



By Anna Purves 2025

The internet will tell you that the peak hours of a wasp sting are between the 12 and the 48 hour mark and it shouldn't be too bad after that.

People IRL, the ones standing next to you when it happened, will tell you, right after you're stung on your ring finger next to the quite snug wedding band you haven't taken off for 34 years except once for surgery, to "*pull it off right now!*" I would have, except that it already wouldn't budge. So venom really does work on the instant.

I could no more pull off my ring 20 seconds after the black hot *dagger* nailed into me than I could do a back flip, so I resorted to Waiting It Out. Ice and elevation and epic dissociation from reality allowed me to drive 300 miles alone the next day to the White Mountains because Google implied it would be better by Day 3. Except that the ring was acting like a tourniquet and my finger was become red and redder--and large and strange and unbendable. Also hot and itchy.

"Oh God, you're just like my husband," expostulated my therapist to whom I showed my finger on Zoom on Day 2 at the 39 hour mark. "Just because you haven't gotten the medical help you wanted for your chronic conditions,

doesn't mean you don't go to the ER when you need to." At hour 45 I caved and got driven the 30 miles to the nearest ER, assuaging my husband's concern on the phone and texting my therapist, as I had promised, that I was off to get my ring cut.



What's just as weird as my finger swelling up so much (like one of those bizarre skinny gourds with a bulge only at one end that you see at autumn harvest) is seeing my marriage ring in two halves. On my finger it was slender and constant. Now it just looks like some inconsequential bits of metal.



Post surgical snip, implications started arising as quickly as the swelling had. If I keep the ring in pieces in a locket or something, does that mean my marriage could ever fracture? If the ring gets bonded back together is the ring and my marriage bond, like they say about broken bones, stronger than ever?

Of course it's just a piece of metal freighted with abstract symbolism unrecognized, as far as I know, by the rest of the biosphere. Of course a ring isn't the marriage itself, but humans aren't very easily separated from their ideas.

All that aside, I have never been so glad in my life to get something 'off of me' as when that second snip of the nifty ring-cutting tool employed by the young, very handsome ER doctor released me from two days of agony.

Some of my friends think this is a great occasion to "get the ring of my dreams," whereas my grander dreams run more along getting my mortgage paid off. Regardless, not having a wedding ring is strange. Three weeks later my finger still feels light and the red imprint of the years is still there.

In November all the wasps except for a newly hatched queen will be dead or gone until next year. And by then the gold bits will either be re-forged by a

jeweler or we'll engrave a new ring in time for our 34th anniversary. I'll see if the new ring carries the same weight or not.