



Dear Uncle Mike,
My room mate and I are having an ongoing disagreement about toilet paper. Please help us. Should the paper unroll from the front or the back? We figured if anyone would know, you would.

Dos Amigos,
Kingman, Arizona

Dear Dos,

You figured wrong. After years of hearing both sides of the story, often in tones entirely too spirited, Uncle Mike is convinced that, while much can be said for either arrangement, the less said the better. The toilet paper permutation problem is a corollary of the familiar riddle: if a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear, which fork should one use for the butter beans?

Dear Uncle Mike,

My problem is an ego thing. Sometimes I wonder what isn't. I've been with this girl now for three months. We have sex and everything but she's really aloof. Most girls open up more than you want and get all possessive. Not her. She has stuff in her life she doesn't talk about and doesn't ask me questions about what I do. This is good in a way but now I'm thinking I like her more than she likes me and it makes me try to get her to like me more and that's a joke. Talk to me, Uncle Mike.

Jason

Dear Jason,

Uncle Mike is happy to hear of your imbalance and urges you to welcome it as a friend. In relationships, just as in real life, anything that raises serious questions is a good thing. So the young woman plays her cards close to her vest, grants personal freedom and asks the same in return. The shameless hussy. Uncle Mike suggests you think long and hard about which part of this bothers you and why. You wonder how much she likes you even though you've had "sex and everything". Although Uncle Mike has no idea what either of these terms means to you but would have hoped experiencing them might have provided some notion what her feelings (and everything) are. Why not try something wild and crazy? Accept the woman for who she is and learn what she can teach you about yourself.

Dear Uncle Mike,

Since the subject has come up once or twice, I thought you (and others, if you choose to print this) would be interested in the perspective of 'the other woman'. Last year at a professional function, I met 'Jim'. We hit it off immediately. He has a great sense of humor, is almost frighteningly intelligent, and is a warm and caring person who has a genuine interest in listening to others. We agreed to have lunch. At that time, attraction aside, I'm sure it was as much a business engagement as social one. He was, if nothing else, a married man. We had a wonderful time together, began having lunch regularly and..... We became involved sexually about nine months ago. We have a frank and open relationship. Although he is frustrated and unfulfilled in his marriage, there are children and both of us know what we're having is an affair. This is fine with me. I'm 29 and, although I want to marry someday, I figure it will happen when it happens. ('Jim' is 37.) For the time being, a sexual friendship works for me. I'm an intelligent woman and have given some thought to the situation which is a new one to me. Before 'Jim' and I became involved, I looked down on women who dated married men. But in our case, I can't see where anyone is either losing or being hurt. 'Jim' has said that our relationship gives him energy that he puts back into his marriage. Having a friend he can talk to helps. Because of our work situations, we've been able to carve out time for each other with no one being the least bit aware, so the chance his wife will find out is zero. My question for you is this: must I consider 'Jim' and myself sinners and deserving of guilt?

Another Woman

Dear Woman,

Before considering how you should consider you and old Jim, we first need to clarify the rules of probability as they apply to worldly events: whatever can happen eventually will. One of the many definitions of 'wife' is 'she who always finds out'. If she's anything like any of the women Uncle Mike has ever known, she already suspects. But enough of her and her pain and on to the real issue: what's in it for you and Jim Bob. It's nice he has someone to talk to now and that you've found a warm and caring sexual friend. If the deception and emotional disregard don't interfere with your pleasure, who is Uncle Mike to say you should feel bad? Perhaps someday, when you're nicely married and your husband travels on business, the two of us can chat again.

Dear Uncle Mike,

My wife and I have lived in our home for sixteen years. It's a nice neighborhood, nothing special but certainly not run down. Mostly couples and families. Last year, the lady who lived in the house next door passed away. Her son inherited the house and sold it to a young couple. Our new neighbors moved in last summer and we're ready to move out. Not only do they play their stereo at warp drive, they have a dog that barks half the night, are frequent drinkers and about once a week have a screaming fight. Please don't tell me to kill them or burn their house down. We've considered both but ruled them out. Yes, we've talked to them politely. No, we don't speak to them at all anymore. You must have experience with this sort of thing. Do you think we could get away with burning them out?

D. and L., Portland

Dear D and L,

It would depend on how clever you were and Uncle Mike would urge you not to do anything rash unless you have people who'll swear you were with them at the time in question. Aside from encouraging the authorities to enforce existing nuisance laws, Uncle Mike has no advice to give you. Once you eliminate murder and arson, the only option left is to wait for them to change their personalities. Unless, of course, you hire some guys on Harley Davidsons to illuminate matters for them.

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