



THE

SAINT

BIDS DIAMONDS

LESLIE CHARTERIS



THE SAINT BIDS DIAMONDS

FOREWORD BY GEOFFREY MOORE

THE ADVENTURES OF THE SAINT

Enter the Saint (1930), The Saint Closes the Case (1930), The Avenging Saint (1930), Featuring the Saint (1931), Alias the Saint (1931), The Saint Meets His Match (1931), The Saint Versus Scotland Yard (1932), The Saint's Getaway (1932), The Saint and Mr Teal (1933), The Brighter Buccaneer (1933), The Saint in London (1934), The Saint Intervenes (1934), The Saint Goes On (1934), The Saint in New York (1935), Saint Overboard (1936), The Saint in Action (1937), The Saint Bids Diamonds (1937), The Saint Plays with Fire (1938), Follow the Saint (1938), The Happy Highwayman (1939), The Saint in Miami (1940), The Saint Goes West (1942), The Saint Steps In (1943), The Saint on Guard (1944), The Saint Sees It Through (1946), Call for the Saint (1948), Saint Errant (1948), The Saint in Europe (1953), The Saint on the Spanish Main (1955), The Saint Around the World (1956), Thanks to the Saint (1957), Señor Saint (1958), Saint to the Rescue (1959), Trust the Saint (1962), The Saint in the Sun (1963), Vendetta for the Saint (1964), The Saint on TV (1968), The Saint Returns (1968), The Saint and the Fiction Makers (1968), The Saint Abroad (1969), The Saint in Pursuit (1970), The Saint and the People Importers (1971), Catch the Saint (1975), The Saint and the Hapsburg Necklace (1976), Send for the Saint (1977), The Saint in Trouble (1978), The Saint and the Templar Treasure (1978), Count On the Saint (1980), Salvage for the Saint (1983)



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LESLIE CHARTERIS

SERIES EDITOR: IAN DICKERSON

 **THOMAS & MERCER**

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*To Bobbie,
who went on the picnic*

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The text of this book has been preserved from the original edition and includes vocabulary, grammar, style, and punctuation that might differ from modern publishing practices. Every care has been taken to preserve the author's tone and meaning, allowing only minimal changes to punctuation and wording to ensure a fluent experience for modern readers.

FOREWORD TO THE NEW EDITION

When I first met the Saint he was tall, good-looking, suave, and had a mischievous sense of humor. He also looked an awful lot like my father.

Now, admittedly, I was born halfway through his run as the Saint, so for me he was as much a Persuader and that Bond fellow as he was Simon Templar, but it is always the Saint that I come back to. Whether it's watching some of the old episodes or returning to the books, the call of a hero who takes on the ungodly, helps damsels in distress, has style, sophistication, and one hell of a sense of humor is just too much to resist.

The Saint Bids Diamonds is a classic Saint novel. The premise is simple—in Tenerife, the Saint and Hoppy come across an old man and his daughter who are being beaten up. The old man turns out to be a diamond cutter who is a reluctant member of a smuggling ring masterminded by Reuben Graner. Throw in a missing lottery ticket—worth the equivalent of \$2 million—and you've got all the makings of a classic thriller.

It was first published in May 1937, the result of a winter Leslie Charteris spent in Tenerife with a young lady who would go on to become his second wife and who just happened to be the daughter of a diamond cutter. Perhaps that's one reason why the Saint stories are still a lot of fun, even nearly eighty years after they were first published—Charteris was never shy about mixing fact with fiction. Sure, the language may have become dated and the world has moved on (several times!) but still, this is a lively, breezy story, a pre-war romp that delivers action, adventure, style, and humor—everything you'd expect from a Saint adventure.

Several years ago I started working with producer William J. MacDonald on developing a new Saint for television, a Saint for the twenty-first century. One reason it's taken a while is because we wanted to be true to the original character, true to the Saint you'll find in this book, but also true to life in the twenty-first century. At the time of this writing, Adam Rayner has picked up the halo and done just that. With a bit of luck you'll soon get to watch a new series of *The Saint*, as well as read about him in stories such as these.

—Geoffrey Moore



THE SAINT BIDS DIAMONDS

CHAPTER ONE:

HOW SIMON TEMPLAR TOOK EXERCISE AND HOPPY
UNIATZ QUENCHED HIS THIRST

1

Simon Templar yanked the handbrake back into the last notch as the huge cream-and-red Hironde shot past the little knot of struggling men, and stood up while the tires were still screaming for a ho on the cobblestones. The Hironde rocked to a shuddering standstill just beyond the other car that w pulled in to the side of the road, and Simon sat on the back of the seat and swung long, immaculate trousered legs over the side. From under the jauntily tilted brim of his hat he gazed back at th inspiring scene with a glimmer of reckless delight beginning to dawn in gay blue eyes which shou have seemed entirely misplaced in a man who was better known as the Saint than by any other name.

In the seat beside him, Hoppy Uniatz screwed his head round on his thick neck and also surveyed the scenery, with the strain of intense thought creasing its unmistakable contortions into the rugged contours of what, from its geographical situation rather than anything else, must reluctantly b called his face. Somewhere inside him an awe-inspiringly lucid deduction was struggling for delivery

“Boss,” said Mr Uniatz, with growing conviction, “dat looks like a fight.”

“It is a fight,” said the Saint contentedly, and dropped lightly to the ground.

He had made the deduction several seconds earlier than Mr Uniatz, and with much less difficulty. From the moment when the headlights of the Hironde swept round the bend and caught th group of writhing figures in their sudden blaze of illumination, it had been comparatively obvious th the nocturnal peace of the road up to La Laguna from Santa Cruz de Tenerife was being vigorously disturbed by physical dissension, and all manner of mayhem—so obvious, in fact, that the Saint was treading on the brake pedal and flicking the gear lever into neutral almost as soon as the spectacle m his eyes. He had only paused for that one brief instant to decide whether the fight was merely an ordinary vulgar brawl, or whether it possessed any features which might make it interesting to a connoisseur. And, while he perched up there on the back of his seat, he had seen the vague mass of seething bodies split up into two component nuclei. In one section, two burly males were apparently trying to hammer the insides out of a third whose hair gleamed silver under the dim light, and in the other section, which more or less clinched the matter, a girl who had been trying to help him was being dragged away, fighting like a wildcat, by another of the strong-arm deputation.

Either because the combatants were so absorbed in their own business that they hadn’t noticed the stopping of his car, or else because they proposed to continue operations in defiance of any casual interference, the tempo of the conflict showed no signs of slowing up as the Saint drew nearer, and a gentle and rather speculative smile shaped itself on his lips. The man who was wrestling with the girl had one hand over her mouth, and just at that moment her teeth must have managed to find one of his fingers, for his hand moved quickly and he let out a hoarse profanity which was cut off by her sharp scream for help. The Saint’s smile became even gentler.

“Not so loud, lady,” he murmured. “Help has arrived.”

She had a face which was definitely worth fighting for, Simon realised as the man swung her round as a shield between them, and the artistic perfection of the discovery sent blissful anthems

carolling through his soul. That was just as it should be—beauty in distress, and repulsive blackguard to punch firmly in the eye...

The latter ingredient struck Simon's imagination as being particularly sound. The desire to prove whether it was as satisfactory in practice as in theory became almost simultaneously irresistible. The Saint saw no reason to resist it. He shot out an exploratory fist that whizzed past the girl's ear like a bullet, and felt his knuckles smash terrifically into something crispy-soft which could have been nothing else but the desired objective in the pan of the man behind her.

The jolt ran up his arm and spread itself throughout his body in a warm tingle of ineffable beatitude.

He had not been mistaken. The sensation left nothing to be improved on. It lifted up the heart and made the world a brighter and rosier place. It was the works.

"Lend me your other eye, brother," said the Saint.

The man let go the girl and kicked at him viciously, but the Saint had learnt most of his fighting in places where there were no referees, and the savagely rearing foot that would probably have crippled anyone else hissed harmlessly past him as he stepped smoothly aside. The foot swung on upwards under its undischarged momentum, and Simon cupped his hand under the heel and helped it enthusiastically on its way. The kicker's other leg slipped from under him and he went crashing down on his back, and the Saint trod on his face and assisted the back of his head to collide with the pavement a second time, to remove all doubt.

He took the trembling girl's hand for a moment in a cool grip.

"Get along to my car," he said. "The red-and-yellow one. I'll collect uncle."

She stared at him for a second or two, hesitantly and, it seemed, fearfully, as if she still couldn't realise that he had helped her, and as if she was terrified of a trap. The Saint turned his head so that the light fell on his face, and there must have been something in his smile that answered her doubts, for she nodded and turned obediently away.

The Saint moved on.

Three or four paces from him, the other two members of the tough brigade had made good use of their time. The old man was out, out of the fight for keeps, as Simon had known he must be after a few minutes of the treatment he had been taking. He lay sprawled on the ground like a rag doll, with his head fallen limply back over the edge of the curb. One of his opponents was kneeling on his chest and the other turned round from the diverting pastime of kicking him in the ribs to meet the Saint's approach with a rush of savagely swinging fists.

The Saint side-stepped like a dancer, blocked one blow, ducked another, and slid in with the same movement to catch him in the exact centre of his stomach with a blow that doubled him up as if he had stepped into the path of a runaway pile driver. After which something happened that the victim could never afterwards quite believe, and was inclined to attribute to the dizziness induced by the maltreatment of his solar plexus. But in the fog of agonising nausea which numbed his brain, it felt exactly as if two hands of incredible strength took hold of him at the waist and swept him high in the air, and a voice laughed softly and mockingly before the hands let him go. After which he had a feeling of floating gracefully through the air for one or two short pulsebeats before the earth rose up and hit him a frightful blow in the back that almost shattered his spine...

Simon Templar relaxed his muscles and drew a long, deep breath of sheer content. Even viewed purely in the light of healthy exercise, the dull mechanical movements which less-adventurous souls employed to develop impressive bulges on every limb were not in the same street. This, undoubtedly, as he had always been convinced, was what the doctor ordered. This was the real McCoy. And he laughed again, softly and almost inaudibly, as the last man leapt at him.

He was the largest of them all, with shoulders like an ox, though the Saint topped him in height.

by a couple of inches, and he came in a swerving charge that gave him the space to jerk something dark and glistening from his hip pocket. The Saint saw it and lunged like a flash of lightning for the wrist behind it. He found it and fastened on it with a grip like iron, swinging the gun out of the line of his body. The man tried to wrench free, impatiently, as he might have done from the interference of a child, and a queer look of amazement spread over his broad face when his arm stayed riveted where it was held, as if it had been pinioned in solid rock. The Saint's teeth flashed white in the gloom, and his free fist pistoned up and cracked under the other's outthrust jaw like a gunshot. It should have dropped the large man in his tracks, but he only grunted and shook his head and hit back. Simon slipped under the punch, and they grappled breast to breast. And then there was another sharp thud, and the big man went unexpectedly limp.

Simon let him slide to the ground, and as he folded up he revealed, like an unveiled monument, the homely but supremely happy features of Hoppy Uniatz standing behind him with an automatic in his hand. For a second the Saint's memory flashed backwards in a spurt of sobering alarm, searching for a more precise definition of the timbre of the sharp thud which had preceded his opponent's collapse.

"You didn't shoot him, did you?" he asked anxiously.

"Chees no, boss," Hoppy reassured him. "I just pat him on de roof wit' de end of my Betsy. He ain't hoit."

Simon breathed again.

"I'm not quite sure whether he'd agree with you about that," he remarked. "Although I suppose it's better than being dead...But it looked like the makings of a good fight before you butted in."

He gazed around him somewhat regretfully. The high peak of vivacity in the proceedings seemed to have gone by, leaving a certain atmosphere of anticlimax. The man with the damaged face was trying to get blindly to his feet. The man who had made the short but exciting flight through the air was leaning against the back of the sedan, holding his stomach and looking as if he would like to die. The man whose roof had been patted with the end of Mr Uniatz's Betsy appeared to sleep. What with one thing and another, a shroud of appalling tranquillity had settled upon the scene.

The Saint sighed. And then he grinned vaguely and clapped Hoppy on the shoulder.

"Anyway," he said, "let's see what we fished out of the pot."

He went over to where the old man still lay with his head in the gutter, and picked him up as if he was a child. Whatever else might develop, a strategic withdrawal from the field of victory was the first indicated move. Simon carried the old man over to the Hirondele, dumped him in the tonneau, where he told Hoppy to look after him, and opened the front door for the girl.

She hesitated with one foot on the running board, and again he glimpsed that cloud of suspicion darkening her eyes.

"Really—you needn't bother...We can walk—"

"Not with uncle," said the Saint firmly. "He doesn't feel like walking." Without waiting for her, he slid in behind the wheel and touched the starter. "Besides, your sparring partners might start walking too—they still have some life left in them—"

Crack!

The shot whined over his head and smacked into the wall beyond, and the Saint smiled as if it amused him. He caught the girl's wrist, dragged her down into the seat beside him, slammed the door and let in the clutch more quickly than the separate movements can be described. A second shot crashed harmlessly into the night, and then Mr Uniatz's Betsy answered. Then a side turning caught the Saint's eye, and he spun the wheel and sent the Hirondele screaming round in a skidding right angle. In another moment they were coasting smoothly down into the outskirts of Santa Cruz.

A little later, he heard far behind him a ragged fusillade which puzzled him for the next twelve

hours.

2

But the general aspect of the affair met with his complete approval. He had no fault to find with it—even if it had temporarily interrupted the urgent and fascinating business that brought him to the Canary Islands. Adventure was still adventure, and there was always room for more—that was the fundamental article of faith which had blazed the Saint’s trail of debonair outlawry through all the continents and half the countries of the world. Besides which, there were points about this adventure which were beginning to make it look more than ordinarily interesting...

He glanced at the girl again as they turned out into the wide, open space fronting the harbour.

“Where do you live?” he enquired, and his tone was as casual as if he had been driving her home from a dance.

“Nowhere!” she said quickly. And then, as if the word had come out before she realised what a ridiculous answer it was and how many more questions must inevitably follow it, she said, “I mean—don’t want to give you any more trouble. You’ve been awfully kind...but you can drop us anywhere around here, and we’ll be quite all right.”

Simon turned the car slowly round into the Plaza de la República and tilted his head significantly towards the tonneau.

“I’m sure you will,” he agreed patiently. “But I have to keep on reminding you about uncle. O will you carry him?”

“Is he all right?”

She turned round quickly, and the Saint also looked back as he brought the Hironde to a stop outside the Hotel Orotava. The only person visible in the back seat was Hoppy Uniatz, who did not seem to have fully grasped his obligations as an administrator of first aid. Mr Uniatz was lighting a large cigar, and, for all the evidence to the contrary, he might have been sitting on his patient.

“Sure, de old buzzard is okay, miss,” said Mr Uniatz cheerfully. “He just took a bit of massage but dat’s nut’n. You oughta seen what de cops done to me one time when dey had me in de kitchen.”

Simon saw the pain in her eyes.

“We must take him to a doctor,” she said.

“By all means,” he assented amiably. “Who is your doctor?”

She passed a hand shakily over her forehead.

“I’m afraid I don’t know one—”

“Nor do I. And from what I do know about Spanish doctors, if he’s not dead yet they’ll soon find a way to finish him off. I could look after him much better myself. Why not let’s take him in here and see about fixing him up?”

“I don’t want to go on bothering you.”

The Saint chuckled and reached back to open the rear door.

“Take him inside, Hoppy,” he ordered. “Pretend he’s passed out, and get him up to my room—you’d better act a bit squiffy yourself to complete the picture. We’ll follow in a few minutes so it

won't look too much like a party."

—Mr Uniatz nodded and hauled the patient out like a sack. As he started across the pavement, he lifted up his unmelodious voice in a song of which the distinguishable words made the Saint mildly thankful that no English-speaking residents were likely to be within.

Again the girl made an involuntary movement of protest, but Simon took her by the arm.

"What's on your mind?" he asked quietly, and she shrugged helplessly.

He could feel the tenseness of her under his touch.

"Let me look at you," she said.

He took off his hat and turned towards her. Her eyes searched his face. They were brown eyes he noticed, and her hair shone copper-brown under the lamplight. He realised that if her mouth had been happy it would have been very happy, a soft, red, full-lipped mouth that would have tantalised the imagination of any man whose impulses were human.

She saw a face coloured with the warm tan of unwallied horizons and lighted with the clearest blue eyes that she had ever seen. It was a face that might have leapt to life from the portrait of some sixteenth-century buccaneer; a face that managed to harmonise a dozen strange contradictions between the firm chin and finely chiselled lips and the broad artist's forehead, and yet altogether cast in such a gay and reckless mould that it took all contradictions in its stride and made them insignificant. It was the face of a poet with the dare-devil humour of a cavalier, the face of an unrepentant outlaw with the calm straightforwardness of an idealist. It was the sort of face that she thought Robin Hood might have had—and did not know then that a thousand newspapers had unanimously named its owner the Robin Hood of modern crime.

But Simon Templar opened his face for inspection in the main square of Santa Cruz without a twinge of anxiety even for the two *guardias* who were strolling by; though he knew that photographic reproductions of it were to be found in the police archives of almost every civilised country in the world. For at that particular time the Saint was not officially wanted by the police of any country—a fact which many citizens who had met him in the past had reason to regard with grave indignation.

"I'm just—rather upset," she said, as if she was satisfied with the result of her scrutiny.

"That's only natural," said the Saint lightly. "Getting beaten up by a bunch of toughs isn't what they usually recommend for soothing the nerves. Now let's go and see what we can do for uncle."

He got out and opened the door for her, and the music that was still lilting through the depths of his being opened itself up and sent its rapturous diapasons warbling towards the moon. He knew now that his inspiration must be right.

Somewhere in the vicinity of Santa Cruz there was the material for even more fun and games than he had optimistically expected—and he had come there in the definite expectation of a good deal. And he had tumbled straight into it within a few hours of getting off the boat. Which was only the normal course of events, for him. If there was trouble brewing anywhere, he tumbled into it: it was his destiny, the sublime compensation for all the other things that his outlawry might have denied him.

It never occurred to him to doubt that it had happened again. Otherwise, why had the three toughs been so very determined to beat up the old man whom he had rescued? And why, when he interfered, did they fight to the last man for the privilege of going on with the job? And why, when he had dealt with them once, had they brought their artillery into play to try and start the fight over again? And why was the girl still so afraid even of her rescuer, still suspicious of him even after he had indicated which side he was on in no uncertain manner? And why, most intriguing point of all, hadn't she volunteered one single word of explanation about how the fight started, as anyone else would automatically have done? The whole episode fairly bristled with questions, and none of them could be satisfactorily answered by the circumstances of commonplace highway robbery.

"You know," Simon burred genially on, "these things always make me wonder for a bit

whether it's safe to look a policeman in the eye for the next few days. I remember the last time anything like this happened to me—it was in Innsbruck, but it was almost exactly the same sort of thing. A friend of mine and myself horned in on a scrap where one harmless-looking little bird was getting the hide patted off him by three large, ferocious-looking thugs. We laid them out and heaved them into the river, and it started no end of trouble. You see, it turned out that the harmless-looking little bird was carrying a bag full of stolen jewels, and the three ferocious-looking thugs were perfectly respectable detectives trying to arrest him. It only shows you how careful you have to be with this knight-errant business—Is anything the matter?”

Her face had gone as white as milk, and she was leaning back against the side of the lift, staring at him.

“It's nothing,” she said. “Just—all these other things.”

“I know.”

The lift stopped at his floor, and he opened the doors for her and followed her out.

“I've got a bottle of vintage lemonade that'll have you turning cartwheels again in no time,” he remarked as they walked round the passage. “That is, if Hoppy hasn't drunk it all to try and revive the invalid.”

“I hope you'll turn him inside out if he has,” she answered, and he was amazed by the sudden change in her voice.

She was still pale, pale as death, but the terror had gone far from her eyes as if a mask had been drawn over them. She smiled up at him—it was the first time he had seen her smile, and he couldn't help noticing that he had been right about her mouth. It was turned up to him in a way that at any other time would have put irresistible ideas into his head, and she slipped a hand through his arm as they came to the door of his room. Her small fingers moved over his biceps.

“You must be terrifically strong,” she said, and the Saint shrugged.

“I can usually manage to get a glass to my mouth.”

A queer ghostly tingle touched the base of his spine as he opened the door and let her into the room. It wasn't anything she had said: coming from most women, her last remark would have made him wince, but she had a fresh young voice that made it seem perfectly natural. It wasn't even the new personality which she had started to take on, for that fitted her so perfectly that it was hard to imagine her with any other. The feeling was almost subconscious, a stirring of uncompleted intuition that gave him an odd sensation of walking blindfold along the edge of a precipice, and again he knew, beyond all doubt, that he was nowhere near the end of the consequences of that night's work.

The old man lay motionless on the bed, exactly as Mr Uniatz must have dumped him. Hoppy himself, as the Saint had feared, had started the work of resuscitation on himself, and half the contents had disappeared from a bottle of Haig that had been unopened when Simon left it on the table. He arrived just in time, for Mr Uniatz had the bottle in his hand when Simon opened the door and he was on the point of repeating his previous experiments. Simon took it away from him and replaced the cork.

“Thank God for non-refillable bottles,” he said fervently. “They pour so slowly. If this had been the ordinary kind there wouldn't have been a drop left by now.”

He went to the bed and unbuttoned the old man's coat and shirt. His pulse was all right, making due allowances for his age, and there were no bones broken, but his body was terribly bruised and his face scratched and swollen. Whether he had internal injuries, and what the effects of shock might be, would have to be decided when he recovered consciousness. He was breathing stertorously, with his mouth hanging open, and for the moment he seemed to be in no imminent danger of death.

Simon went to the bathroom and soaked a towel in cold water. He began to bathe the old man's face and clean it up as well as he could, but the girl stopped him.

“Let me do it. Will he be all right?”

—“I’ll lay you odds on it,” said the Saint convincingly.

He left her with the towel and went back to the table to pour out some of the whiskey which he had rescued. She held up the old man’s head while he forced some of it between the puffed and bleeding lips. The old man groaned and stirred weakly.

“That ought to help him,” murmured Simon. “You’d better have the rest yourself—it’ll do you good.”

She nodded, and he gave her the glass. There were tears in her eyes, and while he looked at her they welled over and ran down her cheeks. She drank quickly, without a grimace, and put the glass down before she turned back to the old man. She sat on the bed, holding him with his head pillowed on her breast and her arm round him, rocking a little as if she were cradling a child, wiping his grimed and battered face with the wet towel while the tears ran unheeded down her cheeks.

“Joris,” she whispered. “Joris darling. Wake up, darling. It’s all right now...You’re all right, aren’t you, Joris? Joris, my sweet...”

The Saint was on his way back to the table to pour a drink for himself, and he stopped so suddenly that if she had been looking at him she must have noticed it. For a second or two he stood utterly motionless, as if he had been turned to stone, and once again that weird uncanny tingle laid its clammy touch on the base of his spine. Only this time it didn’t pass away almost as quickly as it had begun. It crept right up his back until the chill of it crawled over his scalp, and then it dropped abruptly into his stomach and left his heart thumping to make up for the time it had stood still.

To the Saint it seemed as if a century went by while he stood there petrified, but actually it could have been hardly any time at all. And at last he moved again, stretching out his hand very slowly and deliberately for the bottle that he had been about to pick up. With infinite steadiness he measured a ration of whiskey into his glass, and unhurriedly splashed soda on top of it.

“Joris,” he repeated, in a voice that miraculously managed to be his own. “That’s rather an unusual name...Who is he?”

The fear that flashed through her eyes was suppressed so swiftly this time that if he had not been watching her closely he would probably have missed it altogether.

“He’s my father,” she said, almost defiantly. “But I’ve always called him Joris.”

“Dutch name, isn’t it?” said the Saint easily. “Hullo—he seems to be coming round.”

The old man was moving a little more, shaking his head mechanically from side to side and moaning like a man recovering from an anaesthetic. Simon returned to the bedside, but the girl waved him away.

“Please—leave him with me for a minute.”

The Saint nodded sympathetically and sauntered over to a chair. The first breath-taking shock was gone now, and once again his mind was running as cool and clear as an alpine stream. Only the high-strung tension of his awakened nerves, a pulse of vivid expectation too deeply pitched and infinitesimal in its vibration to be perceptible to any senses but his own, remained to testify to the thunderbolt of realisation that had flamed through his brain.

He slipped a cigarette from his case, tapped it, set it between his lips without a tremor in his hands, and lighted it without haste. Then he opened his wallet and took out a folded piece of blue paper.

It was a Spanish telegram form, and he read it through again for the twentieth time since it had come into his possession, though he already knew every word of it by heart. It had been sent from Santa Cruz on the twenty-second of December, and it was addressed to a certain Mr Rodney Felson at the Palace Hotel, Madrid. The message ran:

—GRANER

Simon folded the sheet and put it carefully away again, but the words still danced before his eyes. He drew the smoke of his cigarette deep into his lungs and let it trickle out towards the ceiling.

“What’s the rest of the name?” he enquired, as if he was merely making idle conversation.

A moment passed before she answered.

“Vanlinden,” she said, in the same half-defiant way, and then the Saint knew that he had been right in the wild hunch that had come to him five nights ago in Madrid and sent him driving recklessly through the night to Cadiz to catch the boat that left for Tenerife the next day.

3

Simon looked up and realised that the scarecrow physiognomy of Mr Uniatz was becoming convulsed with the same sort of expression that might have been found on the face of a volcano preparing to erupt—if a volcano had a face. His eyes were bulging out of his head like a crab's, and his whole face was turning purple with such an awful congestion, that anyone who did not know him well might have thought that he was being strangled. The Saint, who was not in that innocent category, knew in a flash that these horrible symptoms were only the outward and visible signs of the dawning of a Thought somewhere in the dark unfathomed caves of Mr Uniatz's mind. His eyes blazed a warning that would have paralysed a more sensitive man, but all the sensitiveness in Mr Uniatz would have made a rhinoceros look like a wilting gazelle. Besides, Hoppy's cerebrations had gone too far to be suppressed: he had to get them out of his system or asphyxiate.

"Boss," he exploded, "dijja hear dat? Joris Vanlinden! Ain't dat de guy—"

"Yes, Hoppy, of course that's the guy," said the Saint soothingly.

He went quickly over to the bed and sat down facing the girl. It was a moment when he had to act faster than he could think, before Hoppy's blundering feet blotted out every trace of the fragile bridge that he had been trying to build. He held out his hand and smiled disarmingly into her eyes.

"Lady," he said solemnly, "this is a great moment. Will you shake?"

Her fingers met his almost immediately.

"But why?" she said.

"Just to keep me going till I can shake hands with Joris himself. I've always wanted to meet one of the boys who pulled off that job at Troschman's—it was one of the classics of the century."

"I don't think I know what you're talking about."

He was still smiling.

"I think you do. I said your father had an uncommon name, but I knew I'd heard it before. Now it's all come back to me. I knew I should never forget it."

And he was speaking nothing but the most candid truth, though she might not understand it.

When some persons unknown got into Troschman's diamond *fabriek* down on Maiden Lane one rainy night in April, and cleaned out a safe that had held two hundred thousand dollars' worth of cut and uncut stones, the police were particularly interested in the fact that the raid could hardly have been better timed had the raiders been partners in the business. This was impossible, for Troschman had no partners; Troschman's was a small concern which employed only one permanent cutter, taking on other workers when they were needed. As a matter of fact, this cutter was the nearest approach to a partner that Troschman had, for he was acknowledged to be one of the finest craftsmen in the trade, and had been with Troschman ever since the business was started. So that it was natural for him to be given more confidence than an ordinary employee would have received, and when the stones were collected to fill the biggest order that Troschman had ever secured in his career, this cutter was the only other man who knew when the collection was complete. His name was Joris Vanlinden.

The only reason he was not arrested at once was because the police hoped that, by keeping watch on him, they might net the whole gang at one swoop. And then, three days later, he vanished as if the earth had swallowed him up, and the hue and cry which followed had sought him for four years in vain. Only in various police headquarters did his name and description remain on record, with appropriate instructions. In various police headquarters—and in the almost equally relentless memory of the Saint...

Simon Templar could have sat down and listed the authors of every important crime committed in the last fifteen years, and that list would have included a number of names that no police headquarters had on record, and a number of crimes that no police headquarters had even recognised as crimes. He could have told you when and where and how they were committed, the exact value of the boodle, and very often what had happened to it. He could have told you the personal descriptions of the participants, their habits, haunts, specialties, weaknesses, aliases, previous records, and *modus operandi*. He had a memory for those details that would have been worth thirty years' seniority to any police officer, but to the Saint it was worth more than that. It was half the essentials of his profession: the broad foundations on which his career had been built up, the knowledge and research on which the plans for his amazing forays against the underworld were based, and again and again ingenious felons had thought themselves safe with their booty, only to wake up too late when that unparalleled twentieth-century privateer was already sailing into their stronghold to plunder them of all that they had, until there were countless men who feared him more than the police, and unnumbered places where his justice was known to be swifter and more deadly than the Law.

The Saint said nothing about that, though there was no native modesty in his make-up. He looked the girl in the eyes and kept that frank and friendly smile on his lips.

"Don't look so scared," he said. "You've nothing to worry about. I'm in the business myself."

"You aren't anything to do with the police?"

"Oh, I have lots to do with them. They're always trying to arrest me for something or other, but so far it hasn't been a great success."

She laughed rather hysterically, a sharp and somehow jarring contrast to the panic that he had seen in her face a few moments before.

"So I needn't try to keep up my party manners anymore."

She shook her head and rubbed a hand over her eyes with a sort of gasp, and then all at once she was serious again, desperately serious, with that queer sort of sob in her voice. "But it's not true! It isn't true! Joris didn't get anything out of it. He wasn't one of them, whatever they say."

"That doesn't sound like very good management."

"He...he wasn't one of them. Yes, he helped them. He told them what they wanted to know. He was hard up. He lost all his savings in the stock market—and more money that he couldn't pay. And there was me...They offered him a share, and he knew that Troschman's insurance was all right. But they cheated him...They took him away when they thought he'd break down if he was arrested. Besides, they could use him. They brought him out here. But they never gave him his share. There was always some excuse. The stones would take a long time to get rid of, or they couldn't find a buyer, or something. And all the time he had to go on working for them."

"That was Graner, I suppose?"

He was still holding her hand, and he could feel her trembling.

"Do you know him?"

"Not personally."

"Yes, that was Reuben Graner." She shuddered. "But if you don't know him you couldn't understand. He's—I can't tell you. Sometimes I don't think he's human...But how did you know?"

Simon took out his cigarette case and offered it to her. Her hand was still shaking, so that she

could hardly keep the cigarette in the flame when he gave her a light. He smiled and steadied her hand with cool, strong fingers.

“Reuben isn’t here now, anyway,” he said quietly. “And if he does walk in, Hoppy and I will beat him firmly over the head with the wardrobe. So let’s take things calmly for a bit.”

“But how did you know?”

“More or less by accident. You see, I came here from Madrid.” He saw the awakening of understanding in her eyes and nodded. “Rodney Felson and George Holby were there.”

“Do you know them?”

“Not to talk to. But I know lots of people that I don’t talk to. I just happened to see them. You know Chicote’s Bar?”

“I’ve never been to Madrid.”

“If you ever go there, look in and give Pedro my love. Chicote’s is one of the great bars of the world. Everybody in Madrid goes there. So did Rodney and George. Rodney had a telegram. He talked it over with George—I wasn’t near enough to hear what they were saying, but in the end they screwed it up and dropped it under the table. Which was careless of them, because when they went out I nicked it up.”

“You picked it up?”

He grinned shamelessly.

“I told you I was in the business myself. There may be honour among thieves, but I never saw very much. I knew that Rodney and George were one of the six cleverest pairs of jewel thieves at present operating in Europe, so I just naturally thought that anything they were interested in might interest me. It did.”

He took out the telegram again and gave it to her. He watched her as she read it through, and saw a trace of colour burn for a moment in her cheeks—burn till it burnt itself out and left them white again.

“He sent it as soon as he heard,” she whispered. “I thought it would be like that. I could feel it. He never meant to let Joris and me go away. Oh, I knew!”

He would have guessed her age at barely twenty-one, but when she raised her eyes again there was an age of weariness in them that tied a strange knot in his throat. He took the telegram from her and put it away again.

“Did you want to go away?” he asked gently.

She nodded without speaking.

“Joris was working at his old job, I suppose,” he said.

“Yes. They made him work for them. He cut and polished all the stones that came from Troschman’s. Sometimes they went out and stole more, and when they brought them back he had to re-cut them so that they couldn’t be identified. He had to do what they told him, because they could always have sent him back to the police. And there was me—but I told him that that didn’t matter, only he wouldn’t believe me.”

“And now they want to replace him.”

She nodded again.

“That’s what Graner called it. We thought we might go away, somewhere like South America, where nobody would know us and we could live and be happy. But I knew we couldn’t. Graner never meant us to. So long as Joris was working for them, it was all right. But they couldn’t let him go with all that he knew. He’d never have said anything, but they couldn’t be sure of that. I knew they’d never let him go alive. They meant to kill him...Oh, Joris!”

Her arms tightened convulsively about the old man’s frail shoulders, and the Saint saw her eyes shining again.

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