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King of the Wire Rings

Jerry Lewis—not the real one but a different one—was King of the Wire Rings. This was in The Year of Our Lord One Thousand, Nine Hundred Seventy, in a dry and dusty city.

Jerry had thin wire coated in a flexible rubbery plastic and the coating was multicolored in pleasing common shades. From where Jerry obtained this wire he never said. It was rumored it might have been stolen. He had a large quantity of it, not large as in a boxcar full, or enough to fill a pickup truck's bed or an automobile's trunk, or even, as far as anyone could tell, enough to fill a shoebox, but enough to be considered a large quantity for a boy his age, which was eleven or twelve. He kept this wire in his locker at school, coiled as it was in a loose coil roughly the size of a steelworker's fists.

Jerry made rings out of this wire, and this is how this was done: Loop a carefully chosen length of wire back on itself and tightly wrap one line of it around the loop to leave a small portion of the loop free at one end and the stub-end of the length at the other; bend the remaining unwrapped wire back and forth until it breaks; squeeze this broken end tightly against the tightly wound portion; bend the ring around a finger and hook it in place with the stub-end catching on the small portion of free loop. Do not cut off your circulation.

The rings were colorful and new and every kid at school wanted one. Jerry went around at school with the coil of wire hanging from a belt loop and made rings and sold them for ten cents apiece. Kids came to him all day long.

Jerry, make me a ring.

Jerry, here's my lunch money. Make me a ring.

Jerry, I have a dollar. Make me ten rings.

Soon he had two and sometimes three friends with him every day. They were like bodyguards and that is probably what they were. He sold a lot of rings and his pockets were filled with dimes and nickels.

He couldn't keep up with the orders.

He began selling wire to other kids. He wouldn't sell to just anybody. Only kids he or his bodyguards either liked or didn't dislike qualified as buyers. These buyers were of sufficient number and made rings in sufficient numbers that soon the market became

saturated. At this point, the market did what markets do when they become saturated, and it collapsed.

The following year (Our Lord, One Thousand Nine Hundred Seventy-One) no one wore the wire rings and they were as much as forgotten. Jerry Lewis, King of the Wire Rings, moved on to small-caliber bullets, which he discharged by pushing them through the small hole at the end of a cheap plastic ruler and banging the ruler against a concrete bench on the school playground. Every kid at school thought this was cool. The authorities had Jerry removed from the school and sent away. He did not, to this school, return.