



## Diamond Head

*Cecily Wong*

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## **Diamond Head** Cecily Wong

A sweeping debut spanning China to Hawaii that follows four generations of a wealthy shipping family whose rise and decline is riddled with secrets and tragic love—from a young, powerful new voice in fiction

At the turn of the nineteenth-century, Frank Leong, a fabulously wealthy shipping industrialist, moves his family from China to the island of Oahu. But something ancient follows the Leongs to Hawaii, haunting them. The parable of the red string of fate, the cord which binds one intended beloved to her perfect match, also punishes for mistakes in love, passing a destructive knot down the family line.

When Frank is murdered, his family is thrown into a perilous downward spiral. Left to rebuild in their patriarch's shadow, the surviving members of the Leong family try their hand at a new, ordinary life, vowing to bury their gilded past. Still, the island continues to whisper—fragmented pieces of truth and chatter, until a letter arrives two decades later, carrying a confession that shatters the family even further.

Now the Leong's survival rests with young Theresa, Frank Leong's only grandchild, eighteen and pregnant, the heir apparent to her ancestors' punishing knots.

Told through the eyes of the Leong's secret-keeping daughters and wives and spanning The Boxer Rebellion to Pearl Harbor to 1960s Hawaii, *Diamond Head* is a breathtakingly powerful tale of tragic love, shocking lies, poignant compromise, aching loss, heroic acts of sacrifice and, miraculous hope.

## **Diamond Head Details**

Date : Published April 14th 2015 by Harper

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Author : Cecily Wong

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## From Reader Review Diamond Head for online ebook

### Terri says

Review also found at <http://kristineandterri.blogspot.ca/2015/03/diamond-head-by-ellen-elimus.html>...

3.5 stars

I received an advanced copy of this book from the publisher Harper via Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review. The expected publication date is April 14th 2015.

This was a really interesting story for me although I have to admit that it took me a while to get in to it. With the multi-generational stories and the alternating between time and stories I at first had a hard time keeping track of all of the characters. Once I straightened it all out the story began to hit it's groove.

I was really conflicted about how I felt about this story. It was about fate and destiny and the ties that bond people together. On the one hand it was fascinating with the several stories that intertwined but on the other there were some characters I just couldn't warm up to. To be truthful it was only one character and that was Amy.

Lets talk about Amy. In my mind she was completely selfish and lived in a world of self pity when things did not turn out the way she wanted. This can happen when all of your decisions revolve around money. I simply could not feel sorry for her or understand her point of view. I understand that there was a moment of redemption for her in the story but it simply was not enough for me. I found her cold and unfeeling and it made it difficult to go on her journey with her.

Aside from her I found myself enjoying all of the other characters. I liked how their stories slowly unfolded as told through the various woman. I also enjoyed the historical backdrop in which the story took place.

Overall this was an enjoyable read and I am glad that I had the opportunity to preview it.

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### Wybredna says

Przeznaczenie i azjatyckie, egzotyczne klimaty  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHTFk...>

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### Afoma Umesi says

I was very skeptical about this book because of the mixed reviews, but I am so glad I didn't heed the advice of the negative reviewers.

What. a. story.

Wong is a masterful storyteller and her language is pristine. The descriptive prowess in this book is overpowering and yet, it feels just right. Diamond Head is told in turns by the Leong women and it is a story of secrets. The secrets a family have kept and the ways they have been mangled by these secrets.

A soaring family saga, this book is an emotional rollercoaster, deeply engrossing and so true to life. Every member of the Leong family, especially Bohai, is engraved on my heart. It's not a perfect book and I honestly found Theresa annoying, but Wong will have you grappling with all the issues these characters face.

Diamond Head is writing well done.

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### **nikkia neil says**

At first, I was confused by this book, and didn't know if it made sense. I'm happy I stuck with it. This book will affect your thinking. Makes you reevaluate decisions you made or told yourself someone made for you. That is the best kind of book to me. Challenges you

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### **Ashley \*Hufflepuff Kitten\* says**

6/15:

I only got about 50 pages in, but it's due back now-- another one of those cases where I took too many books out of the library at once. Will definitely revisit this at some point in the future, because I'm already in love with the story!

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### **Urenna Sander says**

I believe the theme is choices, secrecy and betrayal. The novel involves the three-generational saga of the wealthy Leong family. The novel begins in 1964 with Amy Chan Leong and her daughter, 19 year-old Theresa preparing to attend the funeral of her late husband, Bohai Leong

The novelist's writing appeared uninspiring during the opening scenes concerning Bohai's funeral. I almost lost interest. However, I suggest you not give up. Cecily Wong's story becomes rich and powerful, as she weaves imagery throughout third person point of view. Family matriarch, Lin Leong, reveals a strong voice in first person point of view. Lin vividly and memorably describes her life prior to and during her marriage to Frank Leong, a wealthy, magnetic and spontaneous businessman. He loved Lin more than any other woman.

Wong's writing revealed Lin had deep feelings and reactions, which were sensitive and heartfelt, much more than Amy when she spoke in first person.

Like Amy, Lin grew up amid poverty. Lin was an only child whose father operated a 'greasy spoon' in China. He often expressed disappointment that Lin was not a male child. He battered her over the slightest annoyance. And her mother chronically complained Lin had damaged her womb during childbirth. But Lin was undaunted, resilient and unafraid of her father's threats and survived the beatings.

It seemed by fate Lin met her husband Frank in her father's restaurant. During their first meeting, her

battered appearance touched internal feelings from Frank's childhood past. He immediately rescued her from her father, for a price. The two became deeply in love, and when Lin could not provide him a child, she elicited a concubine who bore their first son, Bohai.

After the Boxers Rebellion, World I War appeared imminent. A respected, high-leveled businessman, Frank, remained neutral selling tanks and guns to the Brits and the Germans. Yet he became uncomfortable with the clouds of change on the horizon. So, he and his family, including his late brother's wife, warm and faithful, Hong, migrated to Oahu, Hawaii, in the early 1900s. Bohai was five years old. There, Frank built a home for Lin to her specifications, and there, in Hawaii, Lin gave birth to a son, Kapai. The Leong's became philanthropists, had a happy marriage, and family life in Hawaii.

Years later, Lin discovered Amy for her son, Bohai, a brilliant, but shy and retiring young man, with an uneventful life. A marriage contract between families than individuals was probably still in effect in mainland China, but Amy had been born in Hawaii and did not speak Chinese, nor was she interested in marrying a Leong. She believed in the red string of fate, that two people connected by the red thread are destined lovers, regardless of place, time, or circumstances; a cord that stretches or tangles, but never breaks. She was in love with her fiancé, William, an electrical engineer, who was in the U. S. Army.

Amy and her 10 siblings lived with their parents in a one room basement apartment in Honolulu. Her father, a photographer, spent most of his time in his studio in Waikiki. He ignored his burgeoning family. He believed his art was not about money and provided no excuses or felt ashamed when he made no money. He escaped the family daily. Yet Amy's mother, Iris, could not escape, and realized too late the choice she had made; her marriage was never forged, never a great bond, and her left hand, ring-finger naked, without testament of their marriage.

Amy decided not to make the same choice her mother had made. She wanted a better, more influential life, even if she sacrificed love with William for Bohai. Bohai, a shy man, loved her deeply, and expressed it in so many ways. I could not understand Amy's lack of candidness, and how she could spend two decades with her loving and loyal husband, and never experienced emotional intimacy with him.

In first person point of view, Theresa Leong, 19 years-old, pregnant and unmarried, appeared as a weak, spoiled, entitled, young woman, who disliked her mother, Amy. It was difficult to connect with Theresa, whom I dubbed inconsequential in this family of strong women.

The surprise twists and turns are revealed in the secrets and betrayal that emerge in the Leong family, which begins with Frank. His fate, death by poisoning, was uneventful.

I enjoyed reading Diamond Head, which provided brief excerpts of history concerning the Boxer Rebellion, Chinese culture and superstition. My favorite character was Lin Leong.

I thought the writing exceptional. I enjoyed the quote by Hong Leong: "Sometimes, we are distracted by fate. So much, sometimes, that we lose our chance at destiny."

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**Jolene says**

I liked it a lot.

It's a story that's mostly about women, Lin, Hong, Amy, and Theresa though Leong Fu/Frank, Bohai and Kaipo all make appearances. Even though this is a story centered around three generations of the Leong family -- it focuses on themes like love, independence, and decisions about the future.

Each of the main characters makes a choice about who to love + marry, whether to pursue riches or not, and these choices combined with circumstances determine the future.

Within the telling of the story, there is a legend that you are connected to your fated match by a red string. But if you yoke yourself to someone who is not your fated match you introduce knots into that string, which will go on to affect future generations. (The story's better laid out in the novel.)

Later, at the end, we read, "I have placed too much on fate, on chance, and not enough on destiny, on the difficulty of choosing....The choices that bring fear, that make us turn to fate...this, in fact, is destiny. This, for good or bad, we can control."

While the legend is a nice narrative device, the interaction between all the characters and the opening up of the story of the Leongs is really where Diamond Head shines.

It's a great addition contemporary Asian-American literature and there are several nods to the genesis of the story--in the letters from Ms. Wong and Harper (which accompany the ARC), in the Acknowledgements and even in the author biography.

I think the author's essay, in particular, demonstrated her desire to write a story that would honor her own family and speak to others. And I think Cecily Wong has crafted her own work here, one that doesn't need to be compared to Amy Tan, Lisa See, etc. Because this is a work heavily based in Ms. Wong's unique family history, which she has fictionalized through years of hard work using her unique imagination and voice.

If it were up to me, I'd include the author's essay in every book--it's a gem!

And if I can express another "wish", it would be great to read a follow-up book about Theresa, Hong, and Amy. And if I got to vote about what happens in Theresa's life, I would hope that she would pursue her love of math and show us what happens as she and her family make their way post the 60s into the 2000s.

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### **Nikki says**

I borrowed this from the library, read the first chapter, and then didn't really feel inspired to pick it up again for a couple of weeks. I liked reading the descriptions of their homes and the foods they ate, and enjoyed reading about some of the Chinese traditions surrounding birth and death, but none of the characters intrigued me.

I got the notice that the book was due back in 3 days and that I couldn't renew it because someone else had requested it. I figured I'd read what I could of it in the 3 days, then return it, and not worry if I didn't finish it. But then around page 100, the book grabbed my attention. I went from thinking, "Meh, I don't care if I read this or not," to "Ooh, I hope I finish!" I stayed up until 1 a.m. the night before it was due, finishing the book.

In the end, I enjoyed the book, hence the 3 stars. (For me, 4 stars is for books I enthusiastically encourage other people to read, and 5 stars is for books that really move me, that I think I might want to re-read at some point.). So no, I wouldn't ever read it again, and I'm not going to go around recommending it to friends and family, but I enjoyed it well enough. I was interested to find out all the family secrets, and to see the way the choices and mistakes they made reverberated through the generations.

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### **Margaret Higgins says**

love hawaii books

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### **Andrea says**

I usually like a good multi-generational family saga but DIAMOND HEAD fell short for me. For some reason I never got really invested in the story.

There was something else that nagged at me and that was how dependent all the women seemed to be upon men. Maybe it was just the time period that was being covered but the female characters didn't distinguish themselves in a way that satisfied me.

I actually bought this book for my mom for Christmas but I snuck in a quick read before passing it on.

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### **Janet says**

Thank you to Goodreads and the publisher for a complimentary copy of Diamond Head. This is a debut novel by Cecily Wong, and I look forward to her future work. This was an engrossing multi-generational saga set primarily in Hawaii. The author writes with great description and atmosphere. Recommended read!

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### **Karina says**

A multi-generational story set in the early 20th century China to Hawaii 1964. I'm a sucker for historical fiction esp of different cultures so that is what intrigued me to pick up this book and it was not disappointing. I did not give it 5 stars bc I found myself skimming it by the middle trying to get to the point. The point comes at the very end but it is worth it to stick to the stories and characters. It is about destiny and fate and how we can control one but not the other. There is a "red string" that bounds us to our true love but as we make mistakes like cheating, killing, other secret lives we start making knots in that red thread and then those mistakes get handed down generation to generation defining the future.

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### **Melinda says**

Cecily Wong has accomplished one complex and intricate family saga. One family cursed by fate or by their

own agency, as the story unravels, tradition and culture delved, you consider the root cause of trials and tribulations this family suffered as well as endured.

Wong managed to pique my curiosity from the beginning, I couldn't wait for secrets to be revealed, drama to unfold, betrayals discovered, the most unsuspecting exposed, motivations examined. Quite a narrative is weaved with intriguing female protagonists telling their version of events, family history, new revelations. Kudos to Wong for exposing the calm and strength of the women serving as the cog of the narrative.

Wonderful historical aspects added to the setting and building blocks of both plot and characters. The peruser is given insight into Chinese culture which serves a large focus of the narrative.

As much as I enjoyed the book the ending was a major letdown for me, it was obvious the direction the ending was taking, predictability ruinous.

Wong is a solid writer, I admire her boldness for taking on such a comprehensive and arduous feat with great achievement, an authoress possessing immeasurable writing talent. Looking forward to her next project. Historical fiction fans will find Wong extremely appealing, certainly an engrossing saga.

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### **Nakia says**

More like 4.75 stars. I loved this family saga spanning from China to Hawaii, filled with twists and turns, love and disappointment, poverty and wealth. A very slow build, but when it hits you, it hits hard. It was painful and heart wrenching, but also touching and riveting until the very last page. The flashbacks were filled with my favorite passages. Some parts of the books lagged waaaay too much, particularly those surrounding the funeral, but the rest of the story kept me glued to the page. Looking forward to more from Cecily Wong.

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### **Tara Chevrestt says**

This book is like a memoir of three different women. There's the eldest, who is rescued from an abusive father and marries a wealthy man who takes her from China to Hawaii. There's the middle, the poor girl who marries into the wealthy family, rising from a room in a basement that she shares with ten other children. And there's the youngest, pregnant and unmarried in the sixties--who didn't interest me at all because the book took too long to get to her story.

All the stories I did read could have been fascinating, but the narrative style rather ruined it all for me. The fascinating parts were told quickly--such as Hong's tale and the elder's tale of rescue. Hong was the most interesting to me, but she was only briefly there. Her bit was so intriguing, it could be a novel itself. I was disappointed her tale was told and then over so fast.

The problem I had with the narrative is that it goes all over the place, from person to person, China to Hawaii, time period to time period. And it's not always a smooth transition.

Besides that, the first person narratives are more telling than showing. The third person would have worked fine but it was used solely for the present-tense parts, the funeral, which was not interesting. There are

secrets, about love, finances, babies, wives...but they are revealed so late, I'd lost interest by that point. The book is longer than it needs to be, more wordy than necessary, and while I appreciated that the novel tries to show bits of different cultures--Chinese and Hawaiian--it was overdescriptive to the point of boredom.

<http://wwwbookbabe.blogspot.com/2015/...>

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