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Why Can't We Be (Just) Friends?

DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

I'm a lesbian who mostly hangs out with gay men. I would really like to have more female friends, but it never seems to work out for me. Just when I'm thrilled to have a gal pal, the flowers start coming. Then, my new friend confesses her feelings for me and wrecks everything. Should I just resign myself to the safety of friendships with the boys and not deal with lesbians and their unpredictable emotions? Or am I doing something wrong?

— Sabrina



ms. behavior
BY MERYL COHN

Another kind of woman also attracts a lot of attention. The second type unconsciously exudes messages of seduction in many of her interactions. She may not be aware of flirting, but she puts forth an energy that goes beyond "gal pals." She shines her intense gaze on a friend, somehow manages to provide the intimacy of a lover ... Then she acts surprised when the FTD flower truck pulls up.

a lover (in what is supposed to be an ordinary friendship) and is titillated by the attention she receives in return. Then she acts surprised when the FTD flower truck pulls up.

Frankly, Sabrina, the flowers are what seem most suspect to Ms. Behavior. It's a big risk to send such a gift, and one that most people won't take without feeling like they've been invited to do so. Someone who sends gifts to a genuinely baffled recipient is either:

- 1) Spending too much time by the punch bowl,
- 2) Incredibly unconscious, or,
- 3) Confused by having been given a come-hither message.

If this just happened once or twice, Ms. Behavior wouldn't suggest that you did anything to excite or to entice your friend. However, it

sounds like a pattern. So without judging you, Ms. Behavior would suggest you engage in a moment of self-examination. Please sit in front of your mirror and contemplate this question: "Am I saint? Or am I just a big panty tease?"



DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

I keep my circle of friends small and close and, as a result, I ended up falling in love with one of them. I finally decided to confess my feelings to my close friend. He said it wouldn't change our friendship, but it seems to be that it has and I'm not sure what to do about it. Should I back off? Should I try to change his mind? Or should I crawl under a rock?

I'm not comfortable with having lots of

friends but being close to just a few people has its drawbacks. What should I do (other than become even more of a celibate and enter a monastery) to fix this?

— Mr. Monk

DEAR MR. MONK:

Don't circle around your friend like a dog, hoping that he'll change his mind. You'll retain your dignity (and probably the friendship) if you make it clear that you'd still like to be friends, and then take a step back to show you really mean it. Try to let go of any feelings of humiliation. You fell in love with someone who doesn't feel the same way. You didn't do anything wrong. (Unless you left out the part where you humped his leg at a party by way of explaining your attraction. Ms. Behavior doesn't mean to offend you, but she does find that there's often a crucial piece of missing information in the letters she receives.) If it turns out that he feels superior or gets weird because you expressed love or desire, then you don't want him as a close friend anyway.

If falling in love with friends is a pattern for you, you need to expand your social life. You may feel safest starting with a group of kind-hearted lesbians, who will scoop you up into the warm bosom of their group without the risk of romantic stirrings.

Meryl Cohn is the author of *Do What I Say: Ms. Behavior's Guide to Gay and Lesbian Etiquette*. Send questions or correspondence to msbehavior@aol.com.

DEAR SABRINA:

Is the problem that all lesbians misunderstand your friendly gestures, or is it that your friendly gestures reek of seduction?

Once in a great while, a woman is so compelling that no one can resist her. Such a woman has charisma, a spiritual gift, and a way of making others feel that they have come home. This woman is a mother-like creature, a goddess, or maybe even a saint, and people—men, women and children—can't help falling in love with her. You may be such a woman.

But another kind of woman also attracts a lot of attention. The second type unconsciously exudes messages of seduction in many of her interactions. She may not be aware of flirting, but she puts forth an energy that goes beyond "gal pals." She shines her intense gaze on a friend, somehow manages to provide the intimacy of