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DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

I played poker with friends recently. My friend Randi ran out of money, so we made a deal: I gave her cash, with the agreement that if she won, we'd split the pot 50/50. When we won the large pot, I half jokingly said that instead of taking my share of the pot, I'd like to buy the right to date her ex-girlfriend, Susie. Randi eagerly agreed. I repeatedly asked if that was really okay, and Randi reassured me that she had no feelings about my dating her ex (from a few years ago).

I called Susie the next day, and now we've been dating for a few months. However, once Randi started seeing us together, she had "unexpected feelings." She has called several times and asked me to stop dating Susie. She even offered to give me the poker money instead. However, I really like Susie and don't want to stop dating her. Randi seems to feel that my long-term friendship with her should matter more than my new (but intense) feelings for Susie. But I feel that I "won" the right to date Susie and it's not fair for Randi to demand that I stop. Who's right?

Also, I'm worried about Susie finding out about the poker game. Is it dishonest to keep it from her?

—Fair Player

DEAR FAIR PLAYER:

Since there were apparently multiple witnesses to the "sale" of Susie at the poker game (who might someday spill the beans), you

You Got To Know When To Hold 'Em, Know When To Not Date Her Ex



ms. behavior
BY MERYL COHN

should tell the story of how she was sold to you—like a pig at a county fair. Then you won't have to wonder how she'll react to hearing the news: insulted to have been so readily sold, or perhaps flattered that you purchased her.

Despite your having done your due diligence—i.e. lesbian "processing" about the deal and any potential feelings—your poor friend Randi has seller's remorse. Is that your problem? Not really. Let's say that Susie *had* been a pig that you purchased from Randi at a county fair. Randi couldn't demand that you return the pig just because she experienced feelings of jealousy upon seeing the two of you together. And since Susie and Randi were not even a couple anymore, when you purchased the right to date Susie she was an abstract commodity—more of a stock certificate for a pig than an actual pig.

Your dilemma isn't much of a dilemma. If your friendship with Randi was the most important part of this equation, you would have weighted it differently when you posed the

question, e.g. "What can I do to save this important relationship?" rather than "I really like Susie and don't want to stop dating her," and "I 'won' the right to date Susie and it's not fair for Randi to demand that I stop."



DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

My boyfriend Josh is extremely sociable and I'm not. His large network of friends and family members descend upon us for weeks at a time, without any regard for how it affects us (or, mainly, me). We live in a resort area, so it's intense in the summer. I have said that I don't enjoy having visitors so often, or all at once, and Josh doesn't seem to care.

I'm not just being weird or controlling; his friends totally take over the house, to the point where I've slept in the attic just to keep my sanity. Also, his ex-boyfriend has come with his partner, two kids and a dog. At various times, they have given us lice, fleas and stomach viruses.

I don't know how to negotiate this with Josh. What would you suggest?

—I'm Not Really Antisocial, Am I?

DEAR I'M NOT REALLY ANTISOCIAL:

Make sure that you benefit in some way each time you agree to have visitors, and set some guidelines about what's acceptable. Write those guidelines down so that they're easy to refer to when necessary. Here are some examples for a written agreement:

- 1) The number of visitors shall not exceed the number of available beds. No sleeping on the floor or coffee table.
- 2) No visit may exceed three days.
- 3) For every week of visitors, there shall be a visitor-free week.
- 4) Maternal visits cause extra stress. For any maternal visit exceeding three days, that mother's son needs to take out the garbage for six months.
- 5) If any visitors cause illness, parasites or infestation, the person who invited the infested visitors must shovel the driveway (urban dwellers may replace this with another unpleasant chore and lesbians may replace it with cleaning out the cat box) for the rest of his natural life.

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.