned by hand to help shape the diamonds. As early as the 1300s, they began cutting small, flat faces, or facets, onto the top surface. That step added sparkle. Next, they began to facet the bottoms too. This meant that the underside facets reflected light back up through

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the stone. Because of its power to bend light, the diamond could be shaped to throw out great sparkles, or "fire."

A lapidary might study a rough diamond for days before doing anything to it. He is seeking the grain or lines in the carbon crystal. He wants to bring out the largest number of perfect pieces. A modern cutter works on a copy of the real diamond before attempting to perform the surgery. He draws lines where he plans to cut. Next he transfers that line to the real stone. Often the rough diamond is put in a dollop of hardened wax or shellac so that it won't move.

The cutter holds a blade on the line and strikes it with a small hammer. This process is called cleaving. The stone either breaks perfectly, or it shatters. It was this step that once caused the cutter of the Star of Africa to faint.

Joseph Asscher of Amsterdam was chosen to cut the largest raw diamond ever found. It was the Cullinan, discovered at the Premier Mine in South Africa in 1905. It weighed 1.4 pounds, or 3,106 carats! It was sold for over 150,000 pounds to the government of the Transvaal. They, in turn, presented it to King

FABULOUS GEMS



Edward VII of Great Britain on his sixty-sixth birthday in 1907.

It is said that Asscher fainted into the arms of a doctor standing nearby after he split the stone. Using the cleaving process, it took Asscher four tries before the diamond split perfectly in two. Then it was cut into nine large and ninety-six smaller stones. The nine major stones are in the British Crown Collection. The diamond was named the "Cullinan" after the chairman of the mine in which it was found. Today it has the more romantic name "Star of Africa."

Diamonds can also be cut by sawing. It is a slower process than cutting. A paper-thin disk made of bronze and coated with diamond dust rotates at a very high speed. It may take several hours to cut through even a one-carat stone. After the sawing is finished, the diamond is put on a lathe and ground by a second diamond. The grinding shapes the gem. Then, to create the facets that make the diamond sparkle, the stone is held at an angle against a spinning iron disk.

Polishing is the final step. The diamond is pressed hard against a wheel covered with polishing powder.

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This step is tricky because the stone might become overheated by the friction and shatter.

In the beginning, the most popular shape to cut a diamond was the “point cut.” It was named after the shape of most diamonds. Over the years, other cuts have been developed. A “pear-shaped” diamond is round on one end and pointed on the other. A “round brilliant” shape is a simple circle and is usually pointed underneath. An “emerald cut” is rectangular in shape. A “marquise” is pointed on both ends. Today the most popular cut is the round brilliant. It has many tiny, triangular-shaped facets and takes a great deal of time to get just right.

Scientists believe that no more diamonds are being formed today. This is because the last eruption of kimberlite took place thirty million years ago. The challenge is to find the diamonds that already exist. During Tavernier’s time, diamonds had not been discovered anywhere but India. Only royalty or the very rich owned diamonds. Even after diamonds were discovered in Brazil in 1725, they were still only available to the very wealthy.

But in 1866 all that changed. Erasmus Jacobs was helping his father with chores on their farm in South

FABULOUS GEMS



Africa. He was leaning against a tree near the Orange River when a shiny pebble caught his eye. He picked it up and took it to his sister. Later, a friend of the family saw it and asked to take it into town. An expert examined it and discovered that it was a twenty-one-carat diamond!

The news spread fast. It was like the Gold Rush in California. Thousands of people poured into the area. They would rope off small sections for themselves, called "finds," and begin digging. The entire area where diamonds have been discovered is called a deposit. Little towns built up around the deposits. They were dirty and crowded. But within twenty years, South African mines were turning out up to three million carats of diamonds a year.

Two brothers named De Beers grew tired of all the prospectors tearing up their land. They sold their farm and moved on. Unknowingly, they had sold a pair of fabulously rich diamond deposits.

A man named Cecil John Rhodes came from England to join his brother in search of diamonds. His brother left after a few years, but Rhodes had a knack for working with the natives. He had a keen business mind. He was also the first to realize that

THE CURSE OF THE HOPE DIAMOND



the hard blue ground beneath where diamonds were being dug probably contained more diamonds. He began buying up many small claims from prospectors who were giving up. He created the largest diamond business in the world. He called his company the De Beers Mining Company, Ltd., after the two farmers who had left.

When Rhodes died in 1902, his company controlled the prices and output of diamonds all over the world. They still do today. This kind of company is known as a cartel. Their trading center is based in London, England. Ten times a year, the De Beers cartel invites around three hundred diamond dealers and jewelry manufacturers to look at boxes of rough stones. The stones have been chosen and graded ahead of time. The dealers inspect the stones before accepting them. The De Beers Diamond Trading Company makes up each box with a dealer's needs in mind. But the dealer or manufacturer cannot change the contents of the box or the price. Some boxes cost as much as \$20 million. The smallest usually will cost at least \$150,000. A dealer either accepts it as is or he or she has to wait to be asked again. Sometimes it is a hard decision. If the stones

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look like diamonds he cannot use, the dealer could lose a lot of money. If he doesn't accept the box, De Beers might not ask him again. Most of the time, the dealer buys. When diamonds are selling, a dealer can still make a tremendous profit.

Some of the dealers must feel like Tavernier did. After spending all that money, the diamonds must still be cut. The dealers are expected to either cut the diamonds or sell them directly to other cutters. They are not supposed to hold on to them or sell to another trader. If they don't follow these unwritten rules, the De Beers Company will not sell to them and they'll be out of business.

It is becoming harder and harder for this cartel to maintain its control as more diamond deposits are discovered. Some people worry that if the cartel did not exist, diamonds would lose their value. Some countries, such as Australia, feel that no one company should have so much power. When diamonds were discovered in Australia, they demanded the right to sell some of their gems on the open market. The Soviet Union also does not deal with De Beers.

Diamond mining today in South Africa is done on a big scale with big machines. Before Rhodes stepped

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in, everything was done by hand. Out of twenty tons of kimberlite dug up, maybe fourteen carats will be found. Many of the diamonds that are dug up are not good enough for jewelry. They are used in dentists' offices for drilling. They are also used in glass cutting. They can be used in space technology. These are called industrial diamonds.

How does a diamond get to be famous? Sometimes it is size that causes a diamond to make headlines. The Star of Africa became famous for its size. Other diamonds might become famous for their rare color. The most famous diamonds are those with a history.

Like the Hope diamond, the Orloff diamond is believed to have been stolen from a statue. The Orloff was supposedly taken from a statue of Brahma, an Indian god. It, too, reportedly brought bad luck. It ended up in the hands of the Empress Catherine of Russia. She had it set as an ornament in the imperial scepter. Many blame the Orloff for bringing ruin on the Russian royal family.

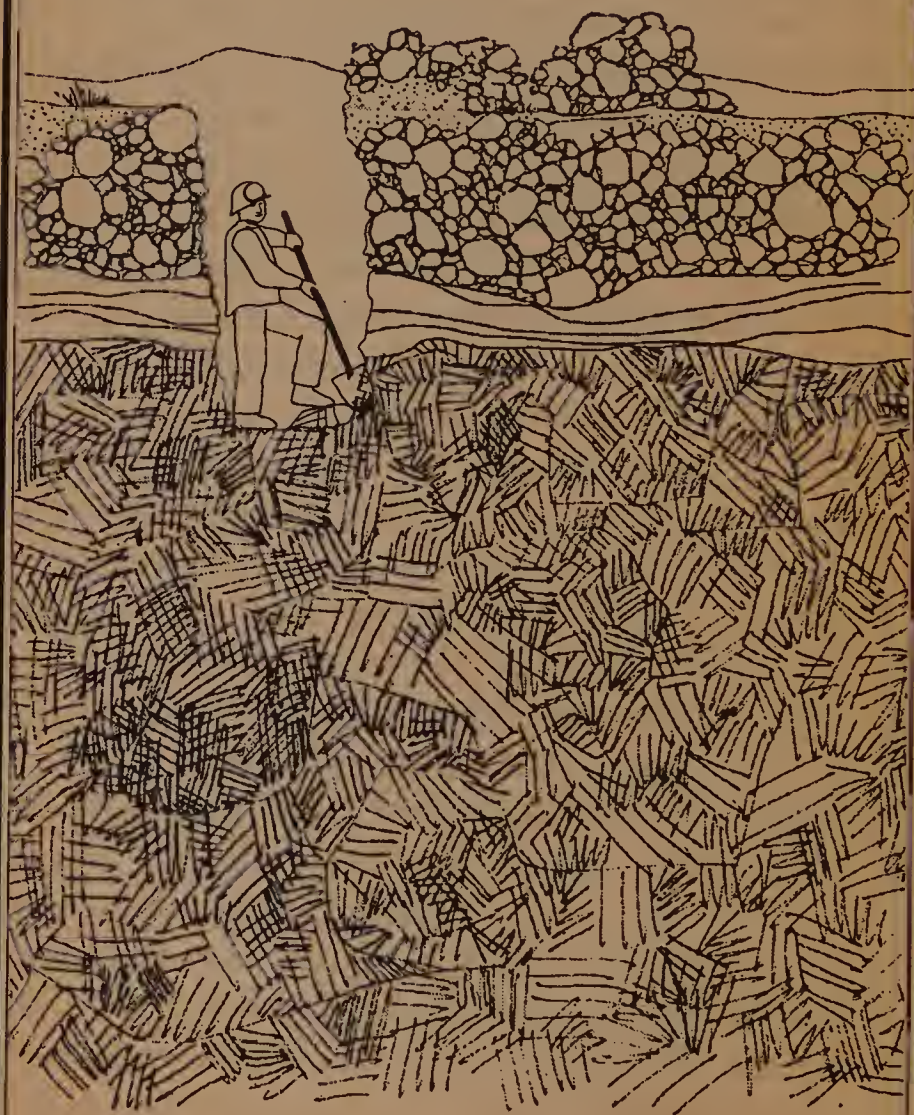
The diamond has long been a symbol of happiness. The Hope diamond is considered the most famous diamond in the world. It has both a rare color and a very exciting history. It is generally believed that

FABULOUS GEMS

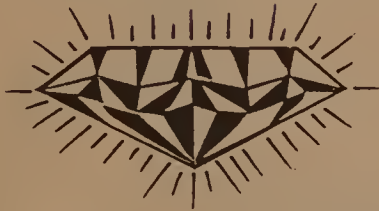


diamonds can free the spirit from worry and make their owners invincible. Can certain stones contain powers that do the opposite? Did the Hope diamond bring a curse on the people who wore it?

Little did Tavernier know as he prepared to sell the blue diamond that the disappointing gem in his hand would one day become the most famous diamond in the world.



A Diamond Fit For A King



Louis XIV was king of France when Tavernier returned from India. France was the richest and most powerful country in Europe. In fact, Louis's nickname was the "Sun King." That was because he had a shining personality, and was considered the center of the universe.

France had a large and wealthy nobility. They all loved to dress up and have parties. No one liked to party more than Louis himself. He would arrive at parties covered with jewels. He had 123 diamond buttons and 396 jeweled buttonholes on one waist-

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coat! His hat ornament contained seven diamonds. Diamonds were on his long socks called garters. There were even diamonds in his shoe buckles. His sword was set with 131 diamonds.

For a long time, pearls were the most popular jewel. But during Louis XIV's reign, diamonds became the rage. It was a good time for Tavernier to approach King Louis with the blue diamond that he called the "Great Mogul."

Most people who were brought before Louis XIV trembled. He was like their god. What if they displeased him? Tavernier was different. King Louis seemed tame next to Aurangzeb. Besides, Tavernier knew that he had something the king would want. The French crown jewels were the finest and richest collection of gemstones found in Europe. King Louis was proud of his collection and would no doubt add to it.

The king was quite pleased with the diamonds Tavernier showed him. He was fascinated by the blue diamond. He held it up in the light.

"I wonder how this would look if it were cut properly," he said.

"I think there is great possibility for it, Your Maj-



The Hope diamond, out of its setting.

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esty,” replied Tavernier. “The blue color is quite rare, as you probably know. It’s more violet than blue, I would say.”

The king was happy. He bought everything Tavernier showed him. There were 44 large diamonds and 122 smaller ones. The king paid \$180,000 for all of them. Later, the king, in appreciation for Tavernier’s services to the crown, made him a noble.

The blue diamond had now changed continents and owners. King Louis took it to the royal lapidary. He transformed it into a heart-shaped stone on the end of a necklace. It looked more like a triangle, and it was covered by dozens of facets that made it sparkle brilliantly. The king wore the necklace around his neck. He called it the “Blue Diamond of the Crown.” That name was later shortened to the “French Blue.” When Tavernier owned it, it had weighed $112 \frac{3}{16}$ carats. After it was recut by the king’s lapidary, it weighed $67 \frac{1}{8}$ carats.

King Louis XIV lived a long and, for the most part, happy life. He built the grandest castle in Europe and called it Versailles. He moved his nobles and their ladies and families out to the castle. At one time there were five thousand people living under

A DIAMOND FIT FOR A KING



the king's roof. His days were filled with hunting, parties, and affairs of state. The only dark note was the wars France constantly fought. But for the most part, France always won, so nobody was bothered by it. The battlefields were a long way off from the gaiety at Versailles. Besides, everyone thought war was a way of life.

Louis XIV's luck began to change in old age. When he was in his seventies, his son and daughter died. King Louis was heartbroken. In 1715 he lay dying, too. His five-year-old great-grandson was brought to his bedside. The king advised him not to copy him in his love of war. He told him to try to live peacefully with his neighbors.

Louis XIV's death was very painful. He had gangrene in his leg. The tissue had begun to rot because his circulation was so poor. Finally, after three weeks of suffering, he died. His young great-grandson was now king. He would be called Louis XV. The Blue Diamond of the Crown now belonged to him.

King Louis XV did not grow into a great ruler. He did not have the ability or the strength of his great-grandfather. His main concern and passion was hunting. One thing he did do, however, was reset the



A portrait of King Louis XIV of France, who called the Hope diamond “The Blue Diamond of the Crown.” He died from a painful case of gangrene, leaving the diamond to his great-grandson, King Louis XV. (The Bettmann Archives)

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Blue Diamond of the Crown. Louis was a member of a knighthood called the Order of the Golden Fleece. The Order was founded to defend the Roman Catholic religion and to uphold the practices of chivalry. Though there were no real knights left, it was an honor to be a member of a group that had started three hundred years before.

King Louis decided to have the French Blue set in the decoration that he wore on a sash across his chest. He had it removed from the necklace his grandfather wore. Then he had a pink-red stone called a spinel carved into the shape of a dragon. Louis XV set the Blue in the middle of the dragon, and surrounded it with a second, large diamond. This decoration was considered a masterpiece of the jeweler's art. It was renamed the "Order of the Golden Fleece."

Around the same time Louis XV was having the large blue diamond reset, he made another fateful choice. He decided to marry his oldest grandson, Louis Auguste, to a young princess from Austria named Marie Antoinette. It wasn't uncommon in those days to have two members of royalty from different countries marry in order to keep the two coun-



Front



Back

Front and back view of the pendant Louis XV called "The Order of the Golden Fleece." Louis XV reset "The Blue Diamond of the Crown" in the pendant, which contained a large red spinel carved in the shape of a dragon, several large white diamonds, and the large blue one. The pendant hung from a ribbon on the King's chest.

(Smithsonian Institution)

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tries from going to war with each other. Austria and France were not friendly. France dreaded an attack from its neighboring country. King Louis XV had the idea that if his grandson Louis Auguste were to marry young Marie Antoinette of Austria, it would put a halt to any thoughts of warfare between the two countries.

Marie Antoinette was only fourteen at the time of the wedding. At first she was very popular. As her carriage entered Paris, crowds of people lined the streets to look at the girl who would one day be their queen.

The wedding at Versailles a few days later was the grandest celebration France had ever known. More than five thousand people were gathered in the drawing rooms and great gallery. Marie Antoinette wore a white brocade dress with large hoops underneath. She was elegant and smiling.

At first, the future king and queen had little to do with each other. They were still finishing growing up. Louis hunted most of the time. When he didn't hunt, he liked to make and repair locks. Marie Antoinette played with other young women at court. She loved to dress up and put on plays. Although she

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wasn't beautiful, she was filled with high spirits and she was well liked.

Gradually the young prince and princess got to know each other. They had four children together. Unfortunately, neither of them liked to think of the unpleasant side of life. In that respect, neither of them would ever grow up. It would prove their undoing.

In 1774 King Louis XV went hunting. After he returned to Versailles, he felt ill. He soon learned that he had smallpox. He was sixty-four years old. He was not a popular king when he died.

Louis Auguste, now King Louis XVI, was ruler of twenty-six million people. Marie Antoinette became queen. Times were changing, but the new king and queen didn't want to hear about it. They continued their lives of hunting, lock repair, and parties. Taxes were very high. But the treasury had been bled dry by years of war and the excesses of royal living. Several times, the common people protested. Louis XVI either ignored the riots or installed ineffectual changes. Taxes kept going up. People were getting poorer and poorer. Even the nobility began to join the protests. They didn't have any power. They felt

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useless. Finally there came a turning point. It did not involve the famous French Blue. But it did involve diamonds.

Two crown jewelers had spent years putting together a magnificent diamond necklace that they planned to sell to King Louis XV. But he died before it was finished. They needed money. They went to the new king and queen. But to their shock and dismay, Marie Antoinette said no.

They kept trying, but the queen continued to say no. A few years later they met a woman who claimed to be a friend of Marie Antoinette's. She told the two desperate jewelers that she could sell it for them. Instead, she kept the diamonds for herself. She sold some and began spending money all over Paris.

When the whole scheme came to light, everyone was horrified, most of all the queen. The king could have cut off the woman's head. But Marie Antoinette insisted that there be a public trial. She and the king did not realize that they weren't popular with the public. It turned out to be the worst thing they could do.

Although the woman was convicted of the crime, people turned against Marie Antoinette instead.

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They had had enough. The situation reached a boiling point. Finally, on July 14, 1789, the French people stormed the Bastille, a fort in Paris where all the government's gunpowder was stored. The revolution had begun.

The king and queen fought to keep their power. But it was too late. Most nobles were fleeing to places like England. In 1791 the king and queen decided to flee, too. Marie Antoinette had her hairdresser sell her personal jewels in England. The king and queen took the money, along with the crown jewels that included the Order of the Golden Fleece, as they tried to escape to Austria. Unfortunately, they were caught along the way. The crown jewels were confiscated. The young king and queen were taken back to Paris as prisoners. Ultimately, they were both tried and beheaded.

Meanwhile, different groups struggled for power as the French Revolution continued. The crown jewels were placed in the *garde-meuble*, the royal storehouse. But often, the *garde-meuble* had no one on watch. Too much else was going on! The new government needed money. They discussed selling the jewels. Around this time, a plot to steal the crown jewels was under way. But the leader, Paul Miette, was sent

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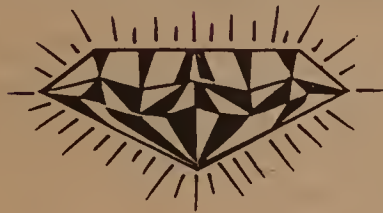
to prison for another theft before anything happened. In prison, he told others about the jewels. Together, a group of them began to hatch another plot to steal the gems. Cadet Guillot was a ring-leader.

By this time, things were out of control all over France. Prisoners escaped right and left. The police could do nothing. When Paul Miette and his friends escaped from prison, they went straight to the *garde-meuble*. There were only a few guards on duty, and they were easily distracted. When the robbers broke in, they found the jewels in unlocked wooden boxes. The Order of the Golden Fleece, containing the French Blue, sat right out on a table! Cadet Guillot couldn't believe his eyes! He swooped it up and left. It took six days to steal everything. Paul Miette and his friends returned several times. When the robbery was finally discovered on the sixth day, people were outraged. Thirty million francs worth of gems were gone!

Over the next few days, some of the jewels were recovered. Some were found buried under a tree. A large diamond called the Regent was found in someone's attic. But the Order of the Golden Fleece was gone. Cadet Guillot was gone too!



The Hope Diamond!



What did Cadet Cuillot do with the Order of the Golden Fleece, containing the French Blue? Did he sell it? Had he been part of a plot? It is a question that has haunted many. It was common during the French Revolution for both nobles and convicts to escape to England. The general belief today is, that is exactly what Cadet Guillot did.

It is possible to trace the history of a gemstone only if it is so outstanding that notes have been made about it along the way. There is a period—from 1792 until 1812—where no record exists of the French

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Blue. But when the stone known today as the Hope diamond turned up in London in 1812, experts were almost positive that it had to have been cut from the French Blue. Its rare dark blue shade and size were the two main clues.

It was owned by a diamond merchant named Daniel Eliason when it reappeared in 1812. It is believed that it was sold to the king of England, George IV. He had it set in one of his medallions for the Order of the Golden Fleece in 1822. When he died in 1830, the French Blue was put up for sale to pay off the king's gambling debts.

No one knows when Daniel Eliason bought the diamond, or how he knew about it. Did he ever meet Cadet Guillot? Did Guillot know of Eliason's reputation and choose to trust him with a stone from the crown jewels of France? Did Eliason wait so many years to sell it so that he wouldn't be accused of stealing the jewels? Was he worried that the government of France would demand the French Blue back if they knew where it was?

In 1830 an Englishman named Henry Philip Hope heard of the superfine, deep blue diamond. He already owned forty-one cut diamonds of fancy colors

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and many others that were still rough. He could easily afford to buy whatever he wanted. He was from a famous banking family. An enthusiastic collector of gemstones, he also liked to collect paintings.

Hope's heart was beating fast as he went to meet Eliason. Because he was a gem collector, he received many letters asking him to consider purchasing certain stones. But few of those stones had belonged to three French kings. Hope wasn't even sure about this one. But how many flawless deep blue diamonds existed? He was certain that this one came from the French Blue.

Eliason and Hope shook hands. Eliason opened his drawer and took out the blue diamond and handed it to Hope.

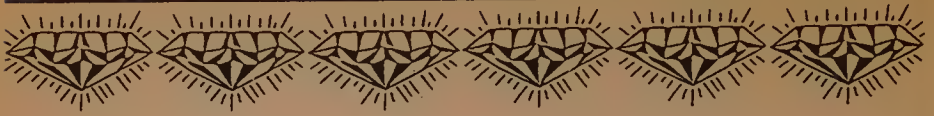
"She's a beauty," Eliason stated.

Hope held it up in his fingers. "What do you know about it?" he asked Eliason.

Eliason shrugged his shoulders. "We don't have the actual proof that it comes from the French Blue, but how many diamonds of this color are there?"

Hope placed the diamond in the box lined with velvet on Eliason's desk. It weighed around 44¼ carats.

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“If this was cut from the French Blue, I wonder if there is a missing piece,” inquired Hope. Like many others, he wondered if the French Blue had been cut into more than one stone.

“I doubt it,” answered Eliason. “If it is from the French Blue, it was recut to disguise that fact.” He continued, “If there is more than one, the second one would have to be quite small.”

Hope decided to buy the blue stone. He paid ninety thousand dollars for it. He certainly could not have known that one day, the diamond would make him, too, famous.

Hope was very organized about his collection of diamonds. He kept the jewels in a large case that had sixteen drawers. Each drawer was covered with glass that had a number on it.

Hope died in 1839. In a catalog Henry Hope had made, the Hope diamond was described as a medalion or brooch with a border of small rose diamonds. These were surrounded by twenty round diamonds of equal size, shape, and cut.

Hope never married. He had two brothers, and when he died, he left large fortunes to each of his

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nephews. The oldest nephew, Henry Thomas Hope, was the new owner of his uncle's large collection of art and the Hope diamond. Henry Thomas Hope was only fifty-four when he died. He left his fortune to his wife and to his daughter, Henrietta. Henrietta Hope married the Duke of Newcastle and had five children. Her oldest son was due to inherit a lot of money from his father, the Duke of Newcastle. When Henrietta died, she left a life interest in her property to her second son. She made one condition. The boy had to take her family name, Hope. By giving her son Lord Francis a life interest in the Hope diamond and the rest of her fortune, Henrietta prevented an impulse sale. Were Francis to die, the diamond would go to his older sister.

Lord Francis agreed to his mother's terms. His name became Henry Francis Hope Pelham-Clinton-Hope. He was now the eighth known owner of the Hope diamond.

Whatever is known about Lord Francis comes from newspaper accounts and legal records. His son, the present Duke of Newcastle in England, doesn't have much information. His mother died when he was five, and his father would never discuss the Hope

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diamond. All the Hope records burned in a fire in 1940.

Lord Francis had eighty thousand dollars each year to live on. But by age twenty-seven, he was already trying to borrow money. He asked the court to let him sell some of the paintings in which he had a life interest, but his brother and three sisters said no. Soon after that, he decided to go to America.

While Hope was in New York, a show came into town called *The Crystal Slipper*. The star of the show was a young woman from Pennsylvania named May Yohe. She was nicknamed the "girl with the foghorn voice." She was already signed up to star in a musical called *Christopher Columbus* which would open in London.

It was when May Yohe was becoming famous that Lord Francis came into her life. He found this talented woman from a mining town in Pennsylvania exciting.

"Tell me about your life in Pennsylvania," he said.

"Well," she started, "my mother is a seamstress. We weren't well-to-do. But I loved to sing. And I loved opera."



Lord Francis Hope, the English playboy, who inherited the Hope diamond from his mother. Hope tried several times to sell the Hope diamond, but his mother's will forbade it. Finally, his debts were so great, the court allowed its sale. Hope had bad luck from the time he inherited the diamond, and even after he had sold it.

(Brown Brothers)

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“How did you know about opera?” he wondered.

She shrugged her shoulders. “Anyhow,” May continued, “some of the coal miners heard me sing. They loved me! They raised enough money to send me to Paris to study singing.”

“How amazing!” remarked Lord Francis. He couldn’t imagine anything like that happening in England.

“Anyhow,” she added, “when I returned to America, I decided to enter show business.” She laughed. “And here I am!”

“What did the miners think of your giving up opera for show business?” he wanted to know.

“They were horrified!” she exclaimed.

Lord Francis was in love. He and May spent a lot of time together. By the time they decided to marry, May surely knew about the Hope diamond and the paintings that belonged to the Hope family. There is no account of what Hope’s very proper English family thought of the chorus woman from America. They must have been shocked.

The two were secretly married in Hempstead, England, in 1894. May claimed to be eighteen, but she was actually twenty-five. Lord Francis was twenty-



May Yohe, the dancing girl from America who captured Francis Hope's heart. She wore the Hope diamond twice during ten years of marriage to Hope. After she left him, she had a copy made, which she wore in her nightclub act. She died alone and in poverty. (Brown Brothers)

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eight. This “Madcap May Yohe” who had just married a lord was now Lady May. A year later, Lord Francis was bankrupt, which meant he had run out of money. He would now only receive ten thousand dollars a year. Even so, that was still a large sum of money then.

It wasn’t long before Lord Francis tried to sell the paintings again. This time he was successful. Just as everyone predicted, that money was soon gone too. Next he would try to sell the Hope diamond. But the judges said no, because no one could put an actual value on it. The judges fussed at him for throwing his money away. They told him he had brought his problems on himself.

May was able to help support them because she had become a big success in London theater. She supposedly only wore the Hope diamond twice. Lord Francis was still trying to sell it. He was so intent on selling the blue diamond, one has to wonder if he had ever heard that the diamond might carry a curse. Or was it simply a need for money that caused him to try to sell it? It surely must have upset his sisters as they fought long and hard to keep the diamond in the family. Did he not care about their feelings?

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In 1900 Lady May and Lord Francis visited the United States. Lady May met a handsome man named William Strong, and within a year she had left Lord Francis and gone off with Strong to Japan. Lady May had some money from her theater career. She owned a large collection of jewelry, much of it from her admirers. After she and Strong were married, they used the money from these jewels to live on. They gave parties and enjoyed life tremendously until May's money started running out. They kept selling her jewelry in order to pay their bills. Strong sold the last of them without her knowing. They divorced in 1910.

Meanwhile, Lord Hope had finally sold the diamond to Joseph Frankel and Sons in New York, but not before more bad luck befell him. He lost his leg in a hunting accident. His new wife died. It seemed as if many terrible things happened to him. Did he feel cursed by the stone? Is that why he sold the stone?

Frankel and Sons sold the Hope diamond in 1908 to a man named Habib or Habid, of Paris, who collected gems. As happened after the blue diamond left

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France, there is a cloudy period when no one is quite sure what happened to the Hope diamond. The *New York Times* announced in 1909, "Hope Diamond Goes Cheap." It said that it was bought by a leading diamond expert of France. Other sources said the man was named Rosenau.

For several years following, the Hope diamond changed hands often. Next it was reported that it was sold to a Russian prince. This same prince lent it to Mademoiselle Lorens Laduc, a dancer with the Folies Bergère in Paris. The prince was in love with Laduc, but in a fit of jealousy, he shot her when she was onstage. She was wearing the diamond. He was later stabbed to death.

Next the diamond came into the hands of a Greek jeweler who sold it to the Sultan of Turkey. But he didn't sell it quickly enough. He and his wife and children were killed in a car accident. Then the sultan's lapidary accidentally destroyed a large pearl while polishing the Hope diamond. The sultan had him beaten and thrown into prison. Later, the keeper of the sultan's jewels was found murdered. The sultan's favorite girlfriend made him angry once when she was wearing the Hope diamond, and the sultan shot her!



Mademoiselle Lorens Laduc of the Folies-Bergere in Paris. She was wearing the Hope diamond on stage when her lover, a Russian prince who owned the Hope, shot her. Later, the same prince was stabbed to death.

(The Bettmann Archives)

Some Turkish warriors were the next owners. They sold it to a man from Spain who later drowned in the waters off Singapore. Finally it was sold to Rosenau again who sold it to the famous jeweler Cartier. There are many tales of unlucky owners, but most of them have not been proved.



The Turkish Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who briefly owned the Hope diamond. Several unlucky incidents occurred to him during the three years he owned the Hope. He sold it to some Turkish warriors.

(Brown Brothers)

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May Yohe got off easy. She wore a copy of the Hope diamond, but it didn't have the power of the real one. But a cloud followed May, nonetheless. She married again, and lived in Singapore, the United States, and Canada. She and her new husband had constant financial problems. They tried chicken farming and ranching, but failed. With each failure, May would return to the stage. She always wore her copy of the Hope diamond.

May and her husband moved to New Hampshire and bought a farmhouse, which they made into a tearoom called the Blue Diamond Inn. The inn burned down. May died at age sixty-nine.

Lord Francis lived to be seventy-five, but the Hope diamond's reputation of carrying a curse was growing with each new owner. The next owner would make that reputation known to the world.



Signs Of A Curse



When Evalyn Walsh McLean was born in 1886, her parents were poor miners in Colorado. But ten years later, her father struck gold. He built a huge home in Washington, D.C., and moved his family there.

Overnight, Evalyn's life became unbelievably luxurious and grand. Her father bought her a carriage and a pair of horses to drive to school. She had beautiful clothes that made her the center of attention. The only cloud in her sunny life was when her brother was killed in a car accident. Otherwise, Eva-

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lyn seemed to live a charmed life. When she grew up, she married a man who was as rich as she was. They built a home called "Friendship." They were known for their entertaining. A couple of years after she was married, Evalyn gave birth to a boy, whom she named Vincent after her dead brother. Other children were to follow.

In 1910 McLean and her husband went to Paris. Cartier, a famous jeweler in Paris, had sold her the famous "Star of India" diamond when she was married. He knew that she claimed bad-luck objects were lucky for her. And Cartier knew that Evalyn liked to make people notice her. She told a friend once that she would have been willing to get married hanging by her knees just for the attention. There was no question about it—Evalyn Walsh McLean was what Americans liked to call a real "character."

Cartier wanted to sell the Hope diamond. He knew the way to interest Evalyn McLean was to take all the rumors about the diamond and make them into a fascinating story. Though McLean lived a long time after Tavernier, they were alike in that the history of a gemstone increased their interest.

McLean already had a collection of magnificent

SIGNS OF A CURSE



jewelry, including the Star of India. She decided to tell Cartier that she would not buy the diamond. She told him she didn't like the way the diamond was mounted. But was that the only reason? People who are the greatest show-offs are often terrified inside. Did the stories Cartier told her actually make Evalyn McLean a little nervous?

Cartier was an excellent salesman. He must have felt that McLean could be tempted again. When he came to America a few months later, he called McLean and told her he had the diamond with him. He asked her if she would keep it for two days. She agreed. Sometime during that short period, Evalyn began to want the Hope diamond. She may have worn it and received lots of compliments. She may have told herself she was being silly for worrying about bad luck. Finally she told Cartier she would buy it.

Even though she finally agreed to buy it, McLean wasn't completely comfortable with the Hope diamond. At first she wouldn't allow her children or friends to touch it. Did she still have that nagging worry that the diamond might cause bad luck?

What was she to do? She had a new, rare diamond

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worth a fortune, and she was afraid of it. That wouldn't do at all. She finally decided to have it blessed by a priest. That way, the curse—if there was one—would be lifted. After that, McLean wore the Hope diamond all the time. Not only did she wear it, but she allowed her children to play with it. She even lent it to a young woman whom she barely knew. The woman was getting married and didn't have anything blue to wear.

Once, when McLean was to be operated on, she refused to take the Hope diamond off. The doctors were quite firm, however. She finally had to remove it.

McLean was the only owner who had been told about the curse of the Hope diamond. Lord Francis may have wondered, but no one knows if he knew for sure. McLean insisted on the fact that it brought good luck. Then one day, bad things began to happen.

When McLean's oldest son, Vincent, was nine, he was killed in a car accident. McLean and her husband felt that their happy life had come to an end. It took McLean a long time to get over the death of her child. Did she think about selling the Hope diamond after that? No one knows. She didn't sell it.



A young Evalyn Walsh McLean wearing the Hope diamond shortly after she bought it. She had second thoughts about the diamond at first, and had a priest bless it to take away the curse.

(The Bettmann Archives)

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Instead, she had it remounted. Now it was in a pendant. Sixteen white diamonds surrounded it. There were forty-five diamonds in the necklace chain. McLean had the Star of the East mounted directly below the Hope diamond. The two diamonds together in one necklace made it the most extraordinary piece of jewelry in the world.

Her husband began drinking heavily. He kept telling Evalyn that he wanted a divorce. McLean buried her head in the sand, just as Marie Antoinette had. She didn't want to look at the terrible things that were beginning to happen in her life.

She continued on with her busy life. She and her husband owned several houses. McLean was always arranging parties, buying horses, decorating houses, and doing the things necessary to keep everything running.

McLean began to run low on money. She decided to pawn the Hope diamond. This meant that she would go to a pawnbroker, who would take the Hope diamond and gave McLean the money she needed in exchange. If McLean did not return the money by a certain date, the broker was free to sell the Hope to someone else.



Evalyn Walsh McLean at a dinner party in the 1940s. The Hope diamond hangs around her neck on a pendant.

(The Bettmann Archives)

McLean invited some pawnbrokers named Simpson to her home. They asked Evalyn if they could see the Hope diamond. McLean looked down and seemed surprised that it wasn't around her neck. Was this one of her famous pranks?

"Please be seated," she said. "I'm sure it's here somewhere." Then she began calling, "Mike! Mike!"

THE CURSE OF THE HOPE DIAMOND



Seconds later, McLean's Great Dane bounded into the room. Twisted around his neck was the necklace containing the Hope diamond!

None of McLean's attention-getting ways could hide the pain she must have felt when she was told her husband would have to spend the rest of his life in a mental hospital. Mr. McLean had fallen in love with another woman years before. He tried many times to divorce Evalyn, but she refused. He became an alcoholic and was declared insane. He died in 1941.

It was 1946 when the final blow came. Evalyn McLean's only daughter died from an overdose of sleeping pills. She was only twenty-five years old. This was too much for Evalyn McLean. A year later, she died.

McLean had requested that her jewel collection be divided among her grandchildren. But two years after McLean died, her jewels had to be sold to pay off her debts. The Hope at that time was valued at \$176,920. The ninety-five-carat, pear-shaped Star of the East was worth more.

Harry Winston, a famous New York jeweler,

SIGNS OF A CURSE

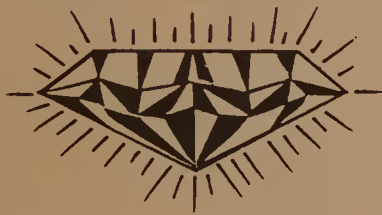


bought the whole collection. Some say he paid \$611,500. The newspapers claimed he paid \$1.25 million. For nine years the Hope diamond traveled thousands of miles. It was worn by many society women who used it to raise money for charity.

Evalyn Walsh McLean's tragic life became known to millions. And every time her story was discussed, the curse of the Hope diamond came up. The story grew and grew. Did the famous gemstone indeed carry a curse? It is a question that many have tried to answer.



Safe At Last?



Harry Winston had a dream. He wanted the United States to have a national jewel collection. After all, America had had no kings or queens to collect crown jewels. America didn't have any deposits of gemstones either.

Winston talked to officials at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. What would they think of the idea of owning the Hope diamond? The officials at the Smithsonian were thrilled. They hoped this would be the beginning of an important gem collection.

THE CURSE OF THE HOPE DIAMOND



What about the curse surrounding the Hope diamond? Would officials at the Smithsonian be worried that the stone would attract bad luck? From the beginning, the Smithsonian's position has been that the stories about the Hope diamond curse are false. It claims that the stories were told to Evalyn Walsh McLean in order to increase her interest in the diamond so she would buy it.

The viewpoint of the experts at the Smithsonian is a scientific one. They go by the facts. They also see the gift of the steel blue diamond as a blessing. It was one of the first major gifts after the Smithsonian opened its gem hall. That gift led others to donate important gems. Today, the Smithsonian has an outstanding collection of gemstones.

It was 1958 when the Hope diamond was delivered to the Smithsonian. The Hope diamond was going to have a permanent home. The gemstone had an American-style royal welcome when it arrived. Many important people had gathered. The big event was covered by newspapers all over the country. Harry Winston could not attend because he was not allowed to be photographed. That was an agreement in his insurance policy. He was constantly dealing



The formal presentation of the Hope diamond to the Smithsonian Institution by Mrs. Harry Winston, wife of the donor. Harry Winston himself never appeared in photos because it was dangerous for him to be recognized in public.

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THE CURSE OF THE HOPE DIAMOND



with such valuable gemstones that it was safer for him not to be easily recognized. Most of the newspapers also included a section in their story about the bad luck the Hope diamond brought to its previous owners. Now millions of people knew the stories surrounding the Hope diamond.

Those stories made them curious. The idea of a diamond carrying a curse sparked their imagination. Before people learned to think mostly in scientific ways, they believed in the mystery of life. Everyday things that couldn't be explained were magic. Gemstones, which appeared so mysteriously from the insides of the earth, were believed to bring good luck. Diamonds protected people from disease. They helped to keep evil away.

Others believed that diamonds contained spirits. People believed that the spirit became upset at the idea of being bought and sold. It left the stone if that happened. Only when the diamond was received as a gift could it be depended on for good luck. When the diamond was offered as a pledge of friendship or love, the spirit living inside was willing to carry its good powers from one owner to the next.

SAFE AT LAST?



The Hope diamond was bought and sold many times. If there is any truth in the belief that diamonds contain spirits, perhaps the spirit left it when Tavernier sold it to King Louis XIV?

Which stories about the Hope diamond are truth and which are fiction? The answer to that may never be known. There are periods when the Hope diamond just disappeared. Then it would turn up again as mysteriously as it had disappeared. All the experts can do is piece together what is known. It has belonged to owners on four continents. What did they have in common?

All were rich. All liked to collect jewels. Henry Philip Hope was the only owner who didn't have any need to show the diamond off. Most of the women whose lives were connected to the Hope diamond had "bigger than life" personalities. Marie Antoinette, May Yohe, and Evalyn Walsh McLean liked attention. They lived public lives. Could it be said that they were cursed? If so, what about all the society women who wore the diamond to raise money for the poor? And the women whom Evalyn Walsh McLean allowed to wear the Hope diamond? The new bride

THE CURSE OF THE HOPE DIAMOND



who needed something blue? There are no bad-luck stories about them. Was the stone bad luck to some and good luck to others?

The men who owned the Hope diamond were all wealthy and powerful. Aurangzeb, Tavernier, the three Kings Louis, the Hopes, and Harry Winston—were they cursed? Or did all the owners simply have the ups and downs that most people, rich or poor, have as they make their journeys through life?

If that is the case, then is the stone an object that reminds the millions of have-nots that terrible things happen to the rich as well as to the poor? Does it say to them, “Money doesn’t buy happiness”?

Of all the owners, Evalyn Walsh McLean is the most convincing case for the curse. She is the one who brought the idea of the curse to the public. It was clear from the beginning that she had mixed feelings about the Hope diamond. Would her life have been different had she followed her first hunch and not bought the Hope? Did the diamond bring misfortune? The question arises: Why didn’t she get rid of it? If there was even the slightest question about its power, why did she insist on wearing it all

SAFE AT LAST?



the time? Was she defying fate? Was this her final statement on the subject? Did she say over and over to herself, “Nothing will overpower me”?

When the Hope was put on display in a safe at the Gem Room at the Smithsonian Institution, thousands went to see the cursed stone. Once in the Gem Room, many felt disappointed. Expecting to find a huge stone that almost glistened with evil, they saw instead a smallish stone that didn’t seem capable of causing anything but the slightest mischief.

Since 1958, the Smithsonian Institution has received hundreds of letters and calls from people who want to know if the stone is really cursed. They also receive letters and calls from people who study astronomy, astrology, or numerology who claim that the Hope diamond is bringing a curse on the country. Some of them predict other terrible things, and blame it on the Hope diamond. Some who study the paths of the planets believe that certain gemstones can bring luck to one country and tragedy to another. They base these observations on the zodiac, which is like a map of the heavens.

The spokesperson at the Smithsonian said, “We



A visitor inspects the Hope diamond shortly after it is put on display at the Smithsonian. Several million people view the Hope annually.

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SAFE AT LAST?



don't like to encourage that sort of thinking." When asked why she thought people insisted on believing in the curse of the Hope diamond, she laughed and said, "I don't know. Why do people watch mysteries on television?"

There is a final nagging question. Was the blue diamond that was to become known as the Hope diamond plucked out of the eye of the goddess Sita in India? Scientific proof says no. It didn't have the right cut, for one thing. The rose or marquise cut, with two pointed ends, would be the proper cut for a stone meant to represent an eye.

The Hope diamond still attracts more visitors than any other gemstone. The mystery continues to grow. A movie was made about the diamond in 1975. It was called *The Legendary Curse of the Hope Diamond*, and it was shown on TV that same year. An actor named Bradford Sterling had a lead part. Strangely, he died after open heart surgery six months later. He was only fifty years old.

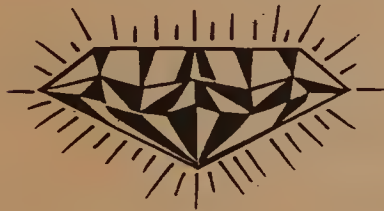
When Tavernier was handed the blue diamond called the "Great Mogul," he complained because it didn't have a history. Only three hundred years

THE CURSE OF THE HOPE DIAMOND



later, the Hope diamond is the most famous gemstone in the history of the world. Is it cursed? The Hope has rested quietly in the Smithsonian for many years. Has the curse been broken? Can we ever know for sure?

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CAN A BEAUTIFUL DIAMOND BRING BAD LUCK?

The Hope diamond is the largest and most beautiful diamond in the world. It is also the most famous. Its fame comes from the terrible luck it seems to bring to those who have it in their possession. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette owned the famous diamond when the French Revolution began—and they were beheaded. A Russian prince loaned the diamond to a dancer who was wearing it when the prince shot her in a jealous rage. The prince was later stabbed to death. The diamond changed hands many times and with each owner its frightening reputation grew. When a wealthy American woman bought the Hope diamond in 1890, she learned that bad-luck objects were lucky for her. She died, and the diamond turned tragic, and at the time of her death the diamond was sold to pay off her debts.

Today, the Hope diamond is on display at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. It attracts more visitors than any other gemstone. It also brings letters and calls from people who are afraid the diamond will bring its bad luck to our country. What do you think? Would you want to own the Hope diamond?

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