



**THE
DEADLY
DIAMOND**

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**MARK GREENWOOD
HISTORY HUNTER**



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INTRODUCTION

Armed guards stand at the entrance to a high-security chamber where a bewitching blue gem rotates in its bulletproof vault. Cold as ice, with a flash of fire, round and round it goes, pulsing with energy, shrouded in mystery.

Every year, millions of visitors from across the world climb the steps of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC. They cross the polished stone floor and enter the Hall of Geology, Gems and Minerals. They've come to gaze upon the world's most notorious diamond.

The Hope Diamond is a miracle of nature, described as a 'fragment of midnight sky ... still aglow



The Hope Diamond.

Photo © Chip Clark, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.

with star gleam'. But the deadly diamond is more famous for its bloodstained history than for its rarity. To be in its presence leaves no one unmoved.

Over the centuries, the legendary jewel has crossed oceans and continents, passing from thieves to commoners, kings and queens. It has been a symbol of love, of wealth and of power. It has been squabbled over, stolen, sold, resold, cut and recut. Many who have possessed it have squandered vast fortunes. Others have lost their lives. Some say it's cursed.

'Diamond' is derived from the Greek word *adamas*, meaning unconquerable or indestructable. Nature's precious creations have a mystique that sets them apart from all other gemstones. Over thousands of years, diamonds have been talismanic symbols of power worn in ornaments by nobility and military leaders, mounted in rings and pendants, bracelets and brooches to protect the wearer. They've adorned jewelled thrones, sceptres and crowns reserved for royalty.

In mythology, diamonds have been attributed with potent energies that can take those who wear them to great heights or send possessors to their doom. Hauntings, creepy histories and superstitions are often associated with the world's most famous diamonds. For those with a taste for the sensational, storied diamonds outrank the curse of the tomb of Tutankhamun. Ever since nature's treasures were dug from dirt, humankind conjured a curious lore of precious stones and assigned special significance to diamonds.

Of all diamonds, the Hope Diamond's history is the most intriguing. Discovered in India, it is the largest known blue diamond. Though its shape is unsymmetrical, the Hope's colour and prismatic fire makes it one of the most stunning gemstones in the world. And according to legend, sinister forces lurk beneath its indigo surface.

The Hope Diamond's potency for bad luck is said to have its origins in an ancient curse. But can material objects, like diamonds, possess power or leave behind

a trail of misfortune? Are the dark meanings bestowed on ancient artifacts simply superstitions imagined by humans? Or is the legendary curse associated with the famous blue diamond real?

To untangle myth from fact, join me on a journey back in time, where we leave the realm of superstition and enter that of history. To trace a diamond's remarkable life, we begin this History Hunter case file over one billion years ago.