The Lucky Stone

BY

Anna Brownell Dunaway

MRS. POSY was ironing. Stiffly starched clothes hung from chair backs and from doors, and even draped the family what-not, threatening to overturn the glass jar of candy hearts, which, in her opinion, gave the last touch of gentility and elegance to the room.

The untidy little house had been reeking with heat since six o'clock. A coal fire burned fiercely in the tiny kitchen. The table, still littered with the breakfast dishes, was black with flies.

A shadow fell across the door and some one rapped briskly. Rather glad of a diversion, Mrs. Posy set her iron on the stand, and, wiping her dripping face with her apron, approached the door.

"I ain't either time nor money to throw away," she snapped at sight of the visitor.

A suave young man addressed her with a winning smile, "Do you believe in luck, my dear madam?" he said.

"Well, of all the fool questions! Yesterday a travellin' evangelist was here. 'Are you saved, sister?' he says, and now here you come! Does the gov'ment pay you for such foolishness?"

The young man laughed. Taking from his pocket a small stone of milky white appearance, he handed it to Mrs. Posy.

"That, madam, is the Oriental Lucky Stone from India. Do you want to be rich? Do you want to be happy and have everything come your way? If so, possess yourself at once of one of these wonderful Lucky Stones."

"Maybe you're advertisin' a patent medicine?" she suggested caustically.

"Not at all, madam. The Lucky Stone has made thousands rich. I have a brother who, through its influence, has become a millionaire. There is no reason why, with one of these stones in your possession you should not become a Hetty Green or a Mrs. Russell Sage."

"Abigail Posy I was christened, and it has always been a good enough name for me," resented Mrs. Posy.

"To be sure," acquiesced the agent. "But, of course you would not object to their wealth. I'll make you a price on this stone. It is the last one I have. Their original price is one dollar. You can have it for fifty cents. A rare bargain. There are only a limited number left and you ought to have one."

Mrs. Posy resisted the temptation to "jew him down," as she was uncomfortably conscious that her iron was cooling and she could hear the boys, Sandy and Hiram, enjoying a "free-for-all" in the kitchen.

So without more ado, she extracted fifty cents of her hoarded earnings from the depths of a crocker teapot and the exchange was made.

With trembling nerves she slipped the stone into her apron pocket, and she [illegible] it, as did her [illegible] "Will all in [illegible]." She turned to be lifted out of her old [illegible] and disappointing. [illegible] with feverish alacrity. [illegible] "Quick," she said, "this if [illegible] would be no dinner to-day. The [illegible] would be [illegible] and Mary Ellen [illegible] carried [illegible] the boys and keep [illegible] mother. It was o'clock the last [illegible] was finished.

Mrs. Posy had never felt [illegible] A wonderful [illegible] were [illegible] within her. She [illegible] to follow her usual routine of washing himself, collapsed [illegible] in his water on the [illegible] to rest upon.

"Mary Ellen came forward, shyly, and told of her good luck."

a paper-backed novel. Not even a best seller could have interested Mrs. Posy now. If luck was to enter their house she must make ready for its coming.

She drew the blinds and drove the flies in a cloud before her. Then she attacked the dirt. Not since the spring cleaning had the house received such an overturning. When she had finally finished, the late afternoon sun looked in upon a scene of triumph. Even the pictures had been dusted, and craven

Mary Ellen walked in wearily and dropped limply into a chair. "Clean tuckered out, poor child," said her mother, tenderly. "This laundry is too much for you, child."

"It's the awful heat of those steamy rooms, ma," replied the girl. "It takes all the life out of me."

She had been too utterly weary to notice the changes, but now she sat up suddenly as her eyes wandered over the rooms. The cleanliness, the order, the quiet were as a balm to her tired senses. She noted her mother's unusual array. "Lookin' for company, ma?" she asked.

"Who knows?" cried her mother, no longer able to withhold the good news. "Mary Ellen, our ships come in. At last, we're in luck!"

She held aloft the milky white stone. "See it, child? It's going to bring us luck. I feel it in my bones."

Some of her mother's assurance made over the girl. She shook off the lethargy that had possessed her, rising to the kitchen she plunged her face and arms in a basin of cool water. Then she went in her room and took off her work dress, damp with perspiration. The old kimono she usually wore at home was in her hands when she remembered her mother's festive air and the hint of "company." So she put on a pink lawn, fresh and crisp, and re-coiled her soft brown hair. She smiled at the vision that peeped out from the plain little stars. Somehow she felt strangely moved as she passed out into the yard where a few belated flowers struggled through the weeds. [illegible] a rose [illegible] nasturtiums. She [illegible] to pick a bunch of them for the [illegible].

It was undoubtedly the [illegible] of the Lucky Stone that led to such Mrs. Sadie James in the [illegible] her motor car that day. [illegible] Mrs. James was a great lady in the town. She had married a [illegible] and was known to have [illegible]. On the [illegible] her hair [illegible] Donald James. She was long [illegible] because her nurse [illegible] had been discharged for [illegible]. She was thinking of this and of her own lack, [illegible] almost ready for the [illegible] and of the [illegible] of the nurse maid and the perversity of things in general, when all at once she caught sight of Mary Ellen kneeling by the nasturtium bed.

"That is my idea of a nurse maid," she said to herself. [illegible] green [illegible] checked and a pink cotton frock."

She bade the chauffeur stop and beckoned to Mary Ellen, who came forward blushing and

Ten minutes later Mary Ellen entered the house fairly radiant.

"Oh, ma!" she cried. "Mrs. James, the millionaire, wants that I should take care of her baby for the rest of the summer. And, ma, she says if I make good she'll keep me this winter and send me to school! And I can run home and see you. Oh! Ain't it too good to be true."

Mrs. Posy gazed at her daughter solemnly. "Child, who did I tell you? Nine and a good nine. It's the lucky stone."

"But did you make any further promises, for she was laying the table with the best and prettiest of her early housekeeping days. The very pie, despite its flaky and tempting contents, dropped to a plain lemon custard, [illegible] the glass lustre dish as if the fragrance pastry, seemed to [illegible]. The [illegible] manners that sat so [illegible] transformed. Mary Ellen [illegible] the spinning machine with her mother, there arrayed in a blue and white [illegible].

There was the sound of scuffling feet on the walk and Mr. Posy stepped, looking tired and [illegible]. Midway between the door and the kitchen sink he paused in wonder at the transformation.

"If it's company," he said, [illegible] "I'm too for this housework. I've had to pass the time of day with no one's [illegible]."

"This here," observed Mrs. Posy, [illegible] the pot a little [illegible] for your pay. I've had [illegible] the room for Mary Ellen. [illegible] the [illegible]. I've [illegible] [illegible] me."

"I want to know!" [illegible] Posy [illegible] "[illegible] and a [illegible] [illegible] dressed. "What's [illegible]."

"Suddenly as a [illegible] Mrs. Posy. "But, [illegible] A lucky [illegible] is [illegible] Mr. Posy."

Mr. Posy looked [illegible] at the ceiling, then at [illegible] "You know, pa, [illegible] luck [illegible] [illegible] expenditure [illegible] work. You know, last winter after you broke your leg, [illegible] was [illegible] our luck began. A week after that you was laid off at the factory, and the next day he died. I guess Miss Walbrick [illegible] that I was keenin' in a box and I don't feel easy on it since."

"Served you right for keepin' it," broke in Mr. Posy. "Where do you [illegible] of [illegible] up the house with a [illegible] school?" [illegible] unfamiliar.

"It was given to me in a dream," returned Mrs. Posy [illegible]. "Just like [illegible] mother. Some one [illegible] Youth, [illegible] that our luck [illegible] home for good. [illegible] luck [illegible] to change. [illegible] up the [illegible] and [illegible] ed. "There's a generous [illegible] house. I heard [illegible] If we ain't [illegible] before long, I miss my guess."

"Humph!" said Mr. Posy, [illegible] the room with [illegible] but she's [illegible]."

Meanwhile, Mary Ellen, [illegible] towering [illegible] [illegible] girls, and [illegible] finished [illegible] [illegible] "[illegible] you [illegible] ma," urged Mrs. Posy [illegible] "[illegible] up the [illegible]." [illegible] Posy [illegible] [illegible].

It was plain that he was [illegible] pressed into so much [illegible] work," as he [illegible] [illegible] ruinge. The [illegible] [illegible] taking, and there was [illegible] [illegible] and pensive [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]