

In the vault of a Los Angeles bank lies a silver ring set with a semiprecious stone. It is not a particularly pretty ring or even a very valuable one, and chances are that no one will ever dare to wear it again.

The ring lies in the vault because it bears one of the most malignant curses in the history of the occult. Successive owners have suffered injury, misfortune, even death. And many people still believe it was this ring that sent Rudolph Valentino to a premature grave. Certainly, the violent incidents that have surrounded it over the years can hardly be shrugged off as mere coincidences.

It was in 1920 that Valentino, at the peak of his success, saw the ring in a San Francisco jeweller's. The proprietor warned him that the ring was a jinx, but Valentino still bought it. He wore the ring in his next picture, *The Young Rajah*. It was the biggest flop of his career and he was off the screen for the next two years. Valentino did not wear the ring again until he used it as a costume prop in *The Son of the Sheik*. Three weeks after finishing this film, he went to New York on vacation. While wearing the ring, he suffered an acute attack of appendicitis. Two weeks later, he was dead.

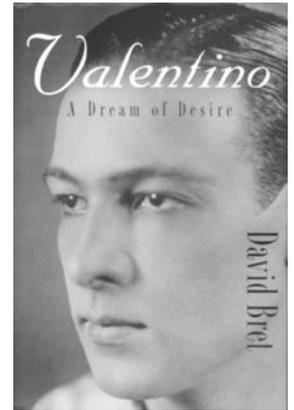
Pola Negri, a famous female movie star of the time, asked to pick a memento from Valentino's possessions, chose the ring-and almost immediately suffered a long period of ill health that threatened to end her career. A year later, while convalescing, she met a performer who was almost Valentino's double, Russ Colombo. Miss Negri was so struck by the resemblance that she gave him Rudolph's ring, saying, "From one Valentino to another." Within a few days of receiving the gift, Russ Colombo was killed in a freak shooting accident.

His cousin passed the ring on to Russ's best friend, Joe Casino. Also at the height of his popularity as an entertainer, Casino took no chances with the ring. Instead of wearing it, he kept it in a glass case in memory of his dead friend. When he was asked to donate it to a museum of Valentino relics, he refused, saying that he treasured it for sentimental reasons.

As time passed, Joe Casino forgot the ring's evil reputation and put it on. A week later, still wearing the ring, he was knocked down by a truck and killed.

By now the curse was front-page news.

When asked what he proposed to do with the ring, Joe's brother, Del, explained that he could not allow himself to be intimidated by a curse, or jinx, or ghost, or whatever it was. He didn't believe in things like that. Del Casino wore the ring for some time and nothing unusual happened. Then he lent it to a collector of Valentino relics, who suffered no ill effects either. This caused several newspapers to speculate that at last the evil influence of the ring had come to an end. And that seemed to trigger off a new wave of violence.



One night soon afterward, the home of Del Casino was burgled. The police saw the burglar, a man named James Willis, running from the scene. One of them fired a warning shot, but the bullet went low and killed Willis. Among the loot found in his possession was the Valentino ring.

It was at this time that Hollywood producer Edward Small decided to make a film based on Valentino's career. Jack Dunn, a former skating partner to ice star Sonja Henie, bore a great resemblance to Rudolph and was asked to make a film test for the part. He dressed in Valentino's clothes for the test - and also wore the jinxed ring. Only twenty-one years old at the time, Dunn died ten days later from a rare blood disease. After this tragedy the ring was kept out of sight and never worn by anyone again, but that did not seem to curb its fatal influence.

A year after Jack Dunn's death, a daring raid was carried out in broad daylight on a Los Angeles bank in which thieves got away with a haul of over \$200,000. In a subsequent police ambush, two of the gang were caught and three passersby seriously injured. The leader of the bank robbers, Alfred Hahn, was jailed for life. At his trial, Hahn remarked: "If I'd known what was in the vault apart from money, I'd have picked myself another bank." For in the bank's safe deposit vault was the Valentino ring.

Can an inanimate object exert a malign influence on those who come into contact with it? All those who have suffered the jinx of Valentino's ring have little doubt that it can. And who can blame them?

| VALENTINO'S RING Comprehension questions | right | wrong |
|---|-------|-------|
| 1. A vault is a safe room of a bank. | x | |
| 2. A semiprecious stone is an extremely valuable jewel. | | |
| 3. The word malignant means bad or evil. | | |
| 4. When film star Rudolph Valentino died, he was very old. | | |
| 5. A jinx is something that brings good luck and happiness. | | |
| 6. The film „The Young Rajah“ was a tremendous success and it's still on the screen today. | | |
| 7. Rudolph Valentino died in a car accident. | | |
| 8. Film star Pola Negri liked Valentino and his death made her sad. | | |
| 9. Rudolph Valentino gave Pola Negri the ring when they married. | | |
| 10 Russ Colombo got the ring because he looked like Rudolph Valentino. | | |
| 11. Russ Colombo was shot. | | |
| 12. It seems that when people only keep the ring without wearing it, then it does no harm. | | |
| 13. Joe Casino was murdered by a professional killer. | | |
| 14. The newspaper were full of stories about the evil spell of Valentino's ring | | |
| 15. Del Casino didn't believe in ghosts. That's why he was shot. | | |
| 16. The man who stole the ring was shot. | | |
| 17. Sonja Henie bought the ring and died in a skating accident. | | |
| 18. Jack Dunn wore he ring because he wanted to look like Rudolph Valentino. | | |
| 19. Jack Dunn died because he was very old. | | |
| 20. Before he died, Jack Dunn sold the ring for \$ 200,000. | | |
| 21. Alfred Hahn was a criminal, but he didn't want to steal the ring. | | |
| 22. The ring was stolen in a broad daylight raid. Nobody ever knew who the robbers were. | | |
| 23. Most people believe that Rudolph Valentino is wearing the ring in his grave. | | |
| 24. Today there is a simple natural explanation for the evil spell. The ring is made of a material, which is called jinx. If it were made of silver, then there would be no problem at all. | | |
| 25. The chances are that no one will ever dare to wear the ring again. | | |