

Grand Union

by Larry Strattner

She suggested just moving in together. A lot less constrained by convention she, on occasion, did not wear a bra.

He proposed in the traditional style. Ring box open, held toward her. Addressing her with her full given name. He did not kneel. An old skiing accident prevented him.

She knew the proposal was coming. Things like this were who he was, what he was about, why she loved him. Still, she was surprised.

He knew their relationship was a bit backwards with him being the sentimental half. Sometimes when he watched his guy-movies, the action movies he loved, he cried when something bad happened to a good person. He didn't know why.

She was not partial to action movies but used them to get him to watch chick movies with her. He usually wound up enjoying them.

He dressed up a little for his proposal. He had an old pair of yellow golf pants but didn't select them. He wore dove gray slacks and a medium blue blazer with horn buttons, an open collar blue shirt. He picked some orange Day Lilies from the side of the road. Lately he paid more attention to flowers. He thought this might be spillover from the love thing. A number of facets of the world had taken on new brilliance for him.

She made an O shape with her lips when she saw the diamond. She had never seen such a small diamond. It was breathtaking in its perfection, set in a simple band held by four tiny prongs. It was real, as he was.

His eyes held the question.

She said, "Yes."

The ceremony was a beginning, a completion and an ecstatic explosion. Neither could stop smiling. She wore a dress she bought in New York. Cut almost like a shift it concealed her figure flaws but an elegant shade of green complimented her eyes to perfection. He wore his proposal outfit again. None of the guests had seen it before.

Friends were there. Various friends had all harbored; Will he? Will she? Will they? speculations. Now. At this moment. In the small garden. The wedding answered all questions for everyone.

The bride and groom couldn't stop smiling.

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Within less than a year he lay dying. He wore a nightshirt so she could better care for him. He insisted his hair be cut and combed. He was unfailingly cheerful, even though sometimes it hurt.

She was thankful they married. If not, she thought, it would have been far more difficult to let him go. She could not be sure why this was so, but it was. She dressed every day in clothes of her wedding color to bring out her eyes. She always wore her ring.

He was never in the best health to begin with. True, they were older. He thought he might last a bit longer. Their love-boost had fooled him. He recalled there was a reason he hadn't worn those yellow golf slacks in a long time.

They both lost families years ago so they wasted little time complaining about fate.

She held his hand and he hers. They talked and laughed quietly. They had known each other for several years before he proposed and counted those years as part of their time.

He smiled at her at the last and closed his eyes. She smiled back.

Tears filled her eyes but she could not stop smiling. She combed his hair back and arranged his hands to her satisfaction. Her ring sparkled softly in the light from the bedside lamp.

