Dear Uncle Mike.

Here's a question for you. How do you stop falling in love with the wrong woman? Over and over again. I always start out thinking this is the one I've been waiting for. I always end up dealing with somebody I only thought I knew who has habits that drive me crazy or gross me out. Is there part of this I'm not getting? I know the kind of woman I want. Why can't they be what they seem? Maybe it's me. But if love is blind, how do people stay together?



Confused in Eugene

Dear Confused,

You neglected to tell Uncle Mike how old you are. Judging from the thrust of your questions, he'd guess you're about twelve and will answer as simply as he can.

How does one stop falling in love with the wrong women? One way is to know who you are, as opposed to who you imagine yourself to be. You can expect this to take most of your life. Another thing you want to do is learn the difference between what you want and what you need. What you want is what you don't have. What you need is what's yours.

Karma being what it is, falling in love with the wrong person is a term without meaningful referents. Uncle Mike would encourage you to look up 'cause and effect' in your Funk and Wagnall's and see how much room it leaves for 'mistakes'. The women in your life come to deliver a teaching and learning you're behaving like a stupid wart is seldom fun. Uncle Mike always counsels himself to eat the pain and leave a large tip. Avoid falling in love with women you don't like. Hormonal lunacy is fun and all, but unless you're in love with pain and sadness, you should look for the same qualities in your lovers that you look for in your friends. Hopefully, this won't include drinking beer from the pitcher and behaving like swine.

The transformation phenomena you speak of, in which someone who holds your heart in their hand changes from a source of pleasure and fulfillment to one of surprise and shocked disbelief, is nature's way of reminding us to laugh. Listen carefully, cupcake. No one is what you think they are. They are, simultaneously, much more and much less than you or they imagine. That's why we call them humans. Is love blind? Uncle Mike doesn't think so. Uncle Mike thinks love has the eyes of a hawk and all the mercy of a puff adder. How do people stay together? With varying degrees of difficulty and generous helpings of faith. Like everything else in the universe, love is an act of creation, something we make up as we go along. To paraphrase our great teacher, Dylan of Minnesota, love not busy being born is busy dying. You'll understand if and when you grow up.

Dear Uncle Mike,

My ten year old son wants a pet tarantula. I like to encourage his interests but, to be honest with you, the things give me the creeps. Do spiders make good pets? How much space do they need? What do you feed them? Can they be de-fanged? The guy at the pet store says tarantulas are really interesting and no trouble at all. Have you ever been around one? Am I being phobic?

Chris L., Portland

Dear Chris,

A commonly overlooked fact about phobias is that they're firmly grounded in good sense. Fear of heights comes from a knowledge of gravity and the truth that there's nothing between you and the ground but thin air. Fear of pit bulls comes from an unwillingness to be torn apart and eaten by something with more teeth than brains. Fear and loathing of spiders is the racial memory of having one jump onto your face

Do spiders make good pets? Not unless you enjoy living with a nightmare. It takes a special sort of person to watch Seinfeld with a tarantula curled up on his lap. With luck, your son isn't this far gone. Do they need much space? Like anything else, spiders will take as much space as they can get. If you're smart, this will be no larger than a small aquarium with a large rock on the lid. As far as diet is concerned, your spider will eat anything it can pick apart with its ghoulish mandibles. Given sufficient appetite, you and your son will fall into this category. Can tarantulas be de-fanged? Absolutely. The proper tool is a large mallet.

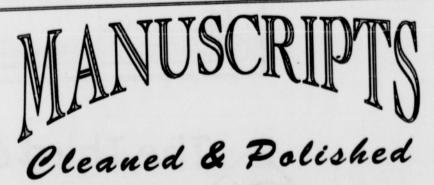
Dear Uncle Mike,

My boyfriend and I are have a question we need settled. Who was it who said, "Let them eat cake"? He says it was Madame Pompadour, I say Marie Antoinette. Do you know?

Rebecca in Astoria

Dear Rebecca,

It's usually attributed to Marie Antoinette, but she didn't say it either. Nothing even close, in fact. Uncle Mike suspects it was Sara Lee.



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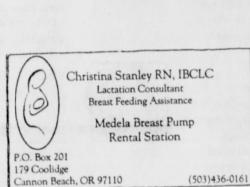


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