Never Leave The Stream

by TheBlindBandit

Summary

Pink Diamond, restlessness, and a lifetime of change.

She supposed she should have been grateful that they only held these once per planetary revolution.

Everything about a public appearance and general address was built to impress - thus it supposedly followed that it had to be painstakingly rehearsed down to the last tiny and likely utterly inconsequential detail. In an incredibly rare occurrence of White wholeheartedly agreeing with her, it was a colossal waste of their time.

Yellow Diamond, bringer of order.

It was always so dramatic - carefully calculated for maximum effect, with hundreds of Gems toiling endless hours over elaborate, flashy stages. And for what?

White Diamond, bringer of knowledge.

The attending crowds were always wowed easily enough. Still, as Blue was so very fond of pointing out, there existed certain standards, and they had to be upheld.

Blue Diamond, bringer of prosperity.
But really, the way Blue talked about these things, one would think the fate of all Gemkind hinged on the ends of her cloak being lit just so - and she’d had more than one terrified agate Retired over a failure to properly handle technical difficulties.

*Pink Diamond, bringer of life.*

She could never quite make up her mind whether she loved or hated being last in their well-established order of appearance.

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She never stayed on-planet for very long.

She’d always been the restless one, not content to sit back and watch and bide her time, like Yellow, or scheme from the shadows, like White, or remain as dully stagnant and content as tideless water, like Blue. Their company was something she endured because she had to - but she only subjected herself to it as much as was absolutely necessary.

New generation pearls were, thankfully, highly efficient, and maintenance on the ships in her fleet never took more than a few dozen rotations. It was interesting to watch them work from a secluded, safe perch high on the hangar rafters. Gems always acted differently when knowingly in the presence of a Diamond, and something about seeing them all in a light the other three had certainly never taken the time or effort to was exciting.

There was a particular pearl assigned to upgrading her personal cruiser’s engines that was a delight to watch work - she hummed when content, and smiled to herself when pleased with how she’d made a particular bolt fit into a latch, adding utterly unnecessary and utterly endearing little flourishes to her movements when attaching electrical components.

Sometimes it almost seemed as if she were doing a dance. It was relaxing and refreshing, almost soothing, even, after a long, frustrating disagreement with White over policies which absolutely weren’t under her jurisdiction, but that she still insisted on poking her rather cruelly pointed features into.

*Pink Diamond, bringer of life.*

She’d made the title sound mocking, almost.

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The next time she arrived at the hangar, both to check on the work in progress and to try and regain some semblance of calm after a disastrous council session, her pearl was noticeably absent, along with several others.

White’s unusually pronounced smirk and the many loaded looks shot her way suddenly made an immense amount of sense. The miserable, spiteful, spying clump of *dirt-*

It was likely already too late, but the Recycling Centre was thankfully not very far. Besides, few would dare stand in the way of an obviously livid Diamond. No doors were ever closed to her, and so neither were the large, battered gates most Gems prayed to never see the other side of.

“Stop!”

Her voice rang out, and silence descended on the cavernous hall, broken only by the rhythmic sounds of automated machinery. An entire line of pearls stood gaping at her, wide-eyed and terrified.
looks melting into awe and disbelief, tinged here and there with the desperate beginnings of hope.

“My lady Pink Diamond,” the Overseer stepped forward, looking no less dumbfounded than the pearls she’d been directing to their deaths in an orderly line, “please excuse my-”

“These pearls are here by clerical error and are not to be Retired under any circumstances,” she interrupted with the full force of her authority and little time for kindness, eyes still trailing over the rows of shell-shocked Gems. “I need them for my next colonisation and exploitation effort.”

She needed no justification, of course - the Overseer would have done whatever she’d asked of her anyway. Still, she felt more comfortable having provided a reason for herself, no matter how flimsy.

“Y-yes, of course, my lady - the situation will be rectified immediately, with my deepest apologies-”

She tuned out the rest of the spiel, because there she was, finally, almost at the grate that led to the Recycler and looking remarkably calm for someone mere seconds away from having her gem ground to dust - the pearl she’d so self-indulgently taken to thinking of as hers.

Relief softened her next words to the flustered Overseer. “Just have them sent to my hangar and let them get back to work.”

_Pink Diamond, bringer of life._

Perhaps, she thought to herself. Perhaps.

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She couldn’t quite say where it all went wrong - or, rather, when she started noticing just how wrong everything already was. Perhaps White’s petty, spiteful little move and biting talk about _getting too attached to her playthings_ had provided a turning point. Or perhaps it had been one of a million other things.

She remembered the first time she couldn’t help but cringe at the sight of a once flourishing planet turned into a lifeless husk by the fate she’d very deliberately imposed on it herself; the first time she reacted with awe and curiosity instead of disgust and discomfort at seeing two tiny Gems become something even bigger than both of them together; the first time it truly hit her that pearls, agates, and ambers and so, so many more all had wishes and desires and wants and thoughts, the same as any other Gem - and the first time she saw how much it could come to cost them if they let anyone notice.

Things she’d never before taken the time to contemplate in any depth suddenly made a distressing amount of horrible sense.

_Pink Diamond, bringer of life._

It rang just a bit more hollow each time.

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Homeworld turned its back on her just as readily as she’d turned hers on _them._

The one thing she knew she had to retain completely and utterly, no matter what, was the conviction that it was entirely inappropriate for a leader to show any trace of weakness. She had to be the pillar for so many who relied on her for strength, for decisive action, for direction and guidance here on an alien world they’d all willingly exiled themselves to.
There was no place for doubt or hesitation, especially not on the eve of battle.

“I can’t do this,” she murmured, hiding her face behind her hands, the white dress spread out around her and over the grass of the hilltop only serving to highlight the abject misery of her hunched posture.

But then, most importantly, there was always Pearl.

“Rose…”

“I have no right to any of your lives. No matter how the battle goes, Gems will be lost, and I might as well have sent them to a Recycler on Homeworld myself. I’m- it makes me just as bad as the three of them, and I hate it so very, very much that, whatever I do, nothing really sets us apart-”

“No!” Pearl interrupted the tirade, making herself flinch with the sudden volume of her own voice and the fiery insistence of her denial. “Rose,” she began again, hesitantly and far more quietly, and Rose felt both her small hands on her arm, fingers pressing nervously, each pad a tiny well of surprisingly intense comfort. “Most of us here… didn’t exactly get to choose a lot. Not much of a- a say in things, really, as you are probably well aware. But we got to choose this. We chose you.”

Rose wasn’t sure if she’d rather smile or cry upon seeing the blatant, naked devotion in the gaze Pearl was so intently focusing on her, pale blue eyes wide and brows fiercely drawn together.

“…and Earth,” Pearl concluded after a brief pause, as if suddenly remembering she’d left out an important part.

Rose’s faltering ceased, and she gave in to the smile. “Oh, Pearl. You always know what to say.”

“W-who, me? Ha!” Pearl’s brief bark of disbelieving laughter was high and nervous, as it always seemed to be these days. “You must be thinking of some other pearl.”

“Mm, no, not at all,” Rose threw an arm around her and nuzzled into her hair, and Pearl let out a fascinatingly endearing squeak.

*Pink Diamond,* -

It was entirely a thing of the past, and she found, in the end, she put very little stock in nostalgia and regret.

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Every battle they fought was inherently a losing one.

The disparity in numbers was so great, all Homeworld had to do was bide its time and slowly grind their resistance down to nothing. Each cracked Gem was far more than the Rebellion could afford to lose, and everything they tried to term a victory was nothing but a feeble attempt at delaying the inevitable.

The mounting tension came to a head when, instead of welcoming Garnet back after a long battle, Rose found herself faced with a sobbing Sapphire. Glints of red peeked out from between her tightly clenched, shaking fingers, and her usual composure was utterly lost under the flood of things she should have seen-

Rose clamped a hand over her own mouth and tried so very hard to stem the tide, but not even Pearl’s presence at her side could do much. Her hands stayed entangled in the folds of Rose’s dress
as if she was hoping to somehow anchor the both of them to their chosen planet and terrible reality of not one, but two dear losses. The tears splashed down, tireless and seemingly endless-

-and with a flash of light and a shocked exclamation from Sapphire, Ruby slowly blinked her eyes open.

The hushed, awed whispers of newborn hope spread through the rebel forces faster than any wildfire Earth had ever seen.

*Rose Quartz, bringer of life.*