

Diamond in the Rough

written by

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based on the novella 'Lust, Caution' by Eileen Chang

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**INT. CAB - DAY**

The black cab hurtles down the bustling London high street. In the back seat, CASS (mid 40s) sits with her hands fidgeting on her lap, staring out of the window. She is made up to look younger, with bleached blonde, freshly curled hair and a glamorous red fur coat.

She suddenly clutches her stomach. In a desperate motion, she winds down the window and throws up onto the street.

Collapsing back into her seat, she wipes her mouth with her sleeve, breathless.

**EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY**

The cab pulls onto the curb, outside a high-end restaurant. The backseat door opens and CASS steps out, looking around in wonder at the people rushing back and forth, as if in a dream. She walks away from the cab, slowly, a lost look in her eyes. She wipes her mouth and chin again.

Behind her, at the end of the stretch of pavement stands YURI (early 50s) an olive-skinned man wearing a rich blue suit. His beard is sharply trimmed to sculpt his face. He watches her, before slowly walking up behind her, putting his hands on the sides of her arms and whispering in her ear.

YURI  
(in a thick Eastern European  
accent)  
Trying to avoid me, are we?

She jumps, putting a hand to her chest.

CASS  
(strong East London accent)  
You scared the shit out of me.

YURI  
Excuse me?

She turns around and laughs.

CASS  
Sorry, fuck, I just wasn't  
expecting that.

YURI  
Mmm, you don't like it when I  
surprise you?

He takes her hands and kisses them, several times, before kissing her on the lips.

YURI  
My driver didn't cause you  
trouble, did he?

CASS looks around at the opulent buildings and people around her.

CASS  
Well he got me to the right  
place.

YURI  
Yes, a much better place than  
your little...hmm what do I call  
it..."shit hole"?

She laughs, politely. He looks down at her chest and his smile drops.

YURI  
You're not wearing it?

CASS looks down quickly at her empty chest.

CASS  
(under her breath)  
Shit.

She looks under the top of her dress, then looks back up at him regretfully.

CASS  
I...I had it on in the car, it  
must have fallen off. I'm sorry.

YURI  
Shhh don't worry baby it's just a  
string of pearls. Totally  
replaceable.

CASS  
It must have cost a fortune.

YURI  
No fortune I don't have.

He takes her hand.

YURI  
I buy you a better one.

She looks up at him with puppy-dog eyes.

CASS  
You'd do that for me?

YURI  
The store is right there, we can  
go today.

CASS smiles demurely, fluttering her eyelashes.

CASS

Well...we'd have to go soon, I've got to be back at work by 8.

YURI

Perhaps we can go after dinner?

CASS

No.

YURI straightens up, caught off-guard by the reaction.

CASS

I mean...I don't think the shop stays open past 5 now, robbers and that...and besides I'd feel really embarrassed going to some fancy place without proper jewellery.

YURI studies her, his brow furrowed. He nods.

YURI

You're right. I can't have you looking cheap, can I?

He traces his hands around her neck, studying her closely.

YURI (CONT'D)

No...that wouldn't do.

He nods once.

YURI (CONT'D)

We go now.

He offers her his arm. She smiles proudly.

CASS

You're too good to me.

They begin to walk.

YURI

Did you wear it yesterday like I told you?

CASS

Yeah, I got some weird looks at work. Jay weren't too happy about it.

YURI

Oh ho, I bet he wasn't.

CASS  
 He were probably jealous couldn't  
 afford something like that for  
 me.

They approach the jewellery store. CASS stares through the shop window at an elegant pearl necklace on a mannequin.

CASS  
 That's the same one.

Her own reflection stares back at her.

**INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

CASS removes an identical pearl necklace from around her neck, looking into a grimy mirror. Staring back is a bare-faced woman with strained, flat hair, and defined lines of age across her face. The yellow light flickers.

She drops the necklace into the toilet and pushes the lever, but it doesn't flush. She pushes the lever several more times, to no avail.

CASS  
 (under her breath)  
 Fuck.

She tries to push it down with her foot, continuing to flush.

A man shouts from outside the bathroom in a slurred cockney accent.

DRUNK MAN (O.S.)  
 Oi are you done in there?

CASS continues to shove her foot into the toilet, flushing furiously.

CASS  
 (shouting)  
 Give me a minute will ya!

DRUNK MAN (O.S.)  
 Hurry up you old whore.

CASS  
 (under her breath)  
 Piss off.

The toilet flushes, taking the necklace with it. CASS takes her foot out of the toilet and immediately doubles over, throwing up.

**INT. PUB - NIGHT**

CASS peers round the door into the dimly lit, low-ceilinged bar room. The tables and chairs are out yet the pub is deserted, apart from FOUR rough-looking men sat around the pool table with a pint each in front of them.

ALAN

As of this mornin' he's bought  
the rest of the street. We're the  
last ones.

JAY

Christ.

Sat at the head of the table, JAY (mid 50s) scratches his head. He's significantly bigger and burlier than the other men, and sits on the edge of his seat, as if he's ready to get up and fight at any moment.

CASS lingers around the back of the room, seemingly unnoticed.

JAY (CONT'D)

Dunno 'bout you fellas but I  
think it's about time we sort  
this out once and for all.

PHIL

What, you think we need to do it  
now?

JAY

We wait any longer and before you  
know it we're being chased outta  
place by those geezers in suits.  
It's tomorrow or never. This Euro  
cocksucker's got to go.

ALAN

I'm with Jay.

The rest of the men murmur in agreement.

JAY

Well, as you know, everything's-

The bathroom door swings open, JAY goes silent. A scrawny looking man walks through the door and sways drunkenly across the room towards the main exit. The moment the door shuts behind him, JAY shakes his head and resumes.

JAY (CONT'D)

Everything's in place. Alan and  
Phil are gonna stay nearby as  
backup. Ian, you're the man.

JAY pulls out a handgun from the nearest pocket of the pool table, pushes it across the table to Ian, a pale bald man with a stoney face.

JAY (CONT'D)  
 And, there's just one more thing.  
 We can't forget...

He pauses to take a sip of his beer.

JAY (CONT'D)  
 (slowly)  
 The reason this whole thing was  
 possible. Our crowning jewel.

JAY turns towards the back of the room, locks eyes with CASS.  
 JAY smiles.

JAY (CONT'D)  
 Come here babe.

CASS forces a smile and walks over to the table. JAY takes  
 her arm and pulls her onto his lap. He gazes at her.

JAY (CONT'D)  
 Nothing catches a man off guard  
 more than a beautiful woman, eh?

The man laugh. CASS remains silent.

JAY (CONT'D)  
 By tomorrow night, this  
 cocksucker will be out and WE  
 will be back in.

The men cheer. Alan raises his pint.

ALAN  
 To honest men.

The rest of the men raise their glasses.

JAY  
 Honest men and beautiful women.

Laughter. The men drink. CASS continues to smile, her eyes  
 empty.

**INT. PUB - NIGHT**

Some time later. CASS walks from the bar into a small  
 backroom lined with boxes and old rotting stacks of beer  
 crates. JAY follows her in and closes the door behind them.  
 They stand in silence for a few moments.

JAY  
 Don't mess this up for me.

She doesn't look at him.

CASS  
 I know.

He walks over to her and violently grabs her face by the chin.

JAY  
If you mess up we're all dead.  
You first.

JAY stares at her intensely. She doesn't move.

After a moment of silence, he kisses her, forcefully. She doesn't reciprocate. He smirks, pulling away and looking at her, almost tenderly.

JAY  
You know I love you babe.

She doesn't respond. He turns away, pacing in thought, and turns back to her within seconds.

JAY (CONT'D)  
If we pull this off, I'll marry  
ya.

CASS gives a suppressed laugh.

JAY (CONT'D)  
I mean it. I wanna show you how  
much you mean to me.

CASS  
What if I said no.

JAY  
You wouldn't dare.

CASS  
You don't know that.

JAY  
You would be very stupid to do  
that.

She scoffs.

CASS  
You think I need you?

JAY  
Well let's put it this way, who  
else is gonna take an old tramp  
like you?

CASS' expression turns sour. Her face stiffens.

JAY (CONT'D)  
I mean, look at you. Mutton  
dressed as lamb. Nobody wants  
that.



CASS  
Charming.

He grabs her neck and pushes her against the wall.

JAY  
Now you listen to me. Before you met me you was a washed up nobody. I took you in, taught you everything you know. I pay your bills during the day, I fuck your brains out at night. So don't you dare be an ungrateful little bitch to me, alright? I'm your fucking boss, not him.

Beat.

CASS  
I need to sleep.

JAY lets go of her. She swallows.

JAY  
Make sure he's at the jewellers at exactly 4:30. Do not let him leave any earlier. When the job's done, stay nearby and one of my guys will come get you, he'll bring you back to me.

She says nothing as she walks towards the door.

JAY (CONT'D)  
Remember what I said. We both know it'll be worse for you.

She stops and turns to look at him again, fear in her eyes.

**EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT**

CASS stares through the window at the pearl necklace, before following YURI into the store.

**INT. JEWELLERY STORE - DAY**

The store is small, with an old fashioned red carpet and ageing beige walls. The walls are lined with bright glass cases. At the back of the room, AMANDA is sat on the counter, tapping briskly on her phone. She's around CASS's age, wearing an immaculate brown suit. YURI strides over to her.

CASS wanders to one of the cases, gazing over a set of glittering watches.

YURI and AMANDA walk over to CASS.

YURI

Fantastic news. They have the exact same necklace available for you right now.

CASS hesitates. She slyly tilts her head to look at the time on one of the watches. 4:20 PM.

CASS

No. Actually...I'd like something else.

YURI smiles.

YURI

What did you have in mind?

CASS swallows. She turns away slowly to leisurely admire the jewellery.

AMANDA

Take as much time as you need.

AMANDA begins to walk back to the counter.

YURI

Amanda.

She turns back.

YURI (CONT'D)

What would recommend for us in the way of...say, rings?

YURI he turns his head to smile at CASS. With her back turned to him, she looks straight ahead anxiously.

AMANDA

I'll show you what we have. If you'll follow me upstairs.

CASS turns around hesitantly. YURI offers his arm, beaming, and leads her to the back of the room.

AMANDA opens a door leading to a dark, narrow staircase. CASS follows behind YURI, her high-heeled shoes wobbling with each step. She grips onto the banister, looking upwards at a pale light at the top of the staircase.

She stops, clutching her hand to her mouth. She lets out a suppressed retch.

YURI turns and offers his hand. She takes it, one hand still on her mouth, pulling herself up the last few steps.

The upstairs room is mostly bare, apart from a small table in the centre, and a line of large safes at the back. AMANDA walks over to one of the safes while YURI leads CASS to the table.

YURI  
Please, sit. She'll bring them to us.

He pulls out a chair for her, and she sits, wiping her mouth with her sleeve.

AMANDA brings over a velvet tray of sparkling diamond rings, laying it on the table. CASS lets out a gasp.

YURI  
Exquisite, aren't they?

CASS  
I...I've never seen so many diamonds.

AMANDA  
We got these in from Shanghai this morning. Have you been there?

YURI  
Now and then, for business.

CASS  
Never.

YURI looks at her.

AMANDA  
Let me see what else I have.

AMANDA gets up to open another safe.

YURI  
Well then I must take you there. You would love it. It's expensive, lots of people, lot's of parties.

CASS smiles politely.

CASS  
Maybe one day.

YURI  
How about tomorrow?

She looks at him sharply, then puts on a forced smile.

CASS  
Don't be daft.

YURI

I can get my pilot to pick us up in the morning. You won't have to worry about a thing, I will take care of it.

CASS raises her eyebrows.

CASS

Well it sounds lovely, but I have to work.

YURI

You don't want to work for that imbecile anymore, do you?

CASS

No, but-

YURI

And I don't want you working for him. That place will collapse in a matter of days anyway, you'll have nowhere to go.

CASS glances down at YURI's gold watch. 4:25.

CASS

Yes, but you're the one making it collapse.

YURI shrugs

YURI

Times change. People don't want to see the same ugly streets, they want money and glamour. I'm just giving it to them.

He takes a ring from the tray, a delicate gold band with a large pink jewel in the centre. Taking her hand, he slides the ring onto her finger.

YURI

What do you think?

CASS, lost for words, stares at the rock on her finger.

AMANDA

She's a beauty that one. Very rare.

CASS

It's very heavy, actually.

YURI

Oh ho, that means it's expensive.

AMANDA  
You're looking at nearly 40K for  
that one.

CASS  
Jesus.

As if by instinct, CASS slides the ring off her finger and  
puts it back in the tray. YURI laughs.

YURI  
(to AMANDA)  
She's not used to this sort of  
opulence.

AMANDA  
I can see that.

CASS wipes her forehead, beads of sweat beginning to appear.  
YURI notices. She forces a smile.

CASS  
God. It's hot in here.

YURI raises his eyebrows.

YURI  
(to AMANDA)  
Could you maybe turn the heating  
down?

AMANDA  
I'm afraid it's always this hot  
up here. Was the first thing I  
noticed when I bought the place.

CASS  
You own this place?

AMANDA smiles at CASS.

AMANDA  
For nearly ten years, yes. My  
family have always been in the  
jewellery business and I wanted  
to break out and have my own  
space.

CASS  
That must have been scary.

AMANDA  
It was at first. But it's worth  
it for the freedom.

YURI leans into CASS's ear.

YURI  
Baby, why don't you try on  
another ring.

CASS glances down at his watch again. 4:27.

CASS  
Could I have a moment to think?

Before either can respond, CASS gets up and walks towards the window, looking out onto the bustling street below. She closes her eyes, breathing slowly and deeply.

YURI comes to stand next to her.

YURI  
Are you alright?

CASS looks down, avoiding his gaze.

CASS  
Yes, just...overwhelmed I  
suppose.

YURI  
Perhaps it was too forward of me  
to ask about Shanghai.

CASS wipes her forehead.

YURI  
I'll be honest with you...I was  
hoping that if you would come  
away with me it would make that  
old innkeeper lose hope. I think  
it still will.

CASS turns to look out of the window, where she spots IAN standing casually on the street, about a fifty metres away, his hand firmly in his pocket. He meets her gaze for a moment. Without drawing any attention to the exchange, she slowly turns back to face YURI.

CASS  
So I'm the pawn in this game  
between you?

YURI takes her face in his hands.

YURI  
Of course not, baby. I'm not  
doing this to use you. I'm doing  
it because...

He hesitates and shakes his head.

YURI  
I love you.

CASS ignores him, looking over at AMANDA who is sitting at the table on her phone. YURI lets go.

YURI  
So what do you say?

CASS  
I...

She turns back to look outside the window to see IAN slowly walking towards the store.

CASS  
I can't do it.

YURI  
Forget Shanghai. You don't have to do anything, we'll work something out.

CASS  
I'm not talking about Shanghai.

YURI  
What do you mean?

She takes a deep breath, then looks at him dead in the eye.

CASS  
You need to leave. Right now.

For a moment he looks at her, bemused. Then, his face drops at the realisation.

CASS  
Go.

Without warning, YURI darts towards the stairs and exits. AMANDA stands up abruptly.

CASS  
Wait, it's alright.

CASS turns back towards the window, observing the action below. YURI dashes out of the shop, half bent over. Two loud BANGS go off. The crowds in the street scream and separate.

AMANDA rushes to the window.

AMANDA  
Oh my God, was that a gun?

YURI races off down an alleyway out of sight. CASS scans the scurrying chaos of people, but IAN is nowhere to be seen.

CASS  
Where's the back entrance.

AMANDA

I think you should stay-

CASS

Trust me, I'll be safer out there  
than in here. Just show me.

Without an explanation, CASS gestures for AMANDA to lead the way, which she does, hesitantly.

**EXT. BACK STREET - DAY**

CASS emerges into a narrow backstreet, piled with black bin bags and waste. The sound of men shouting in the distance echoes through the street. She stumbles down the pavement in her high heels.

CASS reaches the end of the street and peers round the corner. She quietly gasps, covering her mouth when she sees JAY standing less than a metre around the corner, hands in his pockets, watching the police pushing IAN into their car. She watches him from behind, considering her next move.

JAY begins to turn around, CASS quickly darts back around the corner, pressing herself against the wall. He doesn't see her. After a long hesitation, he begins to walk away in the opposite direction.

Thunder CLAPS, and rain starts to fall. CASS doubles over and throws up loudly onto the street, coughing and spluttering. She straightens up and turns to walk the other way down the street.

One of her heels catches on a cobblestone and she trips, catching herself on all fours. Something falls out of her coat pocket and CLATTERS onto the cobbles. She looks up. It's a pregnancy test.

She takes it. It shows two lines.

She closes her eyes and slowly climbs to her feet. Standing in the pouring rain, she looks out at the narrow street in front of her. Her makeup starts to run, exposing the lines on her face, the dark circles under her eyes.

She takes a deep breath. Throwing the pregnancy test onto one of the piles of bin bags, she begins to walk again, into the unknown.