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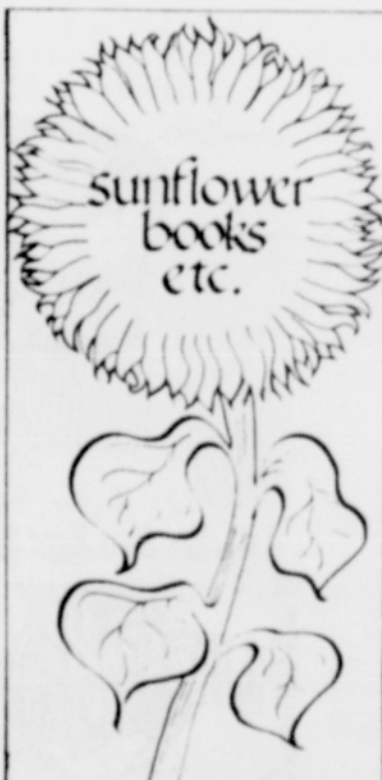
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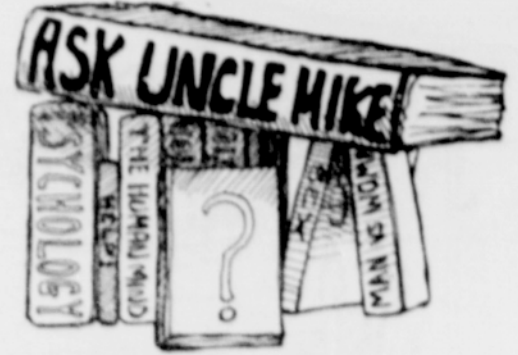
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Dear Uncle Mike,

About a month ago, I met this great woman through mutual friends. We hit it off right away and see each other once or twice a week. She's intelligent, beautiful, and has a great sense of humor. I can't remember a woman I've enjoyed being with more. So what's my problem? I'm 45, she's 26, I'm white, she's African-American. None of our evenings have ended with breakfast yet, but it's obvious we're both thinking about it. I'm not a rounder and she's not a woman into casual flings. I'm also not naive and realize the difficulties involved. Any thoughts?

Smitten in Seattle

Dear Smitten,

Uncle Mike always has thoughts, many of them unacceptable in polite society.

You mention difficulties. Which ones? That the two of you emerged from different gene pools or that she's young enough to be your niece? Uncle Mike regards both as confusion factors.

In the first place, booblah, applying rational thought and social sensitivity to affairs of the heart is the worst sort of foolishness. Love is hard enough to come by without setting sanctions on who can play with whom. At 45, you should be dry enough behind the ears to realize the part of us that falls in love is the spirit.

And that the nice thing about spirits is their lack of age or racial origin. Having dealt with liberal claptrap, on to real life.

Difficulties, cupcake? You bet your bippy. Uncle Mike won't even mention the likely outbreak of heart attacks and strokes in both of your families. Yes, there will be wailing in the tents should your relationship with this young woman flower. This alone should not deter you. Humans have a great capacity for accepting what they can't change, even if it involves having a honky in the woodpile.

As you've surely discovered, the two of you should get used to being stared at, often without admiration. The success of "Roots" and "I'll Fly Away" notwithstanding, interracial couples are still oddities, with all the privileges that brings, in a culture that mass produces "Dare to be Different" t-shirts and fails to see the joke.

Although more subtle than race, your age difference will be every bit as tricky. To her friends, most of whom were not born when you were eligible for the draft, you will be an old geek who should be ashamed of himself. To your friends, many of whom have children her age, you will be an old fool who should be ashamed of himself. What they will dismiss as youthful folly on her part will be, in you, indication of serious character flaws. Among women your age will be fears you're falling apart.

To all of which, Uncle Mike makes rude sounds with his mouth.

If you care about this woman and she cares about you, you owe yourselves a dance. In Uncle Mike's opinion, the most serious challenge you face is that, as different genders, you evolved on alien planets and inhabit alternate universes. Uncle Mike refuses to even get started on that.

Dear Uncle Mike,

This is a little embarrassing, but here goes. I hear my woman friends complaining that all their boyfriends want to do is have sex. I should be so afflicted. My boyfriend and I have been living together for a little over a year now and, to him, anything more than twice a week qualifies as wanton abandon. We're both in our early thirties and, other than libidos, we're a great match. But good frequent sex is important to me and I'm starting to have second thoughts. Worse, I'm obsessing. You're a guy. Is this something he'll get over? Would counseling help?

Annie S., Portland

Dear Annie,

Would counseling help? Maybe. Is this something your friend will get over? How would I know? Uncle Mike doesn't know either one of you. Fortunately, this won't stop him from considering the mess your life's become. Yes, we're quite a guy.

Uncle Mike first assumes you've not, in the short time you've lived together, turned into a slattern in a mumu who only stops shrieking long enough to find the bonbons.

Uncle Mike also assumes you've tried the usual Pavlovian techniques: the candlelight bubblebaths, the whips, the jello, the Little BoPeep outfit.

Uncle Mike further assumes you've taken the lad aside, explained clearly the depth of your frustration and the possible consequences for him should it continue.

If so, and he still fails to respond to your whistle, you may have a dog who's just not going to hunt, so to speak. Life being grand, this leaves you the three options.

The first was best summed up by Woody Allen who confessed he was twenty-five before he learned that sex involved two people. The second, nearly as popular, involves dishonesty and hotel expenses. The third begins with leaving the hopeless clod and having lunch with Uncle Mike.

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