

Diamonds and Scoundrels: My Life in the Jewelry Business

Adrienne Rubin

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Steeped in women's empowerment and behind-the-scenes candor, Diamonds and Scoundrels is an entertaining memoir about entrepreneurship.

Adrienne Rubin's gutsy and arresting memoir *Diamonds and Scoundrels* details her shift from a placid, 1960s homemaking life to an adventurous career, capturing thirty-five years of wisdom and growth.

A wife and mother with "brains to spare," Rubin craved a larger role at a time when women of her social standing weren't expected to work. She found the opportunity when she landed a job as a sales agent in the US for a jewelry store in Mexico. Rubin recalls importing Mexican silver, making cold calls to department stores, and braving the men-dominated world of gold and diamonds in energetic chapters that depict learning the ropes of the business. The formal aspects of building a business are glossed over in favor of livelier anecdotes that feature people encountered and mistakes made, bringing the luxurious world of jewelry down to earth.

Pre-internet Los Angeles's danger and mystique come through, as does the incredible nature of the jewelry field, in which success once relied on little more than a reputation and a handshake. Whether covering Rubin's trusting nature or the savvy that allowed her to recoup losses from cheating customers, the book delivers a clear message on the satisfaction that comes from making calculated risks.

The book's focus on mental fulfillment has a hint of privilege, although Rubin's family's support is acknowledged. There's excitement in the book's accounts of hustling and thoughtfulness in its fleeting moments of self-doubt. Meditations on the dilemma of choosing between stay-at-home parenting and an active work life also arise, but are handled without regret. A family encounter with Alzheimer's adds a more human note to the story, whose tone is grateful and proud in turn.

Much of the book centers on Rubin's role as a silent shareholder in Diamonds & Gold Jewelry Manufacturing Company, which turned out to be fraudulent. This is treated with honesty, with Rubin claiming naiveté, eagerness to succeed, and belief in people. After she discovers that the business is fraudulent, the book turns toward lengthy sections detailing Rubin's search through company records as part of the discovery process in a lawsuit against them. This work is painstaking, with mounting proof of the company's criminal practices coming to light. Ultimately, the investigation portions of the book are less dynamic than those that focus on Rubin's own companies.

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KAREN RIGBY (July 31, 2019)

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