

**Hocking Murray**  
by George Sapio

Cast:

Simon: M, a diamond dealer. Cast appropriate.

Dorothy: F. 50+

Setting: Simon's diamond trading cubicle.

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**HOCKING MURRAY**

*[At rise: DOROTHY seated across from SIMON.]*

**SIMON**

This diamond has a bluish tinge.

**DOROTHY**

Does that make it more valuable?

**SIMON**

Well, it is technically an impurity. Diamonds are graded on color, among other things. The absence of color is usually better. There's a joke among jewelers; the perfect diamond would be invisible.

**DOROTHY**

Isn't a sapphire a diamond with blue color?

**SIMON**

No. A sapphire is a variant of the mineral corundum, usually containing trace amounts of iron. A diamond is made from carbon. This is a diamond containing trace amounts of boron. Where did you get this?

**DOROTHY**

I've had it for years. I guess.

**SIMON**

You guess?

**DOROTHY**

Well, I've had the diamond itself for five years.

**SIMON**

But you seemed to indicate a longer time of possession.

**DOROTHY**

I suppose I've had . . . this . . . for twenty-six years. Total.

**SIMON**

I'm not following you.

**DOROTHY**

Can't you tell me how much it's worth? It is a diamond, right?

**SIMON**

It is most definitely a diamond.

**DOROTHY**

Then please tell me what it's worth.

**SIMON**

I can do that. But I have to tell you first that it is not worth anything near to a natural blue diamond.

**DOROTHY**

You just said it was a real diamond.

**SIMON**

It is a real diamond. I did not say it was a natural diamond.

**DOROTHY**

But [you said]

**SIMON**

This is a synthetic diamond. I can tell because of the way the light refracts under the spectroscope.

**DOROTHY**

What's the difference? If it's a diamond, it's a diamond, right?

**SIMON**

Only in the same way that a wig made of real hair isn't one's own real hair.

**DOROTHY**

My hair is real.

**SIMON**

I am sure, ma'am, but [it is not my business.].

**DOROTHY**

So this diamond looks like the real thing, but it's not as valuable.

**SIMON**

Well, as I told you, it is a diamond. Its just [not a natural diamond.]

**DOROTHY**

Not a natural diamond. This is my luck. This thing cost me fifteen thousand dollars.

**SIMON**

You paid fifteen thousand dollars for this?

**DOROTHY**

I paid fifteen thousand dollars to have it made.

**SIMON**

Made?

**DOROTHY**

This diamond is unlike any other.

**SIMON**

Ma'am, I'm very sorry. I don't know what you were told. Yes, each diamond is indeed unique and intrinsically one of a kind. But still . . . Why would you pay fifteen thousand dollars to have a diamond made when you can find a natural one?

**DOROTHY**

Because what you are holding is my dead husband.

**SIMON**

Excuse me?

**DOROTHY**

His name was Murray Fisher. He was a high school social studies teacher. I had him cremated and pressed into that synthetic chip of carbon.

**SIMON**

Ahhh. I've heard of these, but I must confess I've never actually seen one before. Was he a diminutive man?

**DOROTHY**

Average size.

**SIMON**

And he was compressed into . . .

**DOROTHY**

Sort of makes you think, doesn't it? An average size man, one hundred and eighty-nine pounds, with bones and organs and a beer gut turned into a hunk of carbon the size of a housefly. Cremated and compressed. Modern science. That 1-carat diamond was a man your size.

**SIMON**

I am truly humbled.

**DOROTHY**

And I wanna hock it. What will you give me for it?

**SIMON**

Now I'm thinking of it as "him."

**DOROTHY**

It is a "him." It's Murray.

**SIMON**

With due respect, it *was* Murray. Now it's pressurized carbon.

**DOROTHY**

I was married to this pressurized carbon for 21 years. This is Murray.

**SIMON**

This *was* Murray. You know, some wives pressure their husbands to become well-known, but you've literally pressured him to become eternal.

*[Waits, but no reaction. Then:]*

**DOROTHY**

You're just trying to talk me down in price.

**SIMON**

Ma'am, I assure you I am a fair and honest trader. There are a dozen dealers up and down this block. Each one, I guarantee, will give you a price reasonably close to mine.

**DOROTHY**

I'm not convinced. First you tell me this is a diamond.

**SIMON**

It is a diamond.

**DOROTHY**

Then you tell me it's not worth the same as a real, sorry, "natural" diamond.

**SIMON**

Because it's not. Natural diamonds take millions of years and very special circumstances to create. How long did it take them to turn Murray into this nugget?

**DOROTHY**

Three weeks. Shipping included. How. Much???

**SIMON**

Ma'am, I told you. I can only give you so much for this diamond. It may not be worth it for you to part with this treasured part of your life. This was your husband. I couldn't possibly give you a fair price on the life you shared together.

**DOROTHY**

What do you know about the life we shared?

**SIMON**

Well, nothing.

**DOROTHY**

Precisely.

**SIMON**

I must admit I'm starting to feel somewhat uneasy about this.

**DOROTHY**

Oh, really.

**SIMON**

If, as you say, this was your husband . . .

**DOROTHY**

You want to know, right? They weren't always good years, okay? He was an unpredictable, moody bastard. I never knew what or when something would set him off. Frequently I hated him.

**SIMON**

Please. This is not [my business.]

**DOROTHY**

You deal with these damn things all day. Pieces of pressurized carbon. Each one a fortune. Each one a symbol of undying love.

**SIMON**

[Ma'am . . .]

**DOROTHY**

The market for diamonds is the most fabricated swindle ever perpetrated on the public. "A diamond is forever." How many women insist on diamonds as symbols of love and commitment? Honestly? It's a rock. Nothing more.

**SIMON**

A very rare rock.

**DOROTHY**

Not anymore. Synthetic diamonds are being pumped into the system willy-nilly. And, aside from industrial uses, they are in effect, essentially and intrinsically, worthless.

**SIMON**

If that is the way you feel, why even bother to have this ring made in the first place?

**DOROTHY**

Because it is (a) pretty fucking ungainly, and (b) illegal to drag around the corpse of one's dead husband. After a while pieces drop off and it gets pretty stinky. So I had him rocked.

**SIMON**

And now you wish to sell him.

**DOROTHY**

How much?

**SIMON**

It's not that easy.

**DOROTHY**

Try.

**SIMON**

A diamond must be examined carefully. In order for me to give you a fair price for this I need to look at it and grade it. It will take a while.

**DOROTHY**

Oh, brother.

**SIMON**

Would you buy a car just by looking at it? I assure you I am not trying to drive down the price.

*[Beat. Dorothy waits.]*

First I look at the color. There's a hint of blue.

**DOROTHY**

You said that already.

**SIMON**

There's always some color cast. And there are usually impurities. No diamond is perfect. Just like a husband.

**DOROTHY**

What are you, a shrink? Murray was always a light shade of yellow. A little jaundiced. But hardly noticeable.

**SIMON**

His color is fine. A slight shading. It actually makes him look a bit richer.

**DOROTHY**

Rich was one thing he was not.

**SIMON**

The facet, polish, and symmetry are excellent.

**DOROTHY**

You sure that's Murray?

**SIMON**

It's the only deceased husband in the store. I guarantee. You spent so much to have him made immortal. Now you want to sell him.

**DOROTHY**

Stop saying "him."

**SIMON**

I can't change the facts. I can't change that this was once a human being named Murray Fisher. With this in mind, I'm wondering if this may not be a profitable deal for me.

**DOROTHY**

What do you mean?

**SIMON**

I may not be able to, well, resell it. Him. I'm not even sure it would be legal. Or ethical.

**DOROTHY**

Why not? This is a perfectly good diamond.

**SIMON**

I agree. It is good. The quality is better than good, in fact.

**DOROTHY**

Then what's the problem?

**SIMON**

Technically, it is a person.

**DOROTHY**

Was, you said.

**SIMON**

Well, I'm not sure now. I mean, every diamond has a provenance. Its history must be accounted for to ensure honesty and to prevent the passage of illegally gotten goods.

**DOROTHY**

I assure you, Murray was not stolen.

**SIMON**

See? Even you refer to it, uhh, him as Murray.

**DOROTHY**

Well, that's because he was! And now he's a rock.

**SIMON**

But he *was* Murray. A human being. This is important. There are laws against trafficking in human beings.

**DOROTHY**

Never mind.

**SIMON**

Every other dealer will ask you the diamond's history.

**DOROTHY**

So what?



**SIMON**

So this is not just buying a diamond. This is buying someone's dead husband. Think about it. This is not just a rock. This used to be a person. This used to be Murray. Or Walter. Or Martha.

**DOROTHY**

So?

*[Throughout the following speech, DOROTHY will try to interrupt once or twice]*

**SIMON**

That means something. Once you tell someone that the gem they are looking at used to be a living human being, who will want to buy that? Imagine having Eugene or Debra on your finger. And not *your* Eugene or Debra, but someone else's Eugene or Debra. There are people who won't wear used clothes because they were on someone else's body. They have the aura of the former person's skin, scent. And who knows who they may have been? Were they good people? You wouldn't want a murderer or a congressman on your finger. Were they attractive? Who were they? Could you actually wear a diamond on your finger and not wonder who it used to be? Diamonds are meant to be admired, to be looked at, to be revered. But this. Knowing it was someone named Murray, how could you stop looking at it, wondering who Murray was? And what if you did the research? Looked him up online and found his picture. What if Murray now had a face, a full name, an identity? To know that the ring on your finger used to be an actual human being with skin, organs, a brain. A scent. A penis. A vagina.

**DOROTHY**

Murray did not have a vagina. It was not that kind of relationship.

**SIMON**

You look at the ring and you see Murray, who you lived with for how long?

**DOROTHY**

21 years.

**SIMON**

Yes. And you knew him. Loved him. Lay next to him. Fed him. Cared for him. Were deeply intimate with him. Could you ask someone else to wear him now? Once you leave him here, what would you do? Could you wear someone else's Martin? Howard? Besides, and think about this, how many women could say with exact literal precision that they have their husband wrapped around their finger?

**DOROTHY**

How much?

**SIMON**

This is your husband. Why, after all this time, and all that expense to keep him, would you want to get rid of him? Worse: to sell him to a complete stranger?

**DOROTHY**

You are getting way too personal.

**SIMON**

You're right. Please forgive me.

**DOROTHY**

I found letters.

**SIMON**

Excuse me?

**DOROTHY**

Letters of an extremely intimate and provocative nature.

**SIMON**

That is very unfortunate.

**DOROTHY**

Letters no decent person should ever write to another human being. Letters filled with the most graphic and disgusting words you could imagine.

**SIMON**

That must have been [devastating for you.]

**DOROTHY**

I did think about this before coming here. This was not an emotional whim.

**SIMON**

[As you say.]

**DOROTHY**

I did not just react like a heartbroken child.

**SIMON**

This is really [none of my business.]

**DOROTHY**

I took time. I weighed the import of what I was considering.

**SIMON**

I [understand.]

**DOROTHY**

Do you think what you said never occurred to me?

**SIMON**

I am sure [it did.]

**DOROTHY**

Do you really think you can teach me about my own husband? About every day we spent together? About the millions of small, random loving things that added up to our twenty-one years? And you sit there and make smarmy jokes at my expense.

**SIMON**

I apologize.

**DOROTHY**

How would you feel with this, all of this, on your finger?

**SIMON**

I could not possibly answer that.

**DOROTHY**

First smart thing you've said. All those years and all those letters. And he thinks he got away with it. Well, I have news for him. I have the chance to actually divest myself of, if not the memories, than the actual physical being. I can divorce him after he's dead by selling him away. I can make a deal and leave him in a shop display case. If not with you, then with your neighbor next door who may not be so sticky on the metaphysical aspects of this transaction. Or the next jeweler. Or the next.

**SIMON**

I will buy this diamond from you if you still wish it.

**DOROTHY**

They told me this would be a real diamond.

**SIMON**

It is.

**DOROTHY**

As real as fake fur.

**SIMON**

Yet people wear it. It feels just like the real thing. It keeps you warm as well as the real thing. It does exactly what the real thing does.

**DOROTHY**

I thought *he* was the real thing. I really did. But he only looked like it.

**SIMON**

Please, madam, listen to me. I have been in this business for over thirty years. I have seen thousands of diamonds of varying qualities. Every

single diamond out there has a flaw. There are no truly perfect ones.  
Sometimes you just have to live with that.

**DOROTHY**

How much?

*[SIMON writes down a figure on a piece of paper and  
shows it to her.]*

**DOROTHY**

I will settle for that.

*[SIMON writes her a check]*

**DOROTHY**

Thank you.

*[DOROTHY leaves]*

**SIMON**

Those must have been some letters.