



ZOMBIES AT TIFFANY'S







ZOMBIES AT TIFFANY'S



SAM STONE





First published in England in 2012 by
Telos Publishing Ltd
17 Pendre Avenue, Prestatyn, Denbighshire, LL19 9SH
www.telos.co.uk

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ISBN: 978-1-84583-072-4 (paperback)
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Typesetting by Arnold T Blumberg
www.atbpublishing.com



Printed by Berforts

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data.
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

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No zombies or cats were harmed in the creation of this book.





For Natasha and Leah





Prologue

The Darkness

Extracts From The Journal Of A Union Army Soldier

I floated in the happiness of ether as the doctor began to work on my leg. There was the numb, cold sensation – accompanied by a painless tugging – of running liquid as he poured whisky into the wound. I visualised him cutting into raw meat, felt the same indifference. Then I heard a *ping* as something was dropped into a small metal dish on the table beside me. He had removed the bullet. There was more tugging and a distant scraping as my thigh was roughly sewn up with catgut. I felt nothing.

It had hurt so much a short time ago. Now my limbs were heavy and numb. My chest heaved, my breathing was laboured. Shadows gathered around the tent like



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the spirits of the dead waiting to take me away to the next realm. I thought I would probably die. Can you understand that? Facing death?

My mind flashed back to the battlefield. The cries of war, the screams of the dying and the deafening retorts that echoed across the plain as soldiers fired their weapons: all were still ringing in my ears. The silence in the tent was torture. It made me feel less alive.

Yes. I was certain that death was nearby.

There was an oil lamp, and as the dark spread into the corners of my eyes, I felt the doctor move away, sensed the brightness intensify as he turned the lamp up, but my dulled vision could barely make out the canvas above my head.

I heard, rather than felt, a final splash of cleansing spirit over the now-sealed wound.

‘George ... you’re going to be all right,’ said the doctor. ‘Rest now.’

The tent flaps opened as someone came in and the doctor stopped his work and glanced up.

‘Is he going to make it, Doc?’ asked a voice I knew. The Colonel, Jackson was his name, was making his rounds to see which of us were worth saving.

The doctor opened one of my eyelids with his thumb and gazed down as though he could see my soul.

‘This one is fine. The wound was from a bullet, nothing else,’ he said.

I drifted away. The ether darkness was all I knew



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and it pulled me down into a deep, painless sleep. Even so, the dreams remained. The insanity of the day mixed around in my subconscious and the enemy became more monstrous than they really were.

It was full dark when I woke again. A dull ache throbbed through my thigh and pushed away the last traces of the anaesthetic.

The camp was quiet, as it should be, but my heart began to race as though I were an animal hiding from a predator. I remembered how I came to be here. The surgery, the ether. My throat was dry and a strange metallic taste was in my mouth. My head hurt and I felt sickness tugging at the insides of my stomach. *Had I lost my leg?* I wanted to see but I was afraid to look. I moved my heavy arms, tried to move my legs. Pain wracked through my thigh and hip. It felt as though it were still there, but I knew about phantom limbs, had seen many a soldier believe he was still whole when in fact parts of him were now scattered on the killing fields.

The flaps on the medical tent moved once more.

'I'm hungry ...' said a voice. 'It's dark. So very dark ...'

I tried to sit up, but my limbs were paralysed and I wasn't sure whether this was the after effects of the medication or whether fear had sapped my strength.

Something lurked in the doorway, as though waiting to be invited inside.

'What are you doing here?' demanded the doctor.



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I turned my head and saw the doctor lying on another cot beside mine. He sat, pushing back the coarse grey blanket. My eyes followed him to the door of the tent.

‘Doc ... I’m hungry. Feed me ...’

Somewhere there was light and the doctor’s face was ashen in the pale glow that came from the camp outside. I imagined that the lamps were lit to scare away evil. I didn’t know why this thought came to me, or why my heart continued to pump blood into my ears, deafening me with my own heartbeat as the doctor conversed calmly with the stranger at the entrance to the tent.

‘You need to go and sleep this off,’ the doctor said.

‘I can’t, Doc. It *bit* me.’

‘In the morning you’ll feel better.’

I raised my head and saw burning embers in the stranger’s eyes and realised that it was Colonel Jackson. I wondered what had happened to him. He was usually so in control. But this man ... he was troubled, pulled by more than lack of sleep and the pressure of command. He was haunted.

‘I can give you something to help you sleep,’ said the doctor.

‘Yes,’ said Jackson. ‘Sleep. I need sleep.’

They left then, walking away. The tent flaps fell back in place. I was alone once more. I didn’t like it, but the terror left my limbs and I was able to pull myself up into a seated position. I glanced down at the blanket covering my legs. In the gloom I could make out the shape of both





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of them, still there, still intact. Still whole. *Thank God.*

I sighed deeply and realised that I had been holding my breath. The leg – my thigh – ached but still I swung it over the side of the cot, wincing at the pain, but not allowing it to stop me. *Could I walk?*

I stood tentatively, taking the weight on my good leg first before testing the other one. Shooting pain pierced my hip. I leaned against the cot, gritting my teeth and hopping to relieve the discomfort.

My leg worked but it couldn't take weight. It hurt like the Devil when I tried. I looked around the tent for something that would make a crutch of some sort, and then I saw my walking stick, strangely and conveniently resting beside my trunk. The stick had been my grandfather's and I had brought it with me for luck. I noted with some consternation that everything I owned was now in this tent; my trunk, rucksack and my weapons all lay a few feet away from my cot. I hopped over to the trunk and I reached for the stick where it lay on top. I had always liked the big silver cat's head that crowned the wooden stick: mouth open; fangs bared like a roaring lion. It reminded me of the cats my grandfather had kept and loved for most of his life.

I slowly put my foot down, but rested my weight on the stick. The pain was bearable. Just. And so I hobbled to the door and looked out at the camp.

The light I had seen wasn't from oil lamps as I had first thought. There was a full moon and it shone down





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on the camp, lighting it up like a beacon with crisp white moonlight.

I saw a soldier walking the perimeter while another prodded a fire and added more sticks and leaves to keep it burning. Other than these two men there was no activity. I was just about to close the flap and return to my bed when I saw the doctor come out of Jackson's tent. He was staggering, holding his hand to his throat. His skin reflected the yellow of the camp fire and the white of the moon.

'Help him!' I called, stumbling forward out of the tent. I almost lost my footing as the cane slipped in the muddy, trampled earth.

The soldier tending the fire hurried to his aid, but as he approached I saw something happen that I couldn't explain. The doctor *changed*. He grabbed hold of the soldier, pulling him towards his open mouth. The moonlight illuminated his yellowed, slime-covered teeth seconds before the soldier pulled his handgun from his holster, pressed it to the doctor's temple and fired.

The doctor's legs crumpled, useless beneath him, and he fell to the floor at the feet of the now near-hysterical soldier.

'He was one of *them*!' he yelled.

The camp was in uproar as many of the soldiers rushed from their tents, rifles at the ready. They surrounded the dead doctor and the soldier.

'Did he bite you?' someone asked, but all the soldier



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could do was shake his head. He was clearly in a state of total shock.

The Colonel lifted the flap of his tent. He came out into the light and I saw the same yellowed skin, hungry, burning eyes and foul teeth that had been the main features in the doctor's metamorphosis. His mouth and chin were covered with blood. I knew then that it was he who had bitten the doctor.

'Come to me boys,' he said. 'The darkness awaits you. Let it into your soul.'

I moved back into the tent as the Colonel stepped forward. All of the soldiers, barring the one that had shot the doctor, raised their rifles and aimed them at the Colonel.

The Colonel smiled. Saliva dripped from his polluted teeth. The soldiers fired.

The Colonel jumped forward, a crazed and hungry roar on his lips. He caught hold of a young cadet and clamped his mouth over the boy's right eye. The boy screamed, I heard a sickening pop, and the rest of the camp fell on both the Colonel and the boy.

They parted them. A black, bleeding hole remained where the soldier's eye had been. The Colonel had somehow sucked it right from the socket. The boy fell back, mouth open and slack with shock, and was caught by two other soldiers and dragged across the camp to be laid down by the camp fire. In the meantime, three men tried to restrain the Colonel, but they were all afraid of



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his snapping jaws.

‘Don’t let him bite you!’ someone called.

The three men let go simultaneously and fell back as the soldiers fired at the Colonel. His body jerked, raised up by the impact, and he fell against his tent. The canvas ripped and the tent collapsed, covering the Colonel as he fell to the ground.

‘Shoot!’ called the Captain. The men let rip into the tent and I saw the Colonel’s body jerk underneath the canvas.

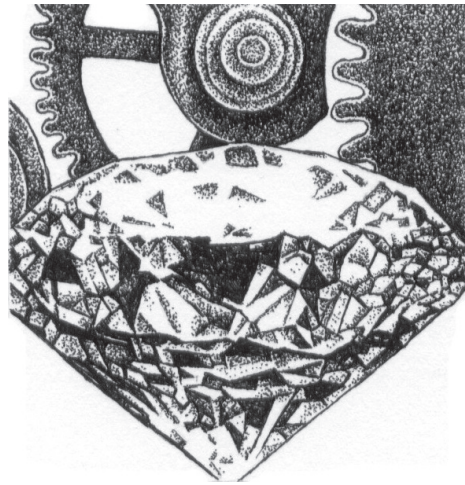
They focused their efforts on his head. The bullets ripped into the canvas, pounding his skull into the ground. Blood seeped through the fabric, but the soldiers didn’t stop firing until the body of the Colonel stopped moving and nothing more than a bloody pulp remained.

It was then that the injured boy by the camp fire sat up.

From my vantage point just inside the medical tent, I was the first to notice him moving. He turned his head and stared at me, and my eyes focused on the bloody hole rather than his remaining eye. A dull flame, some kind of inner evil, burned behind the empty socket.

My voice choked in my throat as I tried to raise the alarm. But the boy didn’t come for me as I expected. Instead he stood and turned and walked out of the camp.

I collapsed to my knees, the pain in my thigh intensified and I felt I had looked death once more in the eye. Could I ever be lucky a third time?



One

It was the summer of 1862 when I started my new job. My brother, Henry, had gone away to join the Union Army to fight against the Confederates leaving my young sister Sally and me with our mother. At the time, Mother was taking in sewing work – she had been among the first to invest in a Singer machine – but the meagre pittance she earned for hours and hours of backbreaking effort was barely enough to pay back the hire-purchase on the machine, let alone cover all of our other living costs. I was 18 when I found myself to be the main breadwinner in our family.

It was a strange time. Women weren't really thought of as the workforce in New York, yet suddenly, with the ever-decreasing male population who were leaving to sign up in the Federal Army, we were left with little choice but to support ourselves and find the best work we could.



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Most went on to factory work, or became waitresses in tea rooms and bars, while others, like me, found their employment in the still thriving centre of the grid that constituted New York.

I was luckier than most. I landed a prime job at Tiffany and Co on Fifth Avenue in Lower Manhattan.

It felt like an adventure going to work. I was good with figures and well turned out; it was what made me stand out in the sea of applicants who applied for the job of sales assistant.

That first morning I donned my uniform: an austere black skirt, high-necked white blouse, and a formal fitted day jacket that matched the skirt. Underneath the long skirt I wore my most comfortable walking shoes. I was wearing a corset too, but mother had fastened it loosely, even though by then I was quite used to wearing them. Shop rules stated that all the female assistants had to wear their hair swept up and away from their face. I'd never worn mine so formally before and I marvelled at how sophisticated I looked as Sally and Mother put in the last pins and my hair was held securely high on top of my head.

'That should hold,' said Mother, adding a final pin for good measure.

There was no point in complaining though; to do so would have brought forth a lecture that I'd learnt by heart. *Kat, you have a responsibility to this family now. You're the eldest. What would happen to Sally if you don't*





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go to work? Be sensible, do as you're told and bring home your pay every Friday. Mother's lecture was unnecessary, however. I wanted to work and the opportunity that Tiffany's afforded meant more to me than the continuing education my family had originally planned.

'There!' said Mother, finally satisfied.

I stared at my reflection. My full, wavy, black hair was now tamed and the uniform, as severe as it was, made me look grown up. Mother handed me her best paste brooch. It contained amber and red glass and it looked like real precious stones, even though we all knew it wasn't. I fastened it on the blouse at my throat and I stood up and stepped back from the dresser to survey my look.

'My word!' Mother said. 'You look so ...'

'You look like a married lady,' Sally piped up. She was 11 and had the habit of saying whatever popped into her head. Mother often chose to ignore it, but I was sure that Sally was so outspoken because no-one ever told her not to be.

'Very sophisticated, I was going to say,' said Mother.

I lifted the black jacket from the back of the chair and slipped it on, quickly buttoning it. My bosom was accentuated by the way the coat fitted, because it buttoned up to just underneath. I turned around, looking at the back of the skirt. The bustle was small, a little old hat by Paris fashion, but modesty was the key thing about the uniform.

'Ready?' asked Mother.



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‘Yes,’ I said.

‘Then you had better get going, you don’t want to be late your first day,’ she said, placing a small package in my hand, wrapped up with string. I stared at the package blankly.

‘Your lunch, dear,’ said Mother.

‘Of course!’

The shop and building of Tiffany’s was a 20 minute walk from our small townhouse. It was a bright morning and the streets were very quiet. I realised I had never been out on my own this early before. The streets of New York City felt safe to me though. This was my home, the place I’d grown up.

As I walked down the street I saw the milk cart driving slowly towards the row of townhouses. As always the farmer, Mr Berry, was on time with his huge metal cans full of fresh milk and cream. He waved to me as he went by, and I smiled and waved back.

At the end of the street I saw a grime-covered urchin throwing stones onto the road as he sat on the sidewalk. His head was downcast, and he looked miserable. He was wearing a ragged brown jacket and shorts. I noticed how thin his legs were and took pity on him. I opened my lunch pack and held out a chunk of bread. He looked up at me, at first suspiciously. Then, when his hunger pushed aside the fear, he reached out and took the bread from my hand.



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'Thanks, Miss,' he said, and rapidly set about eating it.

In the next street a row of horse-drawn carriages lined up on the cobbled surface. These were cabs and they were waiting for their early morning fares. One of the drivers tipped his hat as I passed and I nodded back but hurried on, because I wasn't sure that to talk to him would have been very proper.

I arrived at the store at eight and the streets were rapidly filling up with workers, commuters and shoppers.

At the trade entrance, the security guard surveyed me with disdain.

'What's your name?' he asked rudely.

'Miss Lightfoot. Katherine Lightfoot.'

The guard looked at his list and frowned. 'I don't see you on my list.'

'I'm a new employee. Mr Levy, the manager, interviewed me last week. See, I even have the uniform ...'

The guard took in my uniform and nodded. 'You'll have to wait here.'

The guard closed the door and I waited outside feeling somewhat like a criminal. I noted that there was a metal grille lying open against the wall and it crossed my mind that this was for added security for the shop. It also reminded me that I was in the back alley, not a place I was keen to loiter for long. I let my mind drift away from the unease I was feeling and thought about the guard instead. He was in his late thirties. I wondered why he hadn't joined the war effort with most of the other men



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under 40.

Just then the trade entrance door creaked open and a young, attractive woman smiled at me. She was taller than me and a little thinner, with pale blonde wispy hair, which was also scraped back in the severe bun we had been told to wear. I guessed that she must have been about 25, but I didn't like to ask, because Mother had always taught me that it was rude to ask people's ages.

'You must be Katherine. I'm Sylvia. Come in and don't mind Edward, he likes to throw his weight around because he got rejected when he tried to sign up.'

'Call me Kat,' I said. 'Why was he turned down?'

'He can't see farther than his hands. It would be dangerous putting a weapon in them.'

I followed Sylvia inside as she told me more about Edward Brewster. He had been the security guard at Tiffany's for some time now. I learnt that he was married with three children and his aging mother lived with them. Why this was all relevant I couldn't guess, but it was clear Sylvia liked to gossip.

'He's a little hen-pecked at home,' she smiled. 'It's why he likes to seem so tough at work.'

Through the first door into the building I found myself in a small reception area. Edward had his own table and a chair and he returned to sit down at it. He made me smile, because he was attempting to look so official as he shuffled his list around on the desk, a snub-nosed pencil behind his ear.



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'This way,' said Sylvia and I followed her through another door. This one led into a wide corridor that had several doors coming off it.

The first door was open.

'This is our kitchen,' Sylvia explained. 'Did you remember to bring something for lunch?'

I lifted my arm, showing my reticule, which contained the packed lunch Mother had given me.

I looked around the room. There was a heavy table in the corner, a deep sink, several chairs, and a cupboard stacked up with cups and saucers and a large teapot. Towards the back of the room was a large fireplace with a stove and a blackened kettle. On the wall nearest the door was a cabinet with several doors, each with a small padlock holding it closed.

'These are the lockers. You can store your lunch and anything else you have here. We're not allowed to take our purses out on the shop floor.'

Sylvia gave me a key and pointed to a small locker with a name tag on it. I noticed that she wasn't wearing a wedding ring, which was somewhat unusual for an attractive woman of her age. The tag on the locker said 'MARGARET', but Sylvia pulled it off and replaced it with another one. She took a piece of charcoal from the pocket of her skirt and paused, looking at me.

'Ah,' I realised. 'Kat. With a K.'

Sylvia wrote 'KAT' on the new tag.

'There. Now everyone knows this is yours.'





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I found this to be a rather strange practice, but thanked her anyway.

‘Now, other things you should know. Some of the girls from the workshop come in here too. They are a little peculiar about having their own chairs, so if you use this one ...’ – Sylvia pointed to a small stool in the corner of the room, next to a roughly carved wooden kitchen table – ‘then you won’t upset anyone, because that was Margaret’s.’

‘Oh. Right. What happened to Margaret?’ I asked, certain that she would enjoy telling me.

Sylvia stared at me. ‘We don’t ask awkward questions around here if we want to keep our jobs. Margaret left. That’s all you need to know.’

‘Oh. Sorry ... I didn’t mean ...’

I stowed my jacket and packed lunch in the small locker and followed Sylvia out into the corridor. I was frowning a little because I was concerned that I had upset her, but I soon found that Sylvia was a contrary character. One minute she would gossip, but when questioned, she often took the moral high ground and refused to answer. I think it was because she liked people to think she knew more about what was happening at Tiffany’s than she actually did.

‘Down to the right are the male and female washrooms. At the end of the corridor to the right are the stairs that go up to the first floor. That is where the work rooms are. And here,’ she paused at a door on the





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left, 'is the shop floor.'

The door was closed and Sylvia explained that it should be kept closed at all times. I noticed two heavy bolts that ran across the top and bottom of the door – currently open – and a mortice lock in the centre near the handle.

'During the day this is unlocked, but in the evening the bolts are drawn and the lock engaged,' said Sylvia. Then she opened the door and I followed her inside.

On the shop floor we met Mr Gerald Levy, who I also thought was an odd character. Levy was the manager at Tiffany's, and at that time I never saw the owner, but the other workers commented frequently on how nice Mr Charles was.

I had seen the interior of the shop before, as I had visited it with Mother when we were looking for a crucifix for Sally's last birthday. It was set out unlike most stores of the time. Tiffany's had a price transparency policy and all of their jewellery was labelled clearly with a price. These items were displayed on velvet-covered trays in glass-topped cabinets. The cabinets lined the walls with just enough room behind for Sylvia, Levy and me to move around the room. The rest of the floor was open and carpeted and it allowed the customers room to move freely around and observe what was in the locked cases. There was also an impressive and ornate grandfather clock behind the table containing the till, and it marked time loudly, chiming with grand peals every hour.



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Levy gave me a set of keys for the cabinets so that I could open them to show items to customers, but I was always to keep them tied to my belt, and in the evenings I had to give them back to Levy to lock away for the night.

During my initial interview I had observed that Levy was attractive for an older man. He must have been at least 40 at the time, but he had a shock of thick, black, wavy hair that he slicked back with some kind of shiny cream. He wore smart and expensive suits, with chic cravats made from French silk, which showed that he must be well paid in his role as manager of such an expensive store. Levy was Jewish. This wasn't obvious in any way except for when he became excited and forgot to speak formally to us. At those times he began to spout Yiddish.

'Our silverware is renowned,' Levy told me that first day. 'Do you know, Miss Lightfoot, that Tiffany's are supporting the Union Army?'

I didn't reply. I had quickly learnt that when Levy began to talk of patriotism you didn't interrupt him. He was living the American dream and he believed in the country like all immigrants did in those days. No-one judged him for his faith, in fact Jews were hard-working citizens and Levy was a testament to how anyone could be successful.

'We have been providing swords and most importantly we have made special surgical tools for the battlefield surgeons,' he continued with pride in his voice.





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I blinked at this. We hadn't heard from my brother for months; the thought that he might be injured didn't sit well with me. I did hope that Henry would return from the war unscathed and heroic, just as Mother always portrayed him.

'Our heroes need us! That's why we must behave with dignity and not like a load of *meshugginas* ...'

'That means insane people,' murmured Sylvia translating Levy's Yiddish for me when he had disappeared into the back. 'He *always* uses that one ... You'll get used to it.'

Tiffany's employees were a small, exclusive family to which I quickly belonged. I settled in my new role, rapidly learning the ropes and patiently dealing with customers, wealthy and poor alike, I also learnt that my employers did other things as well as provide jewellery and trinkets.

On the shop floor, Sylvia and I worked mostly alone with Levy, but often Martin Crewe was brought down from his workshop on the second floor. Martin was the designer. As well as guiding the jewellers, he was a wonderfully talented clockmaker. He created the most beautiful and intricate pocket watches.

'See this,' he told me as he carefully opened the back of his latest design. 'It has a double movement.'

'Sorry Martin, I don't know what that means,' I said.

'The clock is self winding: as one movement works it winds the other, then it switches and the process is reversed.'





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‘You don’t have to wind up the watch?’ I asked.

‘Never.’

‘That’s really clever!’ I said, and I was impressed.

I learnt that Martin was from a long line of watchmakers. His father, Crichton Crewe, had worked for the original owner way back when Tiffany’s first opened its doors in 1837. Martin was a little bit of a rebel though. He was talented but he liked to design his own things. Some of which were to come in very handy over the next few months.

‘Of course he should have been drafted,’ Sylvia said, ‘but Mr Charles pulled a few strings and Martin remained. Tiffany’s couldn’t run without him, you see. He designs everything here.’

At that moment the shop door opened and the first customers of the day came in. I couldn’t question Sylvia more about Martin or Mr Charles as the daily rush began.

‘You girl,’ said Lady Barclay. ‘Pull out that tray of rings and let me see them.’ She held up her spectacles on their gold stalk. By then I could recognise the handiwork of the Tiffany’s jewellers and the hallmarks that gave the gold such distinction. I reached into the counter and pulled the tray up, and Lady Barclay spent the next hour trying on rings until she finally chose an ostentatious diamond and ruby setting, which she placed on her pudgy middle finger. Her husband dutifully paid for it: the ring cost more than I would earn in a year.

Afterwards a young couple came in to buy an





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engagement ring. They couldn't afford real diamonds, so I led them over to the gemstones.

'This is beautiful, Freddie,' said the girl. She was a pretty young thing with shiny red hair and a warm smile that Freddie clearly loved.

I retrieved the amber ring from the tray and placed it before her. Freddie frowned when he saw the price tag.

'Just a minute,' I said lifting up the tray next to it. This contained some of the store's finest costume jewellery and it was a fraction of the price, even though to the naked eye it looked almost as good.

The bride-to-be clapped her hands in delight as I gave her a silver setting that contained a near-perfect glass jewel that looked just like a real sapphire.

'I think silver is so much nicer than gold,' I said to the girl. 'Please try it on.'

The ring looked as elegant as I had hoped it would, and Freddie was happy with the price. He paid and the couple left. I watched them through the shop window as they walked down Fifth Avenue. The future bride was holding out her hand and constantly admiring the expensive-looking ring.

'Another happy customer!' said Levy behind me. 'You really are very good at this, Miss Lightfoot.'

'Thank you, Mr Levy,' I said.

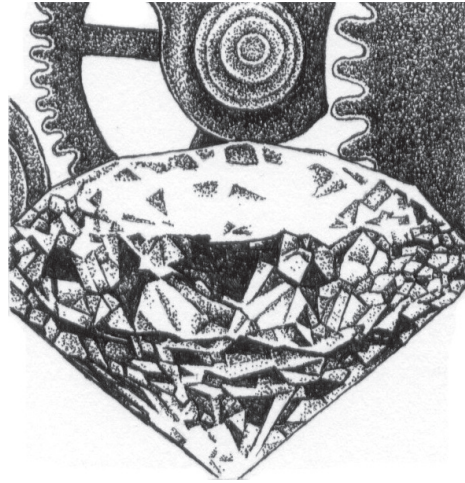
I turned back to look around the shop and saw Sylvia frowning at us from behind the counter. I raised my eyebrow at her and formed the question on my face but



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Sylvia's cheeks reddened and she looked away. Then she began to bustle around the now empty shop, tidying trays and polishing the glass on the counter tops. I hurried to help her, but she was unusually quiet for the rest of the afternoon.





Two

‘Miss Lightfoot,’ Martin said as I was stowing my jacket and reticule in my locker. ‘Mr Levy told me to show you the way to the work room this morning. I’m to give you a tour of the production process. Apparently it will help you sell, and I quote, “exclusive jewellery designs to our more affluent customers”’

I was often in work early and, other than Edward, Martin was always in too. He was also the last to leave at night and I did begin to wonder if he in fact lived in one of the rooms on the upper levels that I hadn’t seen. I didn’t like to ask Sylvia though. She obviously hated to be questioned, even though she frequently told me things without prompting. I knew it would be just a matter of time before she told me all she knew about Martin ... but it always had to be on her terms.

Martin Crewe had intrigued me from the start. It was



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difficult to determine his age, but I thought he might be around 27. To say Martin was unusual would have been an understatement. He was in fact very eccentric, and for such a young man he had something of the ‘mad professor’ about him. I found him attractive though, because he was so highly intelligent and so very interesting compared with other people I had met.

I followed Martin down the corridor, past the washrooms, to the stairs on the right. At the top of the stairs was a door that Martin opened, and it led into a large workroom. The room took up half of the floor space, and I learnt it was the jewellery design and construction area.

I looked around and saw three sets of tables and benches with trays of silver and gold rings and necklaces in various stages of being manufactured. There was a huge drawing on a working easel of an ornate tiara that showed a setting containing over a hundred diamonds.

‘That’s beautiful,’ I said, admiring the workmanship.

Martin shrugged. ‘I do the sketches so large so that the makers can see all of the detail required.’

Martin unlocked a cupboard that held a tray with the tiara frame already made in gold. It looked like the laurel leaf crowns I had seen goddesses wear in a book I had of classical mythology. Some of the diamonds were already set in the piece and I could already tell how magnificent the headdress was going to be.

‘This was commissioned. And so you can see the



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design concept to the semi-finish.'

I glanced down into the tray holding the tiara and saw the diamonds scattered in the bottom on green felt. They glowed like drops of morning dew on leaves.

'Exactly one hundred,' said Martin. 'All cut to perfect accuracy.'

'But how? How can you get them all the same?' I asked.

'It takes practice, and I have to admit that not all of them turn out well.' Martin slid the tray back into the cupboard and then pulled out another beneath it. 'Off-cuts.'

I glanced down at a sea of diamond chips that almost filled the tray.

'I suppose these aren't of any use now?' I asked.

Martin was silent for a moment. 'Sometimes we can salvage bits of these for the cheaper jewellery. Small diamond settings ... I'm sure you've see those.'

I nodded.

'But I have another use for them. One that is far more ...'

'Ah! There you are Kat,' said Sylvia from the doorway. I had been so engrossed in Martin's diamonds that I hadn't heard her light tread on the bare wooden stairs. 'Time to open up. You can finish the tour on your break time.'

'Thank you, Mr Crewe,' I said.

'Just call me Martin,' he answered. 'Everyone else



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does and we don't stand on formality here.'

I nodded. Then turned to leave after making a final sweep of the room with my eyes. I noticed another door at the back and wondered if this led to Martin's living quarters. I was also curious to note that I couldn't see any stairs that led up to the next three floors. Tiffany's, from the outside, was five storeys high.

I left the room as Martin stowed the diamonds back in his cupboard, and as I followed Sylvia downstairs my mind was full of the off-cut diamonds. In their rugged way, they were far more beautiful than the set, perfect stones.

A few hours later I had the opportunity to go back to the workshop. Lady Elsie Beaufort had arrived with Major Thadeus Tinker, and she wanted to collect a necklace that had been designed for her.

Martin wasn't there when I entered the workshop. The girls I occasionally saw making tea in the back room, or eating their meagre lunches, were working solidly, heads down, making the designs that Martin had given them.

'I've come to collect Lady Elsie's necklace,' I said to no-one in particular. The girls ignored me, but I heard the sounds of machinery and looked towards the other door that I had noticed across the room. I walked through the workshop. None of the girls raised their heads, so I opened the door to the other room, looking for Martin.

I found him operating a strange gadget. He was turning the handle of what looked like a Singer sewing





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machine much like the one Mother owned, but it had been adapted and changed. There were new parts of metal added to it. A long barrel that looked as though it had been harvested from a rifle was inserted in the top. Two more barrels ran down where the arm was, and what had once been the foot, containing the needle with which you could sew material together, was a blunt piece of metal that moved up and down and around a diamond. There was a bright light shining down on the diamond, and Martin was wearing dark glasses as he looked at the stone through a magnifying glass.

‘What is that?’ I asked.

Martin jumped, ‘What are you doing in here?’

‘I came to get Lady Elsie’s necklace.’

‘You should ask one of the girls then. No-one is allowed in here.’

I looked around the room and found it was full of weird and wonderful machines. Something that resembled a musket was lying on a table top surrounded by bits of metal.

‘That’s a Springfield Model 1861 Rifled Musket,’ Martin said when he saw my interest. ‘I’m adapting it.’

‘Adapting?’ I said. ‘But that’s the latest thing. I think my brother Henry had ...’

‘Look,’ said Martin, interrupting me and picking up the musket. ‘It’s so limited. Every time a soldier fires he has to reload. What I’m working on is something that will automatically load the bullet and the gunpowder.’





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I nodded, but then my attention was drawn to a sword that rested on a stand as though for display only.

‘This is beautiful,’ I said. It had a shiny silver pommel and the same distinctive hallmark that all of Martin’s work had. I reached out towards the polished surface.

‘Don’t touch it!’ Martin warned, and I pulled my hand back quickly.

‘It’s been sharpened with dialight. That sword can cut through bone. It could sever someone’s head without much of a swing.’

‘What do you mean sharpened by dialight?’ I asked.

‘Can you keep a secret?’

I nodded.

‘Come back later and I’ll explain what I’m doing.’

I left his workroom, but not before I noticed yet another door at the bottom on the right. I wondered if this led upstairs, and I admit felt a little more curious than I had done about the rest of the floors in the store.

‘Your necklace, Lady Elsie,’ Levy said with a flourish as I held out the jewellery on a tray covered with black velvet.

‘Splendid! I must try it on.’

I helped Lady Elsie fasten the clasp and hurried to fetch a mirror for her to see the necklace. The diamonds and emeralds rested against her bosom over a sheen of pale green taffeta, but I was sure the effect was no less impressive than it would be when she wore the necklace later that month at the Major’s annual ball. No doubt then



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Lady Elsie's outfit would be something magnificent. She certainly had style. As I returned with the mirror, I saw her take a quick and surreptitious swig from a silver flask with an emerald top. The emerald matched the jewels on the necklace perfectly, and I wondered if this too had been designed by Martin for her.

'What do you think, Major?' Lady Elsie asked, dropping the flask discretely into her reticule.

'Utterly splendid, my dear. You will be the belle of the ball.'

I placed the necklace in a box and carefully wrapped it. Then I held it out to Lady Elsie and she placed it in her reticule alongside the flask as Levy wrung his hands together, waiting for the final payment.

Major Tinker rubbed his mutton-chop whiskers as he reviewed the bill. 'She's worth every penny,' he said.

'Gin,' whispered Sylvia in my ear.

'What?'

'In her flask. It's her favourite tippie.'

'How do you know?'

'Mr Levy told me. The Major turns a blind eye to it because he is utterly devoted to her.' Sylvia sighed. 'Isn't that romantic?'

I knew nothing about romance and so didn't answer.

Soon after that, when there was a lull in the shop, I took a break and hurried straight back upstairs to see more of Martin's gadgets.

As I re-entered the workroom, the benches and stools



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were empty, and I realised that the girls were all on their break too.

‘Martin?’ I called.

‘In here.’

I went back into Martin’s workroom and found some new things had been put out, presumably for me to see. There was a handgun lying on the table.

‘This is a Remington 1858.’ Martin proceeded to load the gun with what he explained was a cylinder magazine. It was a speed loader and it had given Martin an idea.

‘The loader is removable,’ he said, ‘which means that I could substitute it with a different loader and, more importantly, different bullets.’

Then Martin showed me the loader and bullets he had designed. Although it looked the same at first glance, I soon learned that this loader took a very different kind of bullet. Although the bullet casing was identical to the original, the projectile head – the part that was fired out of the gun by the ignition of the gunpowder in the casing – was filled with diamond off-cuts. These special bullets were loaded by the handful into the empty magazine, which had been adapted to take double the amount of ammunition. That was because it was an extra cylinder that attached to the original, giving it double capacity. The two cylinders rolled together, turning each other like engine cogs.

‘But Martin, the bullets have diamond shards inside them,’ I pointed out. ‘How can that work?’



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'Believe me, diamonds are the toughest substance in the world. These will stop the enemy just as easily as a traditional bullet. Especially if you aim well. You see, when the bullet enters through the skin, it crumples, releasing all of the diamond shards, which then fly out into the body. That can do an awful lot of damage to your enemy.'

I grimaced. I didn't understand why Martin wanted to create weapons. It was a strange pastime, but at least I knew some of his technology went to the war effort and might someday save my brother's life.

'How had you adapted the sewing machine?' I asked, changing the subject.

'Ah – now that is my pride and joy. This is my dialight. It's how I'm cutting diamonds these days.'

Martin explained the process of using his dialight, and how the diamonds themselves created energy. He pointed to the top barrel and I noticed that it had a small hole cut in a rectangle. There was a tiny mirror on hinges that he moved in various ways. It was, it seemed, how he trapped the light inside. The light then travelled down into the barrel and out over the diamond below.

I decided that Martin was far more interesting than he was eccentric. He was certain that one day his weapons and inventions would be used to save lives. I unfortunately could see only how they could take and destroy lives. Even so, Martin was a fascinating man and I knew I wanted to see more of his extraordinary inventions in action.