LOMBARD-STREET TO A CHINA ORANGE

by

CJ Walley
"Too cheerful a morality is a loose morality; it is appropriate only to decadent peoples and is found only among them."

- Emile Durkheim
INT. LUXURY HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

The dim glow of warm light is enough to make out a popped champagne bottle while orchestral music strums.

Two naked bodies writhe entwined within silk sheets. This is CANDACE and MANSA, lovingly engrossed in one-another as they sip bubbly, kiss, and caress each other's tattooed flesh.

Candace stares into Mansa's eyes with adoration.

CANDACE
Tell me, do you ever feel burdened by where we have come?

MANSA
Never. I just think about where we're headed.

Mansa stops kissing Candace. He takes a gleaming diamond necklace and carefully places it around her neck.

MANSA
My queen.

Candace is overcome by passion and kisses Mansa frantically.

CANDACE
My king.

They grope at one another. Candace seems distracted.

MANSA
What?

CANDACE
For some reason, I feel worried this time.

MANSA
Why?

CANDACE
They might call for help.

MANSA
No can't, they're are as dirty as we are, if not dirtier.

Mansa stares down with confidence in his eyes. She smiles content. He motions to go down on her. She stops him, rolls him over, proudly straddles his legs, and goes down on him.
EXT. CITY OF LONDON - DAY

Stone fronted financial buildings tower over a pristine street. A shiny black Jaguar roars to a halt by the kerb.

The doors swing open. Out steps Mansa and Candace dressed in powerful business attire and carrying a briefcase. ABI, a young skinny man, hops out and joins them.

They march down the pavement with purpose and head for the grand entrance of a building.

INT. BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Mansa, Candace, and Abi, sweep through the quiet lobby attracting little attention. Brimming with attitude, they enter a lift and stand tall as the doors close.

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION - DAY

A RECEPTIONIST at a desk. A phone rings. They pick it up and answer too quietly to hear. Bing. They glance up and stare shocked to see-

Abi storming out of the lift with a gun raised. He moves in on the receptionist fast and quickly covers their mouth as Mansa and Candace stroll serenely by toward the frosted glass doors of an office.

INT. TRADING OFFICE - DAY

A small but prestige office with a few STAFF sit watching stock trading monitors. The blinds closed. Mansa and Candace burst in and wave their guns at the staff.

MANSA

Hands up! Get up! Hands up! Get up now! All of you!

The shocked Staff get to their feet and raise their hands.

In a glass executive office, MR DAVISON, an immaculately presented older man, watches what's happening with casual indifference. He tidies up a few things, puts on his jacket, and makes his way out.

MANSA

This is a robbery, init! So fuckin' listen up or you get killed!
MR DAVISON
I've heard about, you pair.

MANSA
Take off your watches and
jewellery, take out your phones and
cash!

MR DAVISON
Keep calm and do as they say.

Mansa opens his briefcase and makes his way around the
office, waving his gun at staff as they follow orders.

MANSA
Put it all in the case! Anyone
calls the pigs, you all die!

Mr Davison narrows his eyes at Candace stood at the other
end of the room facing him with her gun pointed.

MR DAVISON
You know, I do admire the kind of
enterprise that decides, if you're
going to mug people, mug the
richest people you can find. But
here's the thing, that doesn't make
you any better. You're still scum,
petty pickpockets, bag snatchers-

MANSA
-Shut your mouth!

Mansa shoves his gun in a staff member's face as they hand
over their belongings. Candace stares back at Mr Davison.

CANDACE
When one-percent own ninety-nine-
percent, the righteous come round
to collect on what's owed.

Mansa moves into Mr Davison's office and searches around.

MR DAVISON
You think you're Robin Hood? You
know what I think? You'd swap
places with anyone in this room in
a heartbeat, and you wouldn't do a
damn thing different.

The words seem to hit Candace hard.

Mansa suddenly freezes during his search. He reaches down
and retrieves a small black felt bag.
CANDACE
C'mon! Let's go!

Mansa stares at the bag fascinated.

MR DAVISON
I suggest you don't look in there.

Now Mansa is even more compelled by what's inside.

MR DAVISON
Seriously, if you know what's good for you, walk away now.

Mansa looks to Candace. She really wants to get out of there but gives him the nod to go ahead.

Tentatively, Mansa slips back the drawstring, teases open the bag, and peers inside. He's stunned. Too fixated to look away, he waves over Candace to come take a look.

Candace, warily makes her way up the office with all the Staff watching. Mr Davison draws a devious grin.

The sound of a helicopter fades in fast. Everyone looks up.

MANSA
What's that?

MR DAVISON
That, my friend, is vengeance.

The lights go out. Almost pitch black. Frantic shuffling.

MANSA
Turn on the lights! Turn on the lights?

Nothing but shadows and heavy breathing.

Bing! The sound of lift doors clunking open.

BANG! BANG! BANG! From reception.

ABI (O.S.)
Jou bliksem!

PUP! PUP! BANG! PUP!

Silence.

MANSA
Abi, my boy!
Nothing.

MANS

Answer me!

Still nothing.

Two dots from laser sights sweep the office, tracing over the graphs on trading screens. Shuffling. Feet padding fast. Objects hitting the floor.

The lights all flicker on to reveal the staff have fled and two MERCS in full body armour and masks stood in the centre of the office with their rifles aimed toward--

Mansa, holed up in a corner with his arm around an OFFICE GIRL and his gun to her head. Candace in the other corner clutching the felt bag and their case of stolen wares.

MERC #1

Drop the weapon!

MANS

Back off, or she dies!

MERC #1

She dies, you die, asshole!

Candace looks scared. Mansa looks to her, his eyes wild.

MANS

Aim at them! Aim at them!

Merc #2 aims for her.

MERC #2

You gonna make my day, sweetheart?

Candace doesn't dare raise her gun.

Mr Davison strolls back in tidying himself up.

MR DAVISON

You tit, you could've walked out, but you just couldn't, could you?

MANS

Back 'em off, or I shoot her!

MR DAVISON

You shut your mouth! I make the fucking deals in here! You wanna shoot her? Go ahead and fucking shoot her, see what you've got to
Mansa presses his gun against the girl's head. Mr Davison takes a good long look at Mansa and Candace.

MR DAVISON
Now, listen carefully. Money I can take or leave quite frankly. No, what I'm into are the kinda things money can't buy. You follow?

Mansa and Candace just stare back.

MR DAVISON
Let me put it like this. Money, and the stuff it buys, you have enough of it and you get tired of it. Trust me, you do. I know it's a cliche, but it's a cliche for a good fucking reason.

Mr Davison locks eyes with Candace.

MR DAVISON
Now, the thing is, when you can buy anything you want, but you don't want anything you can buy, that's when you learn who you really are.

Candace reflects on his profound statement.

MR DAVISON
So, I'm going to give you two choices. One, you let the girl go, you give me everything back, you both walk out alive. But, I own you, and you'll fucking know I own you everyday for the rest of your sorry little lives.

He smirks to himself. This is how he gets his kicks.

MR DAVISON
Two, either one of you get to keep the bag and you leave with no repercussions, no hard feelings. There is a slight catch though, yeah, whoever doesn't keep the bag does have to die.

He's deadly serious.

Candace and Mansa stare, trying to read each other's minds, the bag in her hands.
She gazes lovingly at him. He can't help but look to the bag, obsessed with its mysterious contents. She looks down at it and offers it over to him.

CANDACE
Please never feel sorry for me, I always wanted to be the person who could make your dreams come true.

He solemnly nods.

MANSAMAN
And I will never forget it.

CANDACE
My king.

Her eyes flood with tears of betrayal.

Mansa takes the bag. Mr Davison clicks his fingers. PUP! Merc #1 pops a round right between Mansa's eyes. The office girl screams and flees. Candace gasps in horror.

MR DAVISON
Now, I never said I play by the rules. That's a mug's game. Let that be a lesson to you. Never choose lust over loyalty.

As he watches Candace trembling on the floor beneath him, he turns sympathetic and waves the mercs to fall back.

MR DAVISON
You see, the thing is, sweetheart, you can't buy allegiance like that, and you can't command it either. So, how about this, you take the bag and you come work for me.

He seems sincere. Candace mulls his offer over.

She wipes the tears from her eyes, takes the bag and the briefcase, and gets up, standing tall before him.

With complete defiance, she drops both of them at his feet before taking off her necklace and tossing that to the floor with them. His jaw hangs open as she stares back fearlessly.

MR DAVISON
It's a fool who lets guilt hold them back, you not realise that? You seen what's in that bag?

She shakes her head. He licks his lips.
MR DAVISON
Would you like to?

CANDACE
No.

He glowers with contempt.

MR DAVISON
You never heard the saying, curiosity killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back.

CANDACE
All you have is dirt and I do not wish to muddy my hands. All you offer is cheap and I'm not for sale. All you are is weak while I am indestructible.

He mulls over those words for a few moments and screams in a fit of rage, his eyes like daggers. He grabs a chair and hurls it across the room.

MR DAVISON
Take her out! Take her out!

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - VARIOUS - DAY

The mercs drag Candace out the office and through reception.

MR DAVISON
Not in the lift, you clowns! Nobody sees this! Nobody!

She's bundled down stairs and corridors. Carpet, doors, and lights whizz by faster and faster. She writhes until--

EXT. BACK ALLEY - DAY

Candace is thrown into the alley from a fire exit. She looks back to see Mr Davison seething shamed as the door slams shut, leaving her alone in silence, her face in the dirt.

She struggles back to her feet, dusts herself off, and makes her way back toward the busy city streets.

THE END.