

# The Proposal, Take One

Contributed by Matt Katz  
Thursday, 25 January 2007

The girlfriend and I have our second anniversary coming up, and this year I promised her that unlike our first anniversary, this will not be the worst night ever.

For some reason, men often propose marriage on their anniversaries. For some reason, men often propose over dessert. For some reason, men aren't that creative.

I, however, didn't know all of this last year, so for our first anniversary I planned a "surprise" involving "dessert" and "something I dropped off" at the dessert place.

At the time, I had no idea this was suspicious. And I had no idea Deb's co-workers spent a week teasing her about how I was going to propose at dessert.

Instead, I just thought I was The Man. The night would start with a bottle of Dom. Dinner would be at one of the nicest steakhouses in the country. The finale, of course, would be a surprise.

And the best part? It was all gonna cost me less than \$60.

I'm. The. Man. (Or, not so much.)

We got the champagne as a gift from a friend on New Year's Eve, which was particularly generous because he lived four hours away and we didn't even let him crash at our place over New Year's Eve weekend. Seriously -- we actually told him he couldn't stay over.

As for the restaurant, another friend gave us a \$100 gift certificate, which meant we could eat and eat and drink and drink and this time, we

would wait for the check before escaping into the parking lot.

Things immediately got off to a rough start. On empty stomachs, we began drinking the champagne 45 minutes before our 7 p.m. reservation. And since it would be improper and possibly illegal to leave without finishing a half-full \$120 bottle of champagne, we killed the entire thing.

It turns out, unfortunately, that champagne has bubbles, and bubbles mess you up. So we spent the first few minutes of the 7 o'clock hour having a very enjoyable, if not unusual, dance-off in our living room.

Twenty minutes later, we finally got to the restaurant -- via cab, of course -- and that's when the fun ended.

The evil bubbles made Deb dizzy while the liquid sent her bladder into overdrive.

Nine times. That's how many times she went to the bathroom during dinner.

While she was gone, I ate. I ate her filet mignon. I ate my crab cakes. I think I ate a dinner salad or two, washing all of it down with ice cold bourbon.

Dinner mercifully ended. Time for the big surprise. We went to a dessert-only cafe, where I had gone earlier in the week to give the owner -- a shaggy-haired man with bloodshot eyes -- a 99-cent white candle with a big "1" on it. One-year anniversary, get it?

"Just put it on whatever dessert she orders," I said.

"You got it," dessert cafe guy said. "See you Saturday night."

"Actually, it'll be Friday night."

"Right."

Things were set. When Deb and I walked into the cafe I exchanged what I thought was a knowing glance with dessert cafe guy, but apparently it was another kind of glance altogether.

He disappeared to the kitchen, and brought us menus. We ordered, and he brought our desserts.

With no candle.

I kept looking over the shoulder of Deb (still far from sober, by the way), trying to make eye contact with dessert cafe guy. Finally he walked over, looked at me and said: "Don't I know you?"

"Yes! My name is Matt . . . No? You don't remember? . . . Matt Katz. Nothing? . . . Uh, I dropped something off the other day?"

"Oh that's right!" he said. "I'll be right back."

So now, like a bad sitcom, here was Deb, waiting to get my "surprise" from the kitchen.

Cue her panic attack.

Deb's heart started beating quickly. She refused to tell me what was wrong, instead insisting she needed to go outside.

"No!" I said, stuffing my already-stuffed face with both of our desserts in case we really did leave early.

Thousands of rapid heartbeats later, a new dessert came with the "1" candle. Deb looked confused. I blew out the candle.

"Oh -- my -- God," she said, holding her chest and checking her pulse. "Thank God you didn't propose."

"That's never even crossed my mind!" I laughed.

That didn't go over well either. Cue the second panic attack.

Well, ignore No. 1, babe. And happy No. 2.

This column appeared in the Courier-Post and Gannett newspapers nationwide.