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Writer/s: [Margaret Trail](#)

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I saw a young man for about eight months. We met in a local pub. He was playing 'Buck Hunter,' a shooting game and I, bored with after-work drinks and a bit pissed, was cheering him on. He was charming in victory. He was six foot four, a football player, and warm, with witty tattoos and, as it eventually turned out, a great and varied collection of rap CDs and good fun in sex. We had what I thought was a perfect affair, largely in secret, although there was no real need for it to be. No one was cheating. Still, he never met my friends, I never met his. I didn't talk about it much to anyone and I don't think he did either.

He was in a bit of trouble with the law. Driving offences, or so he said. I could easily believe it after he drove me out to Campbellfield once. It wasn't good. Tailgating slow drivers, accelerating towards errant pedestrians, filthy language. I stretched both feet out in front of me so he wouldn't see me pumping invisible brakes. Poker-face beneath my sunglasses, knowing if I showed even the tiniest glimmer of judgement that he'd do it all the more.

My Scottish grandmother had a diamond ring hidden in her house. She was the only one who knew where it was, but we all knew it was there. That diamond exerted a terrible pressure in the house, at least it did in me. Even if a visitor didn't know of its existence I was sure they would have felt the compression of its secret presence. I knew my grandmother would have hidden it somewhere so unlikely, stashed it so seemingly-carelessly, at the bottom of a canister of self-raising flour, or in the back of the freezer under a packet of peas, that no one would ever think to look there. She had committed herself to a lifelong performance of complete ingenuousness: brushing past it daily, never forgetting, never letting on.

My grandmother was a card player. Family holiday card games were tense affairs. 'Hands above the table', she'd bark to my nine-year-old brother and me. Addressing us in Glasgow-accented French: 'Gentlemen, place your bets!' As we struggled with our matchsticks, adding up nines, sevens, sixes with our lips moving and our skinny legs wriggling.

The night before his court appearance he asked me to read the tarot cards for him. I couldn't resist sneaking a few scraps of clandestine advice into the reading. He picked it up immediately, stopped me. 'What are you goin' on about?' he asked, 'that's not the cards talking, that's you'. Sprung, I spluttered a bit. 'It's just that I saw

on Judge Judy this one case with a young man who couldn't control himself in the court room,' I said. 'It looked really bad. You have to do the right thing in these situations'. He didn't reply, he looked straight ahead, his face getting red, his eyes shining. 'Come on' I said, touching his leg, 'I'm just trying to help. Like a football coach. I'm just trying to help you get psyched'. He sat in frosty silence, then turned to look at me: 'You don't know what it's like...when everyone around you is telling you what happened and getting it wrong. When people who weren't even there and don't even know, or are out-and-out bullshitting, and the judge is believing them. You don't know what you're talking about'. He stood up and looked down at me. 'You have', he said, 'no fucken idea', pulled the cigarettes from his back pocket and stalked outside slamming the screen door.

I have the ring now. She left it to me. She'd given it to my Dad before she died and he passed it on to me. It's a beautiful ring. Solitaire, with shoulder settings of three smaller diamonds each. Deco. Very elegant. Of course I started to wear it every day.

But one day I looked down at my hand to see the ring empty of its stone. The diamond had fallen out of its setting. It was shocking in a way I had never felt before, like a sting running through my whole body. I rang my parents in hysterical tears, sobbing that I had lost a family heirloom, that I didn't deserve to be trusted. My mother, worried about me, put me on to my father for reassurance. 'Heirloom!' Dad scoffed, 'there's no wealth in her family. She bought that ring from a butcher in a pub in Glasgow for God's sake. She had an eye for a bargain'. While I was talking to them on the phone I found the diamond in the carpet under my desk. Sick with relief, I promised myself I would never wear it again and shortly afterwards I put it in a safety deposit box at the bank.

When he comes back in he apologises. I do too. 'You're right', I say. 'I don't know what I'm talking about'. 'You haven't been poor enough', he says. 'It's all a game for you. The rap, the tarot cards, the football. Your nice house, your cabinet-maker toyboy, your hidden fortune'. I feel our perfect affair collapsing under pressure I don't understand. It feels unjust. 'I do not have a hidden fortune', I say. 'Nah', he says, 'you do'.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Margaret Trail.