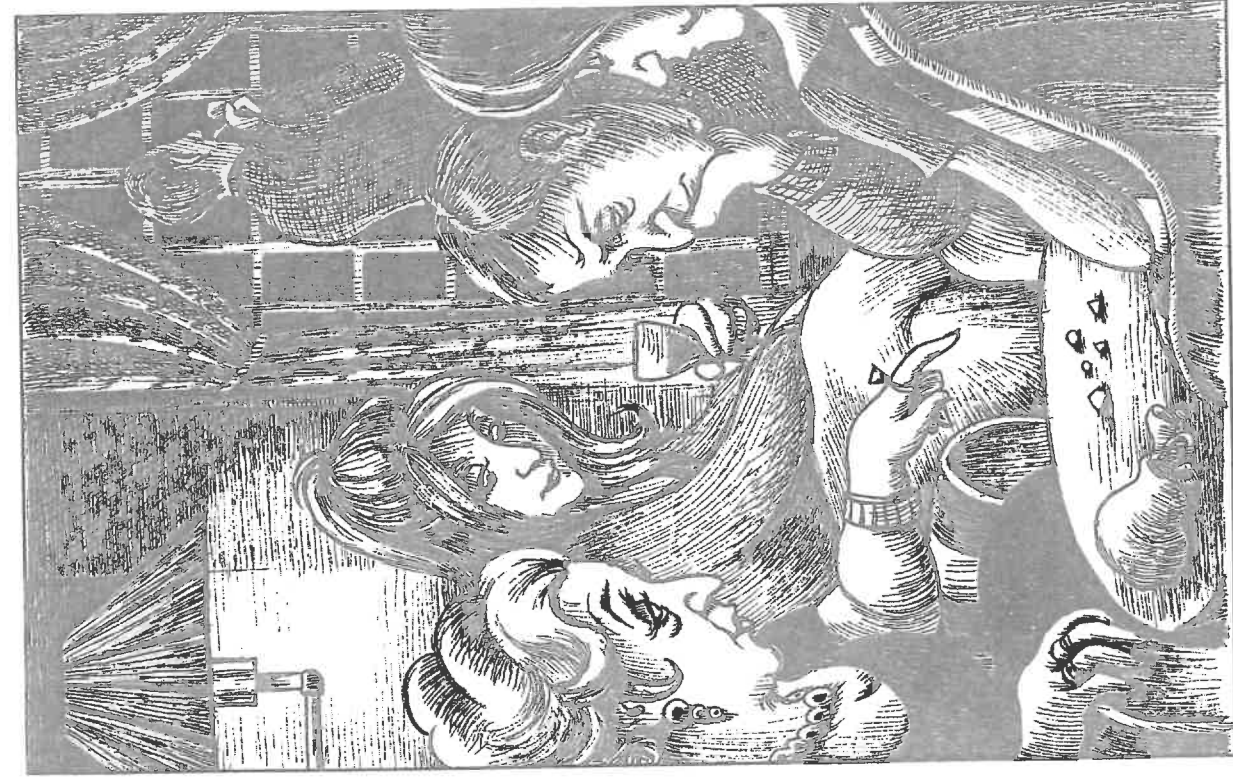




IT WAS A chilly evening in March, 1930. England's legendary tycoon Lord Dudley was hosting a dinner party at his London mansion. As midnight struck, only the overnight guests remained, sipping their port and admiring the Asprey Whites, a collection of unset diamonds that had been passed down in Lady Dudley's family for generations.

"It will be a pity to sell them," Lady Dudley sighed. "But we do so need the money, at least until this stock-market thing turns around."

Lord Dudley protested that conditions were not that desperate. "How many times must I tell you, dear? I don't want you to do it."

"They're mine and I'm going to. I don't know why you're being so stubborn. Why, just last November, you were begging me to sell."

Marie Dudley was a sensible, good-natured girl, and she seconded her mother's feelings. "Don't keep them for my sake, Daddy. Enough of Gene's money survived the crash. If ever I need diamonds, I'm sure my future husband will provide."

Captain Eugene Batts held a family pedigree even more distinguished than the Dudleys'. "Within reason," the young aristocrat chortled. "Lucky for me, our Marie is not that fond of jewelry."

The fifth and final member of the group raised her voice in disbelief. "What? How can any woman not be fond of jewelry?" Katrina Burghar was Marie Dudley's best friend from school, as daring and full of life as Marie was drab and proper.

Lord Dudley stood by the window smoking his pipe. "What's that?" Suddenly he was gazing into the dark. "I saw something move. In the garden." Captain Batts joined him, and both men stared out into the darkness. "Someone was there, I tell you." The butler was sent out to check but reported that the garden was empty. Whatever had been out there was no longer around.

As the party broke up, Lord Dudley swept the diamonds into their velvet pouch. "I think I'll keep these in my bedroom. Better than the safe. Someone was definitely prowling around."

It was shortly after 1 A.M. when the first gunshot was heard. Lady Dudley emerged from her second-floor boudoir. Captain Batts came down from the third-floor guest bedroom and his fiancée ran up the stairs from the library. All three approached Lord Dudley's suite only to find the door locked.

A second gunshot thundered through the hall and was quickly followed by a dull thud. Mere seconds later, when Captain Batts shouldered open the door, they found Lord Dudley on the floor behind his desk. Dead—a bullet hole in his head. Clutched in his right hand was a fireplace poker. Marie noticed the open window and the brisk breeze. Captain Batts noticed the open desk drawer and the revolver lying in the bottom of it. But it was Lady Dudley who noticed the empty velvet pouch.

Exactly one month later, Lord Dudley's accused killer comes to trial. "Kat Burghar, the Deadly Cat Burglar," had been on every front page in Britain. You've seen her picture a hundred times. But sitting here in the defendant's box in His Majesty's court, she is even more attractive than you imagined. The Prosecution states its case.

PROSECUTION: Miss Katrina Burghar is a daring woman with a lust for precious gems. She was determined to get her hands on the Asprey diamonds and saw the dumbwaiter as the perfect means. This pulley-operated mechanism was used to lift food and plates from the basement kitchen to the dining room. It also opened on the second-floor master suite and on the guest bedroom above that. By squeezing her petite frame into this mini-elevator and pulling the ropes, Miss Burghar managed to lift herself unseen from the dining room to her victim's bedroom, where she killed her host, stole the diamonds, then retraced her route. If the family butler had not been in the dining room just as Miss

Burghar emerged from the dumbwaiter, she might never have been caught.