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Non-perishable food donations will be collected at the door at each performance.

ADVICE

## Staying in, coming out

Don't go out with psycho boys; do come out to Nana

DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

Two years ago you published a letter in your column from a man who had trouble meeting other men. You were tender and caring in your response to him. I wrote asking for his e-mail address because it seemed like this guy and I might have some things in common.

This man lived far enough away, so I felt safe talking to him without worrying about him wanting to get close to me. He just didn't sound right (sane) on the phone, but he happened to know two unhappy lesbians in my area, so he started visiting.

When I met him at the lesbians' apartment, the tent from the previous summer's trip was sprawled out in the living room. The apartment smelled like dog poop and urine.

I shoved my way through the living room to get to the sofa to sit down. I tried to smile and be polite, thinking "people live differently, and I should accept it," which I didn't.

Anyway, my "date" turned out to be so needy he covered me like a dense slime, and I couldn't breathe. I tried to be nice and tell him I didn't like him "that way," which didn't work.

I e-mailed and told him I didn't want anything to do with him. I was then sent the "Fuck You" e-mail, followed by several more attempts at correspondence. I finally moved, changed my phone number and blocked his e-mail; I think I've finally gotten rid of him.

I wanted to share that story because I learned something valuable. I should have run to my car at the first scent of dog poop in the lesbians' apartment.

—Steve

DEAR STEVE:

Actually, your first hint that things wouldn't go well was that your prospective date did not sound sane on the phone. If you felt safe only because he lived far away, why did you have any further contact with him?

Ms. Behavior is alarmed by how many of her readers ignore obvious hints. They say things like: "I suspected he was psycho, unethical and had bad hygiene on our first date. When we broke up six months later, I knew it was true because he broke into my apartment, stole all my money and left his smelly clothing on my bed."

Hello? What happened to that first hint, 180 days earlier?

As for the lesbian tent and the dog's bodily fluids, Ms. Behavior does not understand why you took issue. In cool weather, plenty of lesbians secretly camp in their living rooms and convince their dogs that they are in the great outdoors.



Ms. Behavior

DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

Betty and I are getting hitched. She's out to her family but not to her grandmother, whom she loves.

The family has Betty convinced Nana will keel over at the very words "lesbian lover." The problem is that Betty wants Nana to know but is afraid to risk the consequences.

Also, Nana gives all her beloved grandchildren \$10,000 on their wedding day. How can I convince Betty that she is just as entitled to the 10 grand as

her married brother and now-divorced sister? Shouldn't Nana be given the choice?

Betty always says Nana loves her best, anyway. Won't Nana love her just as much knowing she's a lesbian?

I personally never think it's a mistake to come out, but, then again, I don't want Betty to start our happy life together with any regrets. Can you advise us?

—Betty's Betrothed

DEAR BETTY'S BETROTHED:

"Don't tell Nana or she'll die," is effective emotional blackmail. But if old people really dropped dead every time they received "shocking" information, no one would have gray hair, and we wouldn't have to worry about the state of Medicare.

If Betty doesn't tell her grandmother about you or the wedding, she obviously won't be able to invite her. That seems sad. And how close can Betty and her grandmother really be if Betty has to hide her most meaningful relationship from Nana?

The sacrifice of intimacy with someone so close seems like an even bigger loss than the potential \$10,000 dowry. (Well, maybe not bigger. But it's at least a \$7,000 loss.) Also, make sure not to call it a Commitment Ceremony, lest Nana places a lower price tag on the event.

Coming out can be messy

or volatile, but it's never a mistake (unless there's risk of bodily harm). Betty should risk the murder rap and introduce her beloved (you) to the old lady. Once Nana survives the initial lezzie news, Betty should invite her to come dance at your wedding. [M]

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MERYL COHN is the author of *Do What I Say: Ms. Behavior's Guide to Gay and Lesbian Etiquette* (Houghton Mifflin). Her Internet site is [www.msbehavior.com](http://www.msbehavior.com). Send questions or correspondence to [msbehavior@aol.com](mailto:msbehavior@aol.com).

KAREN M. SWEIGERT, MD  
Obstetrics and Gynecology

Phone  
503 274-9936  
Fax  
503 274-2660



Cascade Women's Health, PC

1130 N.W. 22nd, Suite 320, Portland, OR 97210