

It was like a scene out of a romantic movie...he was down on one knee in the pouring rain, asking me to be his wife. But instead of a ring, he had a rusty tractor wheel, it was the closest thing at hand; I was holding a weedwacker... My high school sweetheart (now just a regular sweetheart 8 years later) and I had been trimming weeds around our electric cattle fence, when out nowhere the sky opened up, and I mean, opened up. It was a Maine monsoon. You couldn't see your hand in front of your face. We ran for the cover of the rock wall where a line of cedar trees stood, but the fanned branches didn't provide much relief. My sweetie decided it was the opportune time to ask my hand in marriage, sans ring. I told him to stop being dumb, but when I realized he was serious, quickly accepted.

When we got back to the house, he gleefully pulled a ring out of hiding and presented it to me. It was beautiful, with a classic diamond flanked by a petite companion on each side. The only fault was that it was just a smidge too large for my finger. Not large enough that I couldn't wear it, but I would just have to keep an eye on it until I got to town to get it resized.

A month or two later, I was in the barn, arms full of hay. The majority of the cows were on pasture, but we had one, Clover, who had hurt her foot. She was penned up in the barn to recover, and I was bringing her some supper. As I went to fill her water dish, I realized my ring was gone. Instant panic flooded me. I dropped the pail and searched through Clover's hay manger frantically. I retraced my steps, no diamonds glinting in the late afternoon sun that streamed through the window. Heartbroken as I was, I dreaded telling my fiance even more. Fortunately, he was mostly understanding and didn't seem completely shocked (after 8 years, he knew me pretty well).

The next day a co-worker and her husband came up with their metal detector. They helped me comb the barn from end to end, but alas, no luck. I was ringless. We wondered if in fact, the ring had been in the hay and Clover had eaten it. Cows are indiscriminate in terms of what they eat, and thanks to their complex digestive systems, heavier objects can sit in their stomachs for years (we give our cows magnets that sit in their stomach and attract any metal objects to prevent damage to the digestive tract).

I never found the ring, but what I did find was an important life lesson. Life's riches aren't about the materialistic items. For even though I lost the ring, I will always have memories of a night in the skin-soaking rain and a love that persists through misadventure.