



MYSTERY PUZZLE

by Milton Bradley



Diamonds Can Be Deadly™

A JIGSAW PUZZLE MYSTERY

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Rain pelted the walls of the great stone mansion, whipped to a fury by a storm of almost tropical intensity. A spear of lightning illuminated the four automobiles on the gravel drive, attesting to the presence of tonight's six visitors, guests who were even now sitting in the mansion's lounge, each of them dreaming of diamonds.

The lounge at Tudor Close had been designed for one purpose only, to show off the famed collections of Dr. Black. The rarest coins and stamps were on display in custom-made cabinets. Unique collectibles of all varieties graced the shelves, while framed on the walls was a collection of half-completed crossword puzzles attempted and abandoned by every member of the royal family since George V.

Dr. David Black was the world's most avid collector. The eccentric millionaire cared for nothing else and it pained him to pass up so much as a crumb — especially a crumb, since he was renowned for having the finest antique crumb collection, bar none.

"I never thought I'd have to auction this off," the doctor moaned as he lifted a sparkling necklace from his wall safe and held it up to the light. "But I need the money for further acquisitions. There's a wonderful piece of fifteenth century roof thatch, for example. Museum quality."

But his six visitors weren't listening. All were staring greedily at the Black Star, a flawless diamond of singular brilliance that the doctor had named after himself. Most of them had traveled hundreds of miles to be here tonight, braving one of the worst thunderstorms in recent memory in order to bid on this famous, oft-photographed treasure, a huge gemstone set on a perfect rope of lesser diamonds, all tinted in a rare shade of pink.

"This is an odd way to run an auction," Mrs. Peacock complained. "Holding it in the middle of the night? And with only three bidders? Most unorthodox."

"Is it?" Black asked in genuine surprise. "I've never actually sold anything before, so I wouldn't know."

"Well, I wouldn't have missed it for the world," the Reverend Green said, rubbing his hands together in gleeful anticipation. "Even though I'm just here to verify the stone and act as auctioneer, it's still a rare treat. May I inspect it now?"

The Reverend Jonathan Green was Dr. Black's closest friend and nearest neighbor. He had been a noted gemologist before taking the vows, but nowadays he practiced his trade only on the rare occasions when the bishop called on him to appraise the few paltry gemstones in the church treasury. "What I wouldn't give to actually own this," Green muttered as he carried the necklace to a corner table where the light was better. "Just to look at it every day and know it was really mine. None of these fools could appreciate a prize like this."

The reverend spent a full minute bent over the necklace, then turned back to the others with a flourish and a smile. "Authentic and in perfect shape," he announced, swallowing his resentment. "Would any of the bidders care for a look before we begin?"

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock nodded toward her maid. "Mrs. White! And with a simple motion of her hand, she indicated to her maid to bring her the necklace. Mrs. White obeyed, taking the rope of jewels from the cleric and crossing the room. Elizabeth Peacock held out both hands to receive it. "I shall rename it the Peacock Diamond," she stated imperiously, as if already the owner. "Just like the old days."

The Black Star had indeed been known as the Peacock Diamond, back in the days when it was the property of her first husband, Lemuel Peacock, the industrialist. Lemuel had died from a mysterious stomach ailment, leaving his entire estate to Elizabeth who, coincidentally, just happened to be a gourmet cook. After the equally mysterious death of Mrs. Peacock's second husband, there had been a lengthy police investigation. The poor widow, short of funds and temporarily unable to touch her money, had been forced to sell her beloved diamond necklace to Dr. Black. She had always regretted the sale. But this auction would change all that. This would be her chance to recover her rightful legacy.

Mrs. Peacock's four diamond rings joined in the sparkle as Mrs. White placed the Black Star in her outstretched hands, hands that were shaking with anticipation. "Oh, dear," the heiress cried as the substantial necklace fell to the floor with a resounding clunk. "How clumsy of me." A few seconds later, she had bent under the table and recovered the prized rope of diamonds. "No harm done. My, it's even more lovely than I remember."

Professor Peter Plum was next in line. "I don't know much about this jewelry stuff," the American fitness expert confessed as Mrs. White transferred the jewels from Mrs. Peacock's hands to his. Plum had made a sizable fortune promoting a line of questionable health pills, including supplements of granite and shale, "essential minerals for developing that rock-hard midsection."

The Professor mimicked the reverend's gemology routine, taking the necklace to the corner table and bending over the stones in mock concentration. "Looks great to me," Plum said cheerily a minute later as he turned back to face the others.

Miss Vivienne Scarlett snorted with disdain. "Oh, what do you know, you lummo." She grabbed the necklace with a single swipe, causing a general gasp of alarm. "The best way to judge diamonds is against delicate skin." And with a sexy swivel, the attractive woman sashayed her way across to an ornate nineteenth century mirror mounted on the far wall. For propriety's sake, everyone tried not to stare at her tight silk dress, concentrating instead on sounds — the click of her heels and the tinkling of the gold charm bracelet that dangled from her left wrist. "There," she purred, standing in front of a mirror and unfurling the necklace across her tanned throat. "What do you think, Professor, dear?"

"Gorgeous," Plum gasped, his own throat suddenly dry. The professor was desperately in love with Miss Scarlett. In fact, she was the sole reason for his being here. She had been talking about the auction for weeks, hinting how good she would look decked out in the Black Star necklace. Plum was determined to make the gem into an engagement present that the avaricious beauty couldn't refuse. His plan seemed to be working. Ever since he'd agreed to come to the auction, Scarlett had grown more affectionate. True, she still called him horrible names. But there was something almost loving in her tone now. Plum knew that his future happiness depended on this acquisition.

As for Vivienne Scarlett, her great passion in life was jewels. Out of eleven engagements throughout the years, she had somehow managed to retain fifteen diamond rings, two necklaces, a Victoria Cross and three Eagle Scout medals. The Black Star would be the culmination of her collection. "Gems look so much better on young skin, don't you agree?" Scarlett cooed, throwing a glance in Mrs. Peacock's direction.

"Couldn't tell from you, dearie," hissed Mrs. White with a wicked smile as she lifted the necklace from Scarlett's neck and ambled back across the room.

Mrs. Blanche White didn't know why she had flown to her employer's defense like that. The old bat paid her a minuscule salary and treated her like dirt. But, after all, it was a job. And as an ex-con, Blanche knew she couldn't expect much better.

Years ago, Mrs. White had fallen in with the wrong crowd. Eventually she was arrested, convicted of robbery and served a stretch in Dartmoor Prison. Upon her release, she swore to keep on the straight and narrow and soon settled down to do the only job she could find, catering to a spoiled woman who went through husbands like Churchill went through cigars. Mrs. White's dream was to open a little tea shop in Brighton, but that took capital, money she'd been unable to save no matter how hard she tried. "If only I had the means to really start a new life," she was often heard mumbling to herself.

Colonel Mike Mustard was the last to handle the Black Star. He had been in a sour mood ever since arriving at Tudor Close, one of the most magnificent country homes in England. "Done very well for himself," the colonel had growled as he guided his ailing roadster across the picturesque wooden bridge that separated the mansion grounds from the road.

He and the doctor were old school chums, which is not to say they liked each other. Ever since their days at Harrow, the two had been rivals in everything from grades to girlfriends, with David Black always coming out on top. Mustard was particularly miffed by his old chum's wealth, which seemed to have multiplied at about the same rate that his own wealth had divided. True, the colonel had come here to bid a small fortune on a diamond necklace. But it wasn't his money. The impoverished military man was representing a consortium of buyers who were hoping that the Black Star necklace would make a profitable investment. "Black is not going to embarrass me again," Mustard mused darkly. "I'm

going to own that blasted necklace of his, no matter what it takes."

Mrs. White handed over the Black Star for his inspection and, as usual, Colonel Mustard disguised his bile with a smile and a joke.

"Thanks for the bauble, old man," he quipped, tossing the glittering treasure into his jacket pocket and heading for the door. "Ta-ta."

It was surprising how quickly Black could turn purple. "What do you think you're doing?" the collector blustered.

"You never did have a sense of humor," smirked Mustard. He retrieved the necklace from his pocket and placed it back in the relative safety of the open safe. "Shall we get it over with? The storm is turning even nastier and I'm not sure how long that dilapidated bridge of yours will hold out."

The Reverend Green took his place by the fireplace mantel and began the auction. "Now where should we start?" the cleric asked shyly. "One hundred thousand?"

Three hands pumped their way into the air and kept pumping, agreeing readily to every escalation in the bid. In under a minute, the suggested retail price had jumped to well over half a million pounds.

"Why didn't you tell me it was worth so much?" Plum whispered to Miss Scarlett as he lowered his hand for the last time and dropped out of the running. "You know I can't afford to spend this kind of dough, even on you. The vitamin business isn't what it used to be."

"I guess I'm not even worth half a million pounds," Miss Scarlett pouted. "Well, I always knew you were cheap."

"Viv, baby. You know I'd do anything for you."

The lovebirds did their best to bicker quietly while Mustard and Peacock kept up the furious battle. When the bid reached a staggeringly high million pounds even, the colonel called for a recess. "I'm not authorized to go any higher," announced the flustered ex-officer.

Mrs. Peacock smiled victoriously. "But if I may make a call," Mustard added gamely, "I'm sure my partners will extend my limit."

"What? This isn't cricket!" Peacock screeched.

"I know, it's an auction," Dr. Black retorted. "And if a simple phone call can get me a better price, so be it." He pointed his old schoolmate to a telephone on a nearby table. "Why don't we take an interval? There are some hors d'oeuvres that Mrs. Hogarth has kindly prepared along with a choice of libations. Please help yourselves."

Miss Scarlett jumped to her feet, casually abandoning her blue Plum. "Anyone else for sherry?" she asked, her voice and gold charm bracelet tinkling in equal amounts.

"Oh, yes," Mrs. White said eagerly, momentarily forgetting her place. "I mean..."

"That's quite all right," Scarlett laughed. "I'm sure your employer won't mind your having a sip, especially since it's that divine dark creamy kind. I'll even serve. And how about you, Mrs. Peacock?"

The women all drank sherry. The men drank port and whiskey. Everyone wandered around, idly examining the collections, some of which were displayed in glass-fronted cabinets, others just littered tastelessly in every corner of the lounge. All ears were anxiously attuned to Colonel Mustard and his trunk call.

"Hello? Hello? Blast," the colonel cursed, then slammed down the receiver. "The line has gone dead. The bloody storm must have knocked out the phone lines."

"Then I win," Mrs. Peacock crowed triumphantly and nearly ran to claim her glittering prize. She paused at the mouth of the wall safe and gazed in. "In this light," she said slowly, a frown etched on her face, "it's not nearly as impressive, is it?"

The Reverend Green joined her at the safe. He gingerly lifted out the Black Star necklace and took it once again into the corner. "I

don't know how this could have happened," the cleric stuttered as he turned to face the others. "It's not the same. Someone must have pulled a switch. This is a forgery."

"What? That's impossible." Dr. Black was on his feet and stumbling to the safe.

The reverend held out the paste replica for his friend's inspection. "It's a decent replica. No one but you or I might have caught it."

Dr. Black took the necklace with shaky hands and inspected the facets. "Good Lord, you're right. This isn't the Black Star. But you said it was the real thing when you examined it. Who could have possibly made a substitution?"

"Colonel Mustard did it," Mrs. Peacock said, pointing an accusing finger. "Remember? When he put the necklace in his pocket? He knew he couldn't win the auction fairly."

Mustard bristled. "And how about you, my dear? Dropping it under the table. A perfect opportunity."

Mrs. Peacock glared daggers. "Honestly. Why would I steal a necklace that I just bid a million pounds for?"

"Maybe you don't actually have a million pounds," Professor Plum reasoned. "Or maybe you prefer your necklaces free."

"Don't be a ninny," snorted Mrs. Peacock. "If I had to pick a thief, Professor, it would be you. We all saw how you took the Black Star into that corner."

Dr. Black's eyes flitted from guest to guest as he silently recalled the inspection process. "Any one of you could have made the switch. You all had the necklace out of sight for at least a few seconds. Hogarth!" he shouted out into the hall. "Come here." He turned back to the six suspects. "No one leaves this room until we find the Black Star. I don't care if it takes all night."

"I'm afraid we're going to be here all night no matter what." The Reverend Green had pulled back the drapes and was staring out into the stormy night.

Miss Scarlett and Mrs. White joined him at the window. Through the torrent of rain and flashes of lightning they could see what he meant. The bridge connecting Tudor Close to the rest of the world had just been washed away in the raging river.

"Blimey," Mrs. White said with a shudder. "I could do with another sherry."

Scarlett turned on her. "Quiet, you old souse. This is no time to get drunk."



That night Hogarth the butler lay awake, unable to sleep. In his troubled mind, he reviewed the events of the last few hours. Although they had searched and searched, the million pound necklace had not yet been found. Hogarth himself had personally frisked all the men while Mrs. Hogarth was called in from the kitchen to discreetly search the women — all to no avail.

The obvious conclusion was that the thief, fearing just such a body search, had hidden the jewelry somewhere in the collection-cluttered lounge, possibly during the break for Colonel Mustard's phone call. Dr. Black had initiated a cursory examination of the room, again to no avail. A thorough search would have meant disturbing the collections, something the doctor didn't want to do, not until the police arrived tomorrow. Hogarth had locked the room and the only key, other than Dr. Black's own, was now safely in the pocket of his butler's dressing gown.

The idea of a brazen jewel thief spending the night in Tudor Close didn't appeal to Hogarth, but he did his best not to let it show. He

made all six of the guests comfortable, giving them all private rooms on the mansion's third floor.

Hogarth fluffed his pillow. Beside him in bed, Mrs. Hogarth snored like a bear in hibernation. At least the storm had finally stopped, he mused. Tomorrow the bridge would be repaired and... And then, in between the snores, came the sound of voices. Someone was downstairs. Dr. Black? He listened. Yes, it was definitely the master. And he was arguing with someone.

Hogarth slipped on his dressing gown and sneaked out of his second story bedroom, leaving Mrs. Hogarth to snore on alone. By the time he reached the bottom of the main staircase, the argument had escalated into a fight.

He tiptoed across the hall, still unable to identify the other voice. The disturbance was definitely coming from the lounge. The voices had stopped now, replaced by the sounds of a struggle. Glass was being broken, tables knocked over. "Dr. Black?" Hogarth pressed his ear to the door just in time to hear a sickening thud, followed by the muffled sound of running footsteps. "Dr. Black!" He tried the door, found it still locked, then groped in his pocket for the key.

When the butler finally opened the door, he saw his worst fears materialized. His employer was lying on the Oriental rug, alone and dead, the side of his head neatly bashed in. Without stopping to think about fingerprints, Hogarth knelt and picked up the weapon. It was a heavy, jewel-encrusted spanner — a wrench, as the Yanks call it — that had once been used by Queen Isabella to tighten her armor.



The six guests stood uncomfortably in the lounge, being careful to disturb neither the body nor the debris left in the wake of the struggle. Hogarth coughed gently into his hand and made his announcement as

diplomatically as he could. "No offense meant. But I'm afraid one of you murdered Dr. Black."

"What?" Colonel Mustard huffed. "We were all in our rooms sleeping. None of us heard a blasted thing, not until you came knocking on our doors."

Mrs. Peacock stuck a bejeweled finger in Hogarth's face. "Don't go trying to shift the blame. You were the only one with a key to the lounge. You must have killed him."

"The killer didn't need a key," Hogarth answered. And to illustrate his point, he walked over to the wall and twisted an antique mirror sideways exactly 90 degrees. The six guests gasped as a part of the wall creaked open, revealing a narrow hidden passage. "It connects this room to the conservatory. In all the excitement last night, Dr. Black must have forgotten to lock the mirror. My theory is that the killer came through the secret passage, hoping to retrieve the necklace from its hiding place. The master must have caught this person in the act. They struggled and the master was killed."

"Did the killer get away with the necklace?" Miss Scarlett asked, her eyes wandering over the assorted collections.

Hogarth thought. "I don't think there was time. When the killer heard me at the door, he — or she, of course — retreated through the passage. Next to the conservatory is a rear staircase. The killer could have been back up in one of the bedrooms before anyone knew the difference."

"A pretty theory," Professor Plum scoffed. "Except for one thing. None of us knew about this secret passage."

"Fiddlesticks!" It was Mrs. White's turn to scoff. "Everyone knew. Tudor Close is famous for its secret passages. Anyone who went to all the trouble of making a paste copy of the Black Star certainly would have known about them."

"Exactly," Hogarth said and checked his watch. "It's five a.m. The phones are working now. A man from Scotland Yard is already on his way down from London. Would anyone care for tea?"

For once, the six suspects were silent, intrigued by the prospect of a police investigation. Could Hogarth be right? Was one of them not only a thief but a cold-blooded killer? Their eyes darted around the lounge, as if just by looking they could somehow identify the murderer and locate the missing necklace. And, ironically enough, they could — if they looked hard enough. The clues were right there in front of them.

By assembling the jigsaw puzzle, you, too, can see the clue that pinpoints the killer and also discover where the killer has hidden the Black Star necklace.

Good luck!

THE SOLUTION

Miss Scarlett knew from the night that her nut-cracking boyfriend, Professor Plum, could never win the auction. So she came prepared with a forgery of the famed necklace, good enough to fool a novice examination. She made the substitution while crossing the room to admire herself in the mirror.

But where did she stash the original necklace? Take a good look at the decorations. Remember how Scarlett handed her nut-cracking sherry to all the ladies. Soon someone recognized the supply, the level of the liquid should be quite low. But surprise — the decanter is full. That's because Scarlett dropped the necklace in there while Michael was on the phone. The diamonds were easily camouflaged by the dark cream sherry and the tin glass container. Look up, where Mrs. White ingested another drink. Scarlett discouraged her so that the necklace's hiding place could remain safe.

Besides the sherry, is there any other clue pointing to Scarlett? Absolutely. See the gold coin with the sad little boy? That's not a coin at all, but a gold charm from Scarlett's charm bracelet. During the struggle, the doctor managed to grab her bracelet, accidentally tearing off a gold coin charm that fell among the scattered coins. Scarlett didn't notice the charm was missing until long after she'd fled back through the secret passage.