

What is madness but nobility of spirit at odds with circumstance? Ted Roethke

Dear Uncle Mike,
I'm a 26 year old woman -- single, intelligent, warm, caring, reasonably attractive, sensual and often charming

Here is my question. Where are all the good men? All I get are whiners, slackers, and aging adolescents without a car, gas money, ambition or a clue. I don't think I'm all that picky, but I'm not desperate enough to caretake cynics whose cup is always half empty, put bandaids on the knees of skateboarders old enough to shave, or support lovers who sleep around. Any suggestions, Answer Man? Selective Shopper in Seattle

Dear Shopper,

Uncle Mike always has suggestions. His first is that you change your metaphor before he gags. One shops for clothing, fresh produce, and the perfect Spanish Coffee. The idea of shopping for human beings ended, obstensibly at least, with the Civil War.

Since you describe yourself as intelligent, Uncle Mike hesitates to suggest the obvious. You may be shopping in the wrong boutiques. Or, in a kinder and gentler metaphor, fishing in the wrong hole. Lacking knowledge of what you consider a 'good man', Uncle Mike is hard pressed to whip out a list of likely venues. His first suggestion is that you stop looking altogether. Unlike finding the ideal cellular phone service, finding love is more often a wonderful accident than the climax of consumer research.

Some of the male traits you describe with loathing and disdain are, Uncle Mike can't help but notice, age specific. Poor baby. Having been a younger man himself once, Uncle Mike has nothing but sympathy for young women hell bent to make something of them. Pet rocks are often easier to train. On the other hand, Uncle Mike is ceaselessly unamused by the snivelling of women young and old who, in their search for the perfect man they so obviously deserve, price themselves out of the market.

Dear Uncle Mike,

I'm an easygoing woman but I can be backed into a corner. I've had it up to here with stupid answering machine messages that a) are delivered by children too young to be interesting, b) rhyme, or c) sacrifice brevity for an unfortunate attempt at cleverness.

Knowing you, you have some withering countermeasure. Care to share it? Shirley H., Coloma, Ca.

Dear Shirley,

Eventually. But first, Uncle Mike would like to know how someone in Coloma, California found him in Cannon Beach. For reasons we won't go into, it makes Uncle Mike nervous to be found by anyone too distant to buy him a drink or loan him money.

Are you a) a recent visitor to Cannon Beach, b) a loyal subscriber, or c) a member of a law enforcement agency? In any case, Uncle Mike would consider it a personal favor if you forgot his

As for answering machines whose messages should constitute grounds for flogging. Uncle Mike finds it satisfying to wait for the beep and then flood the instrument with any note played on his tuba.

Dear Uncle Mike

My 10 year old daughter has developed an interest in spiders. It started as a school project. Now she wants a tarantula. Is this normal?

Is this normal?

Squeamish in Astoria

Dear Squeamish,

In a word, no. Spiders are the nightmare of the wild kingdom and those who do anything but avoid them are, in Uncle Mike's humble opinion, one click this side of the irretrievable.

Under no circumstances should you buy your little munchkin a tarantula. Have you seen these things?

Good grief, nitwit, use your head.

Your daughter will promise you she'll keep it in a terrarium with a brick

Your daughter will promise you she'll keep it in a terrarium with a brick on the lid. She'll be lying. Eventually she'll confuse her large-mandibled arachnid with a pet who knows which side its bread is buttered on. Or cares.

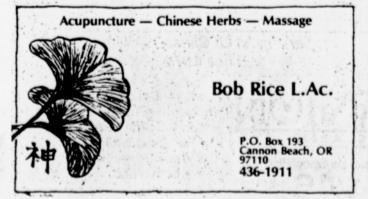
Trust me, the morning will come when, before you've had your coffee, your eight-legged wooly horror will scurry out from under the refrigerator and leap onto your face. At this point squooshing will be out of the question.

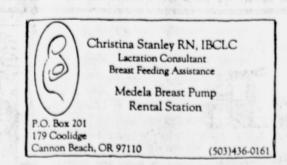




You should have thought of all this before you were born.

N. F. Simpson





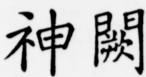
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