

## Ring Recon

Written by Dave Howard

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Year of the Groom is an ongoing bit.

Six months earlier I had decided to explore the diamond market. SHE had been a little PMSy, drinking wine in the afternoon, knitting and watching “Titanic.” I can’t remember how the subject was broached but it we usually have an argument around the time when Kate lets Leo drown. Somehow I had said something or said something similar to the word “wedding” or “marriage.” Breeding? Carriage? I dunno, but the response was definite:

“Yeah, so what’s the fucking holdup?”

Oh, SHE felt strongly about this. Well, I wasn’t about to cave to a blind demand but figured I should at least find out how much a ring would put me in the hole. My mom was coming into town on her way to Palm Springs to play golf with old ladies and young gay men. So why not ask a women who had experience in such matters?

Besides Mom’s dig this kinda shit.

I did a little half-assed research. Talked to some married buddies over at the Cat and the Fiddle during a Sunday afternoon over a beer or four. My friends and I don’t talk money much so I would have to be crafty. Also, I didn’t want to seem too obvious about my intentions so I would slip the question between inappropriate, lusty comments about the waitresses.

Check out those Hefewiezens! How much did you pay for your engagement ring?

Full on nipple at 3:00. Is that more than a carat?

And the all important:

Does the two month salary rule really apply?

Unanimously, the two month salary rule DID apply, plus some. Each of them had paid between \$4k and \$9k for their rings. My next questions, "Where did you buy it?" The answers were what I expected DeBeers, Robbins Brothers and some mall shop I can't remember.

I thought of HER, first thing after the day of our wedding. We are still both drunk on the whirlwind of the day before. Stumbling smiles, we make some in-a-bag coffee in the room while wearing those ultra comfy white hotel robes. Rose petals, a wedding dress and a Men's Wearhouse cummerbund are tossed about on the floor. She looks down at her two rings as her new bride tender smile turns into a scowl. "FUCK! I have to pay off half of this now!"

I wasn't about to have my marriage start off like that. I took my Mom to the wholesale jewelry district downtown.

The Wholesale Jewelry district hasn't changed a bit since the days of Chandler and Spillaine. It also hasn't been given a good cleaning since then. If you could shovel out the homeless and the junkies, I'm sure you could still find a Private Dick's office with 60 years of filing to get through. Odd, because in this four block stretch are millions of dollars of jewels. All you would need is a good sized hammer and a decent exit strategy and you could rip that place off blind.

Similar to Egyptian markets you feel as if life is cheap no matter where you turn, which should be kept in mind when planning an exit strategy. You also get the idea that everything was negotiable. Rock hucksters in rented booths stare back at you, attempting to hypnotize you with their bling.

The first guy we meet is Jerry and he shows me his card which on the back matches the clarity and grade of the diamond. After a while I can spot the differences, yellow diamond bad, clear diamond good. I had also learned in a "Sex And the City" episode that a pear shaped diamond was a definite no go. I didn't need a "why" if the ladies on "Sex And the City" hated it, so did I and so would her friends and mom. Those were the folks I wanted to impress.

He showed me a few, some of which looked like crap an Armenian Great Grandmother wouldn't even wear. Then suddenly there it was. .97 Princess cut G grade clarity (which I couldn't tell from an E or F) placed in a classic white gold band. It looked exactly like the ring on the Luxury Tax space of the Monopoly board. I held it in my hand, didn't know her size but that was the one I wanted. The rock was about the same size my friends had bought.

I must have tipped my hand. Perhaps my normal chitchatery subsided. My eyes may have glazed over or tear spit out of a duct or something. In a husky indeterminate middle eastern accent he said to me "You see the fire, don't you?" Yes, I had seen the fire. It was as if a gypsy had placed three wishes on into that ring. Deep inside the ring there was something invisible that only I could see.

The ring retailed for \$3600 and was going wholesale for \$1300. \$100 a month on layaway. No interest. Did I want to wait a year? Another "What is the fucking holdup" year?

Was I really going to buy the first ring I saw? Nada way, so we made our way off to a dizzying amount of vendors. In guy language that means about four. My mother sat their cooing at all the different cuts and shapes. I didn't see the one with "the fire." I couldn't believe that the first ring I saw was the one that I wanted. They were all pretty, but where was the gypsy magic of Jerry's ring?

Here's the problem. I had done a lot of freelance work the previous year and currently owed Uncle Sam \$1700 due in September, none of which I had squirreled away yet. We went back to Jerry and I saw it again. No further deciding needed to be made. Jerry's gypsy magic ring was it.

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When she saw how excited I was, Mom teared up a bit. She had one hand placed firmly on her purse in case I asked her for a loan. But I couldn't take it. I couldn't let Mom even think about picking up the bill. This was my ring, my decision and the start of my family.

So the ring could wait until next year. This was gonna take some time. I wasn't ready yet, so I have a few months to figure this all out.