

Zambling Bling (Part One)

One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to bind them; One Ring bought at the mall when careless schmucks can't find them.

by Bill Zam

As my wedding anniversary approaches, there's no need for me to tie a string around my finger; and no room, with my two rings clanking together as a constant reminder.

The engagement ring is without question the most important indicator of how much a man loves a woman. If you believe that, I hope you got a pre-nup, because there are plenty of women with rocks three times bigger than my wife's who only use their diamonds to scratch obscenities into the paintjobs of mistresses' cars. Elin Nordegren's ring was reportedly the size of a golf ball, which is handy now that she's probably using that famous back-window backswing to tee off on it.

I'll admit that playing "size doesn't matter" with the ring helps me justify the unspectacular (if lovely) ring my broke ass purchased for my wife, as well as the fact that I bought it for her *after* she said yes. Before you label me unromantic, you should know that the proposal and eventual engagement and wedding ring deliveries involved car keys, mix tapes, graphic design, an elaborate pulley system with a flying Santa Claus and for good measure, a letter to the dead. That, however, is the story of my wife's two wedding rings. This story is about mine.

Whether we agree on how much a guy should spend on a ring, it's accepted fact that the man gets screwed in the exchange. This didn't bother me, given that my strongest opinion on jewelry other than the one you've already read is that people who say "joolery" should be imprisoned. Before I got married you would be hard-pressed to even find me wearing a watch.¹ However, I did agree to join the Til Death Do Us Party and wear a wedding band. It felt foreign at first, but now I wear it all the time, unless I'm swimming or cruising bars looking to commit adultery or playing sports.

As with many husbands, sports got me in trouble. My battles with back pain are well documented, and at age 30 they were in full swing. Unfortunately, a full swing in softball would guarantee me a half-day of recuperation after a league game. However, it didn't stop me from giving 110 percent because I am manly and tough and what many people would call a "gamer," or "stupid." After injuring myself in several consecutive games, my supportive wife delivered the pitch: "If you hurt yourself tonight, don't come home."

Since I had to watch our three-year-old son while she worked the next day, I assured her I would use the utmost caution (i.e., lied). I had the game of my life. Usually a third baseman, I filled in at shortstop that night and hit two dingers, converted several unassisted double plays, and made a leaping catch that would have made Derek Jeter proud. It felt like I never came down.

Until the next morning, when the adrenaline flowing through my veins became paralytic poison. Fighting through the pain, I awoke before my wife and gently roused her from sleep to explain honestly and apologetically what had happened. Ha ha! Of course I didn't. I snuck out of bed early to create the appearance that I was completely healthy.

For my next mistake, I began washing dishes at 7 a.m. What wife would not be suspicious of that? At first I pondered important issues, like what algorithm Dawn uses to calculate "2X concentrated scrubbing power." After a few minutes hunched over the sink with increasing discomfort, however, I wondered if the spray nozzle hose was long enough to hang myself with.

¹ "I don't believe in time." –Hootie and the Blowfish

That's when I noticed my wedding ring was gone. I quickly pulled the rubber seal off² the garbage disposal and fished my hand inside as far as it could go, probably breaking a few bones in the process and finding nothing but dish scum. This explains why I was caught completely off guard when a stern voice behind me asked, "Is there something you want to tell me?"

I glanced over my shoulder towards the bright light that was certainly my wife with flames coming out of her eyes and desperately tried to figure out a way to explain the missing ring,

"You hurt your back again, didn't you?" she asked.

She hadn't noticed the missing ring at all! Overjoyed at my good fortune, I bounced upright and turned around. Stabbing pains shot through my spine, making me wonder if I had left a carving knife protruding from the drying rack, but I masked the anguish. What a gamer.

"No! It's sore, but I'm fine."

"Do you need me to stay home from work?"

"Don't be silly! Michael and I have all sorts of fun things planned," I said, forcing my bloody, soapy left hand into my jeans pocket. "Have a great day."

In retrospect, my wife, who is sharper than a protruding carving knife, didn't believe me for a second. She was going to make me pay by leaving me for 12 hours with a hyperactive toddler.

As she got ready for work, I stretched my hamstrings whenever she wasn't looking and stretched my mind for possible ring locations. It wasn't in the sink. It wasn't in the cup holder or glove compartment of my car, or my equipment bag. These were all logical spots since I typically removed the ring to play sports. Aha! My glove! Maybe it fell off into the mitt while I was MVP'ing all over McCaskill Park Field B. I fingered that glove like a first-year gynecology resident and shook it like a British nanny.³ No ring.

Suffering searing back pain compounded by mental stress, I was faced with a conundrum. Take four Motrin⁴ now, put on some cartoons for Michael, and take my medicine again later when my wife got home? Or spend the next 12 hours on a ring quest filled with mayhem and adversity? I decided to go Frodo.

The Return of the Ring? Come back next month for the conclusion or visit www.billzam.com for the uncut version.

² If you think "quickly pulling the rubber off" is offensive, you probably should leave now before the leather glove part.

³ Mortified? Be thankful you didn't see the version where I fingered the British nanny.

⁴ Bill Zam Motrin