

A lot can come
between husband and
wife...but tinsel?

All That glitters

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YOU DATE A MAN FOR THREE months. After a year you marry him. By your first Christmas together as wife and husband, you think you know everything about him—from how he parts his hair to how he butters his toast.

And then you go shopping together for Christmas tree decorations. And you find you really don't know him at all.

That first year together, Joe and I picked out the *perfect* tree. Now it was time to shop for decorations—ones that would grace our Christmas trees for the rest of our lives. We stopped at a church bazaar and found some boxes of old-fashioned ornaments that reminded me of my family's decorations. Then we head-

ed to the drugstore for lights. Walking down an aisle I spotted a tinsel display. I reached for a box.

"No." Joe said, guiding my hands away from the brightly colored red and green box. "No tinsel."

"What?" I asked him. "No tinsel?" I gave him a quizzical look, trying not to look as shocked as I felt. What was a Christmas tree without tinsel? Had I married a crazy man?

"I'm not wild about it," he said. "Never have been."

I tried to reason with him. "Honey, we *have* to have some tinsel," I told him. "We

TINSELTOWN *The Muscos have their own version of mistletoe.*

JAY GULLIXSON

always had it at our house growing up.”

“Well, we didn’t,” Joe said.

I argued. I kept at him for a week. At last he relented—on one condition.

“We’ll buy one box and that’s it—forever. If you want to put tinsel on the tree year after year, you’ll have to take it off the tree and reuse it.”

This is the man I married? I thought. What happened to compromise? Where went understanding? Maybe he was crazy.

Still, I had married Joe for better or for worse and this was the only negative thing about him, so I acquiesced. Or seemed to acquiesce. I figured I would decorate the tree with tinsel, and once he saw how lovely it looked, he would change his mind.

Well, almost a quarter century went by and nothing changed.

Until last Christmas.

As usual, I unearthed the box of used, tinsel from the attic. The life expectancy of a strand, I’ve learned, is only about one year. Strands break easily when they’re stripped from spiky branches.

My box of precious tinsel was almost exhausted.

I showed the depleted box, its red and green now faded and dull, to Joe.

“Honey,” I said, “I know our agreement, but I would really like to buy some new tinsel this year.”

Joe got a stubborn look in his eyes. “No,” he said.

I didn’t argue. This was the only blip in our wonderful marriage. But 25 tinsel-deprived years was enough. I took to subterfuge. *Next year I’ll buy a fresh box, I thought, and sneak in some new strands—few enough so he won’t turn suspicious.*

May was our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Instead of buying each other expensive gifts, Joe and I decided to throw a party for ourselves—a big one.

A few nights before the party, Joe and I went out for a quiet dinner. A kind of pre-celebration, just the two of us, holding

hands under the table, like we were kids. At home afterward, we sat on the couch and snuggled. I felt so close to him at that moment, so grateful for all of our wonderful years together, that I experienced a pang of guilt about my underhanded tinsel plan.

All at once Joe slipped his arm from around my shoulder and sat up.

Then he pulled a gift-wrapped box from out behind him.

“I thought we weren’t going to buy each other presents this year,” I protested. “I don’t have anything for you!”

“It’s for us,” he said.

I fumbled with the wrapping, like a child on Christmas morning. I paused when the last bit of wrapping was finally off. Slowly I pulled the lid off the box. Then I started to cry. Inside lay a glistening heap of tinsel—silver, for our silver anniversary.

“Do you know how hard it is to find that stuff in May?” he asked, a smile creeping up the corners of his mouth. “I had to go on the internet!”

I threw my arms around him and held him for what seemed like...25 years.

Later, when I was alone, I let the tinsel spill through my fingers. *No, I thought, Joe still isn’t crazy about tinsel, but he is crazy about me,* and said a prayer of thanks for the gift of my husband. ■

This is the man I married? What happened to compromise?