

# To Have and To Hold

What if your special someone could live on forever in the heart of a diamond?

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Can love be the impetus for innovation? If necessity is the mother of all invention, would it not make sense to proffer that something so fundamental to the human condition and experience can and should be why science exists?

When it comes to diamonds, a statement like this rings no truer. For centuries, the diamond has been a symbol of ideal romance; its arduous formation and unmatched hardness epitomise a connection of divine strength. It forms under immense heat and pressure over lengthy periods, spanning millennia. And outlives the human lifespan. Now, if love could live in a diamond, would it not last forever?

What then if that geological time of formation can be shortened to a few hours? Lab-grown diamonds have become increasingly popular among younger consumers today as an affordable, ethical and environmentally responsible alternative to their natural counterparts. After all, they only differ in origin. Structurally, chemically and optically, they are identical.

Not everyone is doing it like Shineternity, which is moving with an intention that calls for a moment of quiet awe. And like so many great inventions, it fell into the shiny world of diamonds by chance – a serendipitous blunder in science.

For over two decades, founder Kavin Ng worked at the precipice of science and advanced manufacturing, developing materials and systems that people rely on every day but never see in person. More specifically, he worked in the semiconductor industry, immersed in wafer manufacturing and Chemical Vapour Deposition (CVD) – technologies that, unbeknownst to many, are fundamental to the production of lab-grown diamonds.

So when a large-scale fabrication project folded unexpectedly and led him to build machines that grow diamond roughs, Ng took the risk to turn an obstacle into an opportunity, planting his feet firmly in the glamorous parallel world of materials science.

And as it turned out, he hit the jackpot at the most felicitous time.

DNA-infused diamonds – while newer than lab-grown diamonds – have already been part of jewellery's lexicon for a while, but have been more obscure. How does it work? Ng explains.

"DNA, hair or ashes, is first carefully extracted from a biological sample. From there, carbon is derived and introduced during the diamond growth. While the DNA is no longer biologically active, its carbon becomes part of the diamond's atomic history." The presence of the DNA sample can be confirmed using a non-destructive, non-contact chemical analysis technique known as Raman spectroscopy; the unique carbon signatures of the stone and the sample can be identified, thereby non-negotiably proving the success of the infusion. Most research institutions possess such equipment.

Given how meaningful this service is, it is surprising that the actual infusion procedure is often out of bounds for clients, even when it is the most crucial and intimate part of the process. "It begins with a conversation – private, unhurried and intentional," shares Ng about how Shineternity differs in its emphasis on honouring the story.

"We focus on scientific traceability, chain-of-custody, and integrity, so for us, the process is as intimate as the outcome. We invite clients into the final phase of the process: the infusion is bespoke, personal and witnessed. Clients therefore follow their diamond's journey in person –

there's no ambiguity, room for doubt, and possibility of a mix-up."

In other words, the client experience at Shineternity includes observing the almost ceremonial infusion process firsthand and receiving a transformed stone in return within a few hours.

"When you work with memory and identity, there's no margin for error – scientific or ethical. Every diamond must be perfect. Especially when working with ashes, there are no second chances. The material is finite, so respect is absolute," adds Ng.

Perhaps this is why Shineternity is not as loud in presence in the local jewellery landscape, because that is not what they seek. Instead, it is the emotional stewardship – the honour they must hold for each person that walks through the lab's doors that takes precedence.

For Kemmy Koh, chief financial officer of Shineternity and Ng's wife, a particular client's story proves that what they do is worth continuing.

"A woman came to us after her husband suddenly passed away," she said. "They had been looking forward to retirement: travelling, slowing down, and doing the things they had postponed for years. After his passing, she carried a small bag in her handbag containing a lock of his hair. She told me, quietly, 'I don't want him to live in a bag any more.'"

"She then chose to create a pair of diamonds using both her and her late husband's DNA – one diamond for herself, set as a necklace she could wear daily, and the other intended for their daughter. Her wish was simple but profound: when she eventually passes, the two diamonds can be transformed into a pair of earrings for her daughter – so both parents would still be with her, in a form that's beautiful, dignified and alive."

Holding space for emotions is a mammoth task to undertake, especially when everyone comes to them at different emotional points. Sensitivity has been something they have had to cultivate since starting the business. But it has reaped nothing but rewards, the heartiest moments of even the smallest legacies signed off with the utmost care, and never made for the public eye.

What's more impressive is how living legacies are as much – if not more – celebrated with what's possible here. Thai megastars like Mew Suppasit and partner Tul Pakorn, as well as prominent TV host Woody and his partner Ote, have both come to the labs in Singapore to personally oversee the creation of their co-signed treasures, celebrating their forever together with a bespoke memorabilia of their love. If this is a new way of expressing affection, then it is romance on a new scale of intention. One that not only stays as a shared memory, but lives on as a story worth telling for generations beyond.

Shineternity's luxury treatment of legacies in Thailand also extends to the realm of education and cultural integration. "We collaborate with wellness, medical and heritage-adjacent spaces, offering the diamond as a means to reflect, memorialise and mark something meaningful in a destination that's often a site of pilgrimage," shared Ng.

This is merely the beginning. As lab-grown diamonds move from status symbols to identity objects, provenance and intention, personal meaning will matter more than age-old myths.

When asked about the future of lab-grown diamonds, Ng believes they will lead, not because they are cheaper, but because they are more considered. "Competition may reduce diamonds to commercial metrics," he says. "But a diamond that carries personal history has infinite value. That is not something the market can price."





