# LOST & FOUND: The Missing Ring

## How one woman learned that love outlasts even the most precious keepsakes



*Ring* Original Watercolor © Laura Carl.

BY AMY PATUREL

The first ring I ever owned wasn't just jewelry. It was magic. I was 10, maybe 11 years old—teetering between childhood and the first stirrings of teenage angst—when I joined my dad for Saturday errands. Sometimes those trips included a stop at the jeweler to clean my mom's wedding ring or buy her new earrings.

That morning, my eyes locked on a case glittering with gemstones. Inside, I spotted a ring shaped like a butterfly, its golden wings wrapped around two miniature diamonds with a pear-shaped amethyst in the center. Purple. My favorite color. And there, on the tag, was my name.

"Dad, that's my ring!" I exclaimed. "It has my name on it!"

Technically, it was the abbreviation for amethyst—amy—but to my fate-obsessed heart, it might as well have been engraved with my Social Security number.

The jeweler, a friend of my dad's, smiled and raised his eyebrows. "She has a point," he said, plucking the ring from the black velvet pillow so I could get a closer view.

I slid the ring onto my finger and felt like a princess.

The gems were tiny, the gold delicate, but it was a pricey ring for a young girl and I sensed my dad hesitating. I reminded him I was a good student. I always did my chores. I probably said I was old enough for "real" jewelry and that my birthday was just around the corner. My pleas must have been effective because when we left the store, the ring circled my right ring finger, and I was beaming beside him.

Even decades later, after I'd inherited my grandmother's wedding ring and wore a wedding band of my own, the amethyst butterfly remained among my most treasured possessions, despite its residence at the back of my jewelry drawer. After I lost my dad to heart disease in my early 40s, the little ring took on even deeper meaning, carrying the unprocessed grief I wasn't ready to face.

When I stared down a health crisis a few years later—one linked to a genetic mutation I got from my dad—I dug out the ring. I wore it daily, resized for my left pinky, a talisman to keep my dad close during doctors' appointments, lab tests, and imaging exams. I told myself the ring would keep me safe.

And it did. I came through the crisis transformed—stronger in mind, if more fragile in body.

## THE SEARCH

Then one evening, the ring vanished. My youngest son, Jack, swore he'd seen it on my finger during dinner. I remembered taking off my rubber gloves when I was washing the dishes—the prong from one of the diamonds punctured the latex—and setting the ring aside. I thought about asking one of my sons to take it upstairs, but I didn't want to interrupt their game of *Sorry!*

Hours later, it was gone.

I scoured the kitchen counters, checked the cabinets beneath the sink, and shoved my hand down the garbage disposal, scraping my fingers against the blades. When the ring still didn't turn up, I panicked. I pulled on a pair of disposable gloves and sat on our porch with a flashlight, rooting through two full bags of trash, picking through all the orange rinds, coffee grounds, banana peels, shrimp tails, and discarded mail piece by piece, praying to see a glimmer of gold beneath every sticky, slimy scrap.

It was nowhere.

I was wracked with despair, sobbing for a full hour. It felt, in a way, like I had lost my dad all over again. As if all the unshed tears surrounding his death had descended upon me like a waterfall.

"I just want it back," I wailed. "*I want it back! I want it back! I want it back!*"

I must have sounded like a wounded animal—a dog howling at the door where its person disappeared.

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My husband, Brandon, joined me on the porch when he heard me bawling, pulled on his own rubber gloves, and dug through the trash alongside me.

"We'll find it, babe," he said gently, sometime after 11 p.m. "Let's go to bed and start again in the morning when there's light."

But I knew I couldn't sleep through my primal cries. Couldn't shut off my mind or soothe my heart. Instead, I searched every nook and crevice in our home, finally turning in around 1 a.m.

The next morning, at dawn, Brandon took apart the sink, searching the pipes with a flashlight. Nothing.

In the days and weeks that followed, I recited my version of the prayer of Saint Anthony before bed every night: *Grant that I may find my beautiful amethyst ring … or at least my peace of mind.*

Then, strangely, my friends and family began telling me about dreams they had related to the ring. I followed those leads like a detective who just uncovered the first real clue in a decades-old mystery. One told me she dreamed I was crying over the ring, and she encouraged me to confide in a third person who towered over both of us—God? An angel? No idea. Days later, Jack told me he dreamed a large man wearing a pink hat and glasses came to our house selling vacuums and found my ring under the runner on our front table.

It wasn't there. I checked.

I even consulted a psychic who said the ring would turn up. "Just keep repeating, 'I'm so happy and grateful that my ring is found safe and sound and back in my possession,'" she said. It didn't work.

A year passed.

## TRUTH UNCOVERED

Then, one afternoon last spring, a few weeks before the seventh anniversary of my dad's passing, my friend Stephanie asked if she could stop by. Our boys were friends, and we connected at school events. When I lost my ring, I'd told her I felt like I was missing an appendage.

Standing on my stoop that afternoon, Stephanie told me she had a dream about my dad. "He was sweeping in the kitchen, and I was scooping crumbs into a dustpan when I spotted your ring," she said. "I told your dad I couldn't wait to give it to you. But he took the ring, and said, 'You're not going to give the ring to her.' When I questioned why, he looked me in the eye with a warm smile on his face, and said, 'She got what she needed from the ring when she had it. She no longer needs it.'"

As she relayed the story, goosebumps rippled over my skin. I didn't know Stephanie well; she didn't know I'd been sick. But the words she shared sounded familiar, like I'd written them myself.

After she left, I flipped through my journal from the days after the ring went missing. Her dream echoed what I wrote in blue ballpoint, my response to the prompt: "What would your dad say if, in fact, you lost the ring?"

The answer was obvious. I conjured his voice in my mind: "Aim, don't sweat it. Maybe the ring served its purpose. Maybe you don't need it anymore. Or maybe, more likely, the missing ring will remind you of me even more because I was always losing everything."

I wrote about how my dad is always with me, with or without the ring. How he feels me each and every day, my yearning, my pain, but also my love and joy. I wrote, "It will turn up when you need it most, OR it will land in the hands of someone who needs it more than you."

And maybe that's the real lesson. Maybe losing the ring wasn't an accident at all, but a cosmic invitation to trust that I'm safe—that my dad is still with me, maybe now more than ever.

For years, I'd worn the amethyst ring like a shield, convinced it kept me tethered to him, even protected. But Stephanie's dream flipped the script, reminding me I've been carrying my dad inside me all along—through the health crisis, the sleepless nights, and the tears in the kitchen over a lost bauble. The ring was never the source of his presence. It was only the symbol of it. &

*Man in Pink Hat from Dream* Original Watercolor © Laura Carl.