

LEGENDARY BLUE DIAMOND

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PROLOG

Australian summer: 2012 AD

HISTORIANS WHO have researched the legendary blue diamond say it originated when the Earth was born. Some say the legend commenced at the union between a man who has skin, the colour of the night sky and a woman who has skin the colour of the sun. Rumor has it the blue diamond couldn't have been any larger than a single carat. Lately, there has been whispers the deep blue coloured diamond is reported to be more than nine carats possibly even ten or higher. What I believe isn't important, though I assume it lays somewhere in between. There's been bush talk from the Australian Kimberley's to Melbourne; whosoever touches the blue stone will die, for it is cursed by God. I believe it is due to man's greed and the blood dripping from his hands is the truth behind the cursed stone.

I have extensively researched a great number of books on the subject looking for a start date to the authenticity of the legend. I think I may have uncovered the actual events though I have no way of proving if the facts are correct. I have been able to ascertain the legend started around the mid-1800's when the State bank of Victoria was in its infancy. A gold prospector unearthed the diamond. In days, he sold it to a man in charge of the bank. He, in turn, made it into a ring for his wife. He described it as a definite once in a life time discovery. A businessman going by the name of Bobbi Forland invited the banker to play a game of cards. Eventually, the banker accused Forland of cheating him out of everything including the blue diamond ring. He was shot for his accusation. The banker made it home, dying in the arms of his wife. What of the blue diamond ring you ask? Of late a possible theory has been circulating the man's wife has it in her possession. How she escaped from being murdered one can only guess.

If you ask me do I believe in the story; I'll answer you truthfully. I know it only as a legend.

CHAPTER ONE

Australian summer: 1850 AD

FOR OVER a minute Jessica Hayes stared directly into her dead husband's eyes. The long-handled shovel she held in her hands had been used for easier times. The hole she finished digging was in the back corner of the cemetery, reserved for the peasants. Jessica pushed the shovel's blade into the clay to take a break, trying to make sense of the last seven hours. Her mind replayed the facts over and over on what had happened, including the reason behind her husband's murder.

On Jessica's twentieth birthday she stood at the altar pledging her vows to the man she wanted to love forever. Charles unquestionably conveyed he loved her too. She didn't expect to bury him the day before her twenty-first birthday.

Jessica's loving husband left her penniless due to a game of poker. Everything he worked towards he lost on a pair of Jacks. Her husband accused the man sitting opposite him of cheating. He'd been shot in the stomach from under the table for his accusation. Dragging his half dead body out of the hotel, he managed to mount his horse. In three minutes, he made it to the front door of their mansion. Sitting on the marble based verandah, leaning against the solid wooden front door his futile attempts to call out to Jessica were inadequate.

Conjuring up enough willpower to claw his way to a half standing position he opened the front door. Closing the door behind him to shut out prying eyes he staggered towards the stairs. Ten feet from the door he gazed up at Jessica standing on the top stair glaring down at him through wide fearful eyes. She watched his mouth open, his lips quivering. Jessica sprinted down. The moment her left foot touched the floor she ran towards him screaming at the top of her lungs. Jessica wrapped her arms around his waist to help prop him upright. Her arms couldn't hold his weight. They both crumpled to the slate tiles. Weeping uncontrollably, she studied her husband's face trying to understand the reason behind what occurred at the saloon.

The sickening answer hit hard.

Jessica's husband, a successful businessman, misused his power to gain even more money. At the height of his career, he gambled on a win. Charles lost everything, including his life.

On his last gasp, he mouthed the word sorry.

In the dead of night, Charles died in Jessica's arms.

The rough-edged man who won the card game, the same one who murdered Jessica's husband, pounded his fist seven times on the front door of the two storey mansion. The man's cold murderous expression depicted he felt determined to take possession of what should be legally his. He brought four large ugly friends for endorsement.

Jessica placed her dead husband's head gently on the floor. In a half standing position, she reached for the solid brass door knob. She didn't get a chance to open the door before someone kicked it in. The violent entry saw the fine workmanship, of the hand decorated china vase, fall off the small entrance table. Jessica could do nothing to stop it from smashing. Hundreds of fine china pieces spewed across the floor.

"You will replace the vase," spat Jessica, pointing. "My dead husband gave it to me on our wedding day."

"I will never replace anything I choose to break," jeered the tall rough-edged man wearing a three-piece suit. "Here is something else for you to remember the moment."

The man pushed Jessica from his path, boldly marched to the base of the staircase, picking up an exact duplicate of the first vase from off another small French polished wooden table. The man lifted the vase high above his head.

Jessica screamed. "Surely you're not mean enough to smash another expensive item?"

In the act of non-cooperation, the man hurled the two-foot vase at the floor. The force saw fragments cover the entire area.

Through her grieving tears, Jessica focused on the man. Her entire body trembled from the intrusion. The man looked to be enjoying the moment, relishing in his power over a young widow.

"Get out of my mansion," yelled the man.

"This is my home; you get out."

"It is you who needs to get out. Boys come in. Chuck this trash out."

The four men came marching through the open doorway as if they owned the place. Their evil smirks looked callous. They acted excited at wanting to toss a defenseless woman out of the home she'd been living in.

"Girl, this is your last warning. Get out."

The businessman stepped forward, grabbing hold of Jessica's arm. She winced at the pain. In seconds, welts surfaced. The man mouthed more hurtful words. Jessica couldn't hear what they were over her pounding heartbeat throbbing noisily inside her ears.

"Drag the woman to the door," ordered the businessman glaring at the four men waiting for the next command. "After you have thrown out the rubbish, search the house. Inside an hour, I want what I came for."

Each man grabbed one of Jessica's limbs and carried her to the door. Before being tossed airborne, she spied the businessman throwing expensive paintings at the wall. Screaming for him to stop, he refused the request to cease destroying everything Jessica's husband gave to win her heart. The intruder even tore in half her favorite painting of a horse in the middle of an Australian bush.

In one massive throw, Jessica landed in the middle of a shallow pond twenty feet from the front door.

Battered and bruised she crawled out.

Crumpling into a ball, she listened to many more precious, items the man smashed against the internal walls of the home she loved.

Standing her five-foot seven-inch frame to full height, Jessica glared at the four men blocking the doorway. "Step aside, or I'll force you," she snarled through quivering lips.

The steel murderous expression of the four men fell away, replaced by laughter.

Jessica stepped up to the largest of the four men. She didn't hesitate in what she intended to do. Jabbing the man in the ribs followed by a tight fist to the man's nose saw him stumbling backwards, blood pouring from his broken nose. Agile as a cat Jessica turned her attention to the next one. He and the other two men sprinted for the safety of the closest tree leaving the entrance unguarded.

Jessica marched back into the house, staring at the intruder. The tall man faced the angry woman head on.

"What is the meaning of this invasion?" screamed Jessica, raising her fists at the man. "Answer me immediately, or you'll end up the same way as the man outside."

"This home is now mine. Leave before you get hurt."

"It is you who is about to be hurt. You have three seconds to explain the reason for your hostility."

The man seemed to hesitate. It was as though he was re-thinking his hostile actions. The ten-inch square canvas painting he held tight in his right hand of a young lad waving and leaning out of the window of a train carriage, the one Jessica's dead husband gave her on their one-month anniversary was already torn. Jessica didn't mourn over the loss. She used the pause to her advantage. She leaned sideways to pick up the fine English bowl sitting exactly in the middle of the Tasmanian oak buffet. She raised it above her head. "Talk fast, or your head and this bowl will collide," she yelled.

"Go ahead, throw it, I don't care."

Jessica hurled the object at the man. He easily ducked. The bowl smashed against the wall causing thousands of crystal fragments to fly about the room.

A belly laugh erupted from the tall man. The remaining three men who had walked up behind Jessica waited for the signal. The moment the man nodded two of the men stepped forward, took hold of Jessica's arms, lifting her off the floor, kicking and scratching. The tall man casually walked across the room. He gave Jessica a backhand across the face. To hammer the slap home, he groped for Jessica's white shirt, ripping the material and popping the six solid gold buttons. They bounced across the floor in different directions.

"Hopefully, the loss of the buttons will calm you down long enough to understand the power I have in this town."

The man signaled his men to apply a downwards pressure on Jessica's shoulders which in turn forced her to sit on the floor.

"You, horrid aggressive man; I see what your game is."

"Don't flatter yourself you, intolerable wench. I'm married. I have no desire to have you or this mansion. My colleagues, on the other hand, mightn't agree with my ideas. They can't resist a pretty young female who only wears a man's white shirt to bed."