

## Off The Market. Finally.

Contributed by Matt Katz  
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She said "of course." I was expecting a "yes" and tears, but instead she gave me an "of course" and broke out in hives.

It was fitting though. The answer to the marriage proposal was unusual, just like the proposal itself and the whole courtship.

I have written about Deb in this column for two years, ever since we were "just friends" and I was trying to use my dating column to somehow land her, which was pretty much the point of the column in the first place. My first column about her began with the oh-so-romantic: "Could I be friends with a woman I sort of wanted to see naked?"

Well, it turned out we couldn't just be friends. It turned out that we are best friends and soul mates and meant to be together until the end. So I began chronicling all the relationship-y details to the disappointment of my single male friends: Going to a fantasy motel room, getting a couple's massage, meeting her parents and finally moving in together and getting a kitten.

It seemed obvious that when I'd propose, I'd do it in the column. But my primary objective was to absolutely floor her. After this, my job would be done. The wedding would be her obsession. This would be mine.

It began after New Jersey Monthly magazine interviewed me for an article about the column. The writer later e-mailed to ask if Deb and I planned to marry. Yes, I wrote back, and wouldn't it be funny if I proposed in the magazine article?

I was half-kidding. Then I got this response: "My editors think it's a great idea."

Oh, boy. Wow. But I need a few days. Is this how I want to do this?

It was. Our grandkids would have a start-to-finish written record of our courtship.

That left me with seven weeks until the magazine published. First, I asked her parents' permission. They live two hours away, so I told Deb I was leaving for the night to play music with my friend Jon. She didn't like that: It's far away, by the time you get there you're only going to jam for an hour, your car is garbage, it's gonna die on the side of the highway, and you're gonna be stranded and get hit by a truck.

But I went anyway, and the moment wasn't nearly as awkward as you'd imagine. They granted the permission, and for dinner (or as I like think of it, for a "dowry") her Dad made me salami and eggs.

I was neither nervous beforehand nor weirded out afterward, which was incredibly reassuring. I was, without question, doing the right thing.

And then I did the wrong thing -- I shopped for a ring at New York City's jewelry district, which is basically capitalism on acid. It's an endless block of salespeople selling mostly the same stuff, using stressful sales pressure. And the yelling! Oh, the yelling!

Fortunately, Deb doesn't dig diamonds. She wanted a pearl ring, which

upset the diamond-pushers: "A pearl? For an ENGAGEMENT RING?!? No. No, no, NO! Diamonds mean forever. You never saw the commercial? That one is \$30,000."

It's terribly ironic that men generally know squat about jewelry and yet are forced to spend more on it than any other purchase in their lives. (I found out, for example, that there's something called "white gold" which looks silver, and that makes no sense.)

I enlisted the help of my friend Zach, because four blind eyes are better than two, and we eventually found a ring I liked. After 48 hours of agonizing, I bargained unsuccessfully, bought it, hid it and waited.

The week leading up to the big day was full of mini-nervous breakdowns and nightmares about losing the ring.

Finally, on the big day, she came home from work and I convinced her, eventually, to sit down and read the magazine. My heart was beating so hard I wouldn't risk giving her a hug hello.

The article was straightforward until the last line -- "The Dating Guy says he is ready to settle down. (Deb) Hurwitz will read the proposal here first. "I want to spend the rest of my life with you. Deborah, will you marry me?" "

At this point, I was on my knee. I pulled out a three-page typed speech, read it and then took out the ring. We were at our favorite place on earth -- on our couch with our kitten, on a random Tuesday night.

And yet we had just gotten engaged in a ridiculously public way.

It was all perfect.

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

To read the proposal, go to: <http://www.njmonthly.com/issues/2007/02-Feb/mrwriter.htm>