

The Parable of the Lost Ring: A Prose Poem

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Sometimes you live your way into a parable. Take the woman with the lost coin for instance. Turns out it was a ring. Maimie's ring passed down through eldest daughter to daughter-in-law. The son's first wife not worthy of the inheritance, but the second—oh how they loved the second—in love with the fiery preacher just like Maimie (of whom no one speaks ill). The ring was platinum—an Edwardian antique with one brilliant round diamond and six little disciples trailing on each side—the most precious thing she'd ever been given, though her skin rebelled against it, and one day at the gym, she had to take it off. She put it in the safest place she could think of, not the pocket but the closed loop of the karabiner with her keys, and when she remembered it two days later it was gone like Jesus on Good Friday and she could not wash her hands of it—no, not even her, governor of good intentions and good excuses. She told no one for days and even though Mary Oliver says you do not have to be good, still she swept the house and ran a coat hanger under the dryer and fridge and moved the dresser and unscrewed the floor vents and shoved the broom way up under the bed and prayed for resurrection or maybe the second coming and found quite a number of missing things that had not been missed at all but not the ring of course and she even went to the neighborhood where they'd been strolling—strolling!—before they knew it was gone and she must have turned over every ridiculous brown leaf that littered the street (in spring!) and took advantage of the kindness of friends and strangers and passed out her number and filed a report and when she thought of visiting every seedy pawn shop in the metro area all by her lonesome (and how many times?) she finally told her husband who could hardly speak to her for days he was so red and black with rage and disappointment but only for a week or so then grace won the day as sometimes happens in parables but by then it was too late for she had become the kind of person who loses precious things—first the baby and now the ring and what would be next? They couldn't help but wonder, and the parables don't mention the shame of it but that's the worst part how it creeps into you, and you realize what an idiot thing it is to say that you love the sinner and hate the sin because whether you meant to or not it sticks to you—unless of course you find it five months later collecting dust in the corner behind a basket of socks, for Christ's sake, and you know there's no way you didn't look there (the bedroom being the most thoroughly inspected place) but you don't really care—the joy seizes you so—and you leap and shout and curse and embrace and praise the Lord you had given up on four months earlier and now you wonder if the angel Gabriel didn't fish the thing out of the gutter to lay it in the dusty corner himself, but more importantly you realize two most wonderful things—your in-laws will never have to know the truth (and just what is that anyway) and your husband's already forgiven you for an almost unforgivable thing, which turns out to be almost as precious as the ring.