

**Carbonado**  
**By Mike Waugh**

“So you’re interested in politics?”, enquired Jarek. I looked around the opulent spa, adorned with intricately patterned tiles, glistening gem stones and a vaulted roof that stretched up into darkness. This was the hottest of the Turkish baths, and though I’d been there for less than a few minutes, already my skin felt like it was searing off my bones.

I nodded. Jarek was my middle-Eastern contact. Fat, fifty and fanatical about diamonds, which was a problem because I had zero interest in them. Not their shape, not their value, not their origin nor their variety. Jarek exhaled deeply, as if the water was gradually deflating him and turned to me as his voice dropped to a whisper.

“Then, you’ve come to the right place, Adam. You know the rules already I’m told.”

Ah, the rules. I’d been sent here by a friend Garrett - no, associate is a better term - on one understanding. He would help jump start my career in politics on one understanding. I was to follow his instructions, not question his method and do exactly as he said for one week. Just one week.

My only question to Garret had been why there were to be no questions. Well, this was met with a hostile, disgusted look. I’d seen that look before, right before he’d decided to crash a multi-million pound takeover deal. Question Garrett all you like, but if you do, expect to come off the worse, so I relented and decided to go along with the flow. This was how I’d ended up in Dubai.

“So, I’ll teach you what you need to know to get ahead. All I need you to do...”

Jarek nodded at one of the staff holding white fluffy robes. He stood up, creating a near tidal wave that knocked me off my step.

“... is to pay close attention”.

“Of course”, I agreed. I started to get up to leave as well but he motioned for me to stay.

The now fully-robed Jarek grinned.

“Relax a while, you’ll need to be fully rested for the next few days. It will be...”.

Jarek looked around as if the word he was reaching for might be lying by one of the deckchairs.

“It will be intense. See you in the morning”.

And that was how I came to learn all about diamonds, which my associate thought should be the bedrock of all political careers.

When Jarek told me the perfect diamond comprised two Egyptian pyramid shapes perfectly mirrored - an octahedron - all I could think of was who I should get into bed with; the well-oiled but soulless free marketeers on the right or the shambolic but lovable ideologues on the left.

On another day, Jarek explained that all diamonds are discovered or stolen. He sketched out diagrams of the earth's crust, and the volcanic activity deep inside the mantle which provided the perfect conditions for most diamonds. But all I could wonder was where political beliefs come from? Are they from deep within or just passed on, generation after generation?

Jarek spent hours and hours taking me through the methodology of diamond processing; from dull stone to sparkling brilliance, via marking it, cleaving it to split it along the grain, bruting it where two diamonds spin against one another to shape them both, before finally polishing to reveal its glory. And yet, my mind was elsewhere; how could I find the ideas that get political traction? How could I improve on what greater minds had already mulled over throughout millennia?

On my last day there, Jarek gave me whistle-stop photographic tour of world's greatest diamonds. His eyes lit up as he described the cranberry hue of the Moussaieff Red (£15 million), the vivid colours of the Steinmetz Pink (£18 million) and the gentle blues of the magnificent Hope Diamond (£270 million). But he reserved the widest grin for the slide showing the 105 carat Koh-I-Noor (priceless), otherwise known as the Mountain of Light that rests in the Tower of London.

Jarek sat back, impressed with himself and stared at me. "So, now you know what I know", he grinned. Even when I had been paying attention, it was pretty clear I knew a fraction of Jarek's encyclopaedic knowledge about the industry but I didn't want to offend, so I nodded. He eyed me up and down and then leaned forward.

"Adam, I don't want to unsettle you, but Garrett asked me to test you over this week. To see if you've been paying attention".

My mind had wondered like a dog frolicking in the fields over the course of the week but Jarek had repeated himself so many times, I was confident I'd pass whatever test he'd dream up.

"And if you fail, you won't be allowed to leave". Jarek half-smiled, making me entirely unsure if this was a joke or a threat.

"Tell me Adam, where's the world's most valuable type of diamond?"

I looked at him as if he was joking. "Erm... London, is this some kind of trick question?". He looked crushed and sat back in his chair.

"That's the world's most expensive diamond. But the most valuable?"

We'd covered the world map of mines; how Russia owned more than half of the world's biggest recoverable diamond supplies, but how most of the most expensive diamonds in existence had come from India and South Africa. I rattled off my now extensive knowledge to a saddened Jarek who shook his head.

"Let's get to the spa".

I'd never been big on baths, Turkish or otherwise but Jarek couldn't get enough of them. I was back again in the searing heat of the Turkish bath.

"Markets price diamonds according to supply and demand and rarely do actual prices match true objective value. Where do diamonds come from? Where has the most value?". I looked at him blankly. If this was the test, I was failing fast.

"Think!" he said, splashing the water all around him. "Follow me". Jarek emerged from the bath like a whale, and stomped over to the freezing cold pool. He turned to me and wagged a finger in the air.

"Think! Think! Think!".

He then plunged into the icy cold. I followed as I lost my breath and my testicles in one foul swoop. Jarek surfaced, breathing fast, staring at me and then to the ceiling.

It was a long shot, but maybe this was the test. Through my gasps I sounded him out.

"You ... told me **most** diamonds are made in the earth's mantle, in extreme heat. Which means some are not".

Jarek broke into a broad grin.

"Meteorites right? Right? I am right?"

Jarek's smile was so wide it temporarily put me off the freeze burn that was scorching my body. Jarek motioned a member of staff to come over who brought a black piece of rock on a silver tray.

Jarek leaned over a wet hand and tossed the rock over to me.

"Carbonado", he said, "from 3 billion-year old meteorites. Source of black diamonds."

"You understand this right?"

"I think so," I replied, hesitantly.

Jarek laughed and clambered out the freezing waters. "The most brilliant comes from down below. The most valuable from up above. Think on it.". And with that, he walked off.

I climbed out the water, and grabbed a towel, still grabbing the black rock in one hand, my body screaming from the cold.

"Jarek!". I called after him as he waddled off. He simply raised a hand in recognition without turning.

The lesson was over.