



A Love Story about a Ring

by Saralee Perel

What is it about estate jewelry that captures us? I think part of it is the intimate connection we feel in having something touch our skin that has long ago touched someone else's.

We picture the slender ruby necklace resting on young sunburned freckled skin. We see the simple strand of elegant pearls on a youthful wrist that has yet to know much of life. And the cameo brooch, so big, that laid against silvery silk on a grandmother's breast, as she attended her granddaughter's wedding, seizing one last celebration of life while wearing the dress she loved.

Shortly before our last anniversary, my husband Bob said, "Now that we've been married for over thirty years, it's time you had a diamond engagement ring."

I looked down at my simple gold wedding band. "But I love this ring."

"I know. But it would mean something to me to get you a diamond ring."

"We don't have the money for that."

"I've been saving."

I looked at my lovely wedding band, remembering how Bob presented it to me. Over thirty years ago, we were having dinner at a fancy restaurant. I can still see us; Bob in a gray pin-striped suit and me wearing a real piece of history - a black dress in a size five.

For dessert, we ordered Napoleons. We held hands, both of us tired from the wine. The waiter brought our dessert on a silver platter. Next to mine was a tiny box, gift-wrapped in gold with a sparkly bow in the shape of a star. The waiter put our desserts on the table and then, in a grand gesture, presented me with the little box.

"What is this?" I can still feel the sting of those tears in my eyes. I opened the box to find the beautiful tiny antique gold wedding band.

And so, we also held hands while we recently talked about Bob's wish for a diamond for me. It was with tremendous guilt that I finally agreed to at least look at engagement rings.

It was a deliciously forbidden feeling to shop for a diamond ring. I found one I loved. A magnificent ring with the historical richness of worn platinum filigree. On the card was the first name of its original owner, Etta. It was dated in the late 1800's. I tried it on. It fit perfectly. Bob's eyes lit up when he saw how I looked at it so passionately.

I turned my hand this way and that, the aged diamond sparkling under the lights. I wondered what Etta felt when she first put it on. Was she thrilled? Did she wear it every day until she died? Did she worry about losing it when she was doing laundry or digging in the sand with her children?

It was truly a masterpiece and I would have loved it. But no, I couldn't buy it. Too frivolous. Who buys themselves a diamond ring, for heaven's sake?



That night over dinner, Bob said, "It looked wonderful on you."

"Well, have you looked at the 'bills to be paid' file lately?"

"You take something away from me by not treating yourself," he said later while we did the dishes.

I had a dream about the ring that night. In my dream, the ring was in a fire and the platinum was gone forever.

The next morning, I found Bob weeding the front garden. "I've been thinking about the ring," I said. "I really do love it." He stopped pulling up old thistle. "Let's just do it," I said. And he joyously came in the house to change before we drove back to the antique shop.

In their parking lot, he held up our check book, grinned like a kid, and said, "I'm ready!"

I felt so naughty rushing to the glass display case. With the excitement of a child on her birthday, I looked for the ring.

It was gone.

"There was an old platinum ring here yesterday," I said to the saleswoman. She helped me search through the jewelry cases. Then she confirmed it wasn't there. She called over to a woman named Helen, who said, "We sold it yesterday."

"I can't believe it," my salesperson said. "It's been here for months." Then she gently admonished me. "Whenever you see something you like in an antique shop, you should take it. At least you could have told me you were interested and I'd have held it for you for a little while. But you didn't look like you really wanted it."

On the ride home, I felt badly for Bob, since he was obviously disappointed for me. "It's just a ring, sweetheart," I said. "There will be others."

I was in the throes of a head cold on the day of our recent anniversary so we stayed home. Bob made an elegant dinner, with Napoleons for dessert.

I was blowing my nose and looking rather dreadful in my faded chenille bathrobe when Bob brought our desserts to the table on a silver platter. There, next to mine was a tiny box, gift-wrapped in gold with a sparkly bow in the shape of a star. In a grand gesture, Bob presented me with the little box.

"What is this?" With luscious anticipation I wondered what gift my sweet husband had picked out for me. I opened the tiny box.

Inside, there is was. Etta's ring.

"But it was sold," I looked up at him, my eyes wide.

He was beaming. "I know. I went right back and bought it that first day."

"So the people there were acting?"

"Yes. We all were."

We were both given timeless gifts that night. Many years of a love-filled blessed marriage and the exquisite tenderness that comes along with giving and receiving a gift from the heart.

And so, what once touched Etta's skin is now touching mine. I am hoping that somewhere, she knows that a small part of her is bringing me great joy and that someday, someone will want to continue the trail of love with this enchanting piece of jewelry.

But most important for now . . . I'd really want her to know . . . her resplendent engagement ring is safe and sound with me.



A 15 year nationally syndicated columnist and a 15 year regular [Cape Cod Times columnist](#), Saralee Perel is a regular essayist for the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation. To date, she has 21 stories published in the bestselling Chicken Soup for the Soul books, with many more stories selected for their upcoming books.

Please visit her website: www.saraleeperel.com if you'd enjoy reading about her other publications which include: Family Circle magazine, Woman's World, Pet Gazette and many others, as well as her multiple national awards.

Saralee maintained a 22-year private psychotherapy practice on the Cape. She draws upon her knowledge of psychology to produce her columns, which are both poignant and humorous. She welcomes e-mails at sperel@saraleeperel.com

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