



Dear Uncle Mike,

About a year ago, I started seeing a woman several years younger than me. She's 28, I'm 37. It was unbelievably good, I've never been this much in love and I know she felt the same. Not just because she said it but because of how she was. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. Then about three months ago out of nowhere she says she has to back away for a while to think things over. She says she

doesn't know if she's ready for the sort of relationship we have that could easily lead to living together and marriage. We agreed not to see each other for a while and to let her make the first contact. I know she's seeing other men. After two months, I called and met for drinks. She stayed five minutes. She said she misses me and I could see it's true but that she needs more time. "A short time." We agreed again that contact would be left to her. That was a month ago. I don't know whether to just let it drop or be a man and pursue her. I know she loves me and if this is some sort of friendship test I don't want to fail but if she's waiting to see if I want her enough to come after her I don't want to fail there either. What would you do?

Richard, Portland, Oregon

Dear Richard,

Uncle Mike would try not to behave like an imbecile. He would say to himself something like, You sorry nitwit. How much more plain can the poor woman make it? Repeat after Uncle Mike: it's over. You may perhaps be friends, after a short time, but your days as lovers are memories you should stop fondling like worry beads. In this part of the movie, you get on your horse and ride away. This is not the time to connect with your feminine side. Consider yourself fortunate to have had a love that was what you say it was for a time. If the paths of your karma are meant to intertwine again, they will; but if Uncle Mike were you, he wouldn't bet on it. Work your way through your hard feelings and avoid blaming someone else for the way you choose to feel. Eat the pain and nourish your better self. Go have some fun. Cast your net and see what flings itself into it. Carve this woman out of your consciousness, with compassion of course, and be curious what interesting woman will walk out of the surf next. You should also make a vow to gnaw off your hand before so much as dialing this person's number. You are, or soon will be, a better person than that.

Dear Uncle Mike,

At what age do you think children should stop crawling into bed with their parents? My sister has a seven year old daughter who crawls into bed between them once or twice a week. I think she's too old to be doing this especially since the man is not her biological father. I don't think that's good and could lead to real trouble. I tell her but she says it's okay because her daughter has been through a lot because of the divorce and just needs to feel secure right now. Do you think this is good?

Worried Mom, Gresham, Oregon

Dear Worried Mom,

Before recommending that you mind your own business, Uncle Mike must take issue with your nasty assumption that, if your sister's partner is a male, he's a potential child molester. Lacking evidence you failed to provide, he's an adult human who probably wishes more than you that the youngster would stay in her own bed. As for whether this is good, Uncle Mike must assume the girl's mother understands her daughter better than, say, you or Uncle Mike; and, we must remember, it wasn't her who wrote to say she had a problem. Unless you think your sister has an unhealthy need to sleep with her prepubescent female child or have witnessed other suspicious behavior which, if reported to the proper authorities, would not be met with raucous laughter, Uncle Mike urges you to put a large cork in your mouth and slam it firmly home.

Dear Uncle Mike,

Don't you get a little tired solving other people's problems? It's unbelievable to me that people can be so stupid sometimes. I'm just a kid (twenty) but I sure hope I don't need to write to an advice column when I'm forty. Even one as good and funny as yours. Thanks.

Jenny, San Rafael, California

Dear Jenny,

Although Uncle Mike often gets tired, he doesn't think for a minute he's able to solve other people's problems. As it sounds like you already know, life doesn't work that way. All Uncle Mike, or anyone else, can do is to listen, try to understand, point out glaring examples of poor reasoning and inappropriate behavior and poke fun at them. Uncle Mike no longer has any difficulty believing in the human comedy. He just thinks we should spend more time slapping our foreheads and laughing about it. He shares your hope you won't be pouring out your angst to faceless strangers, even good and funny ones, when you're forty. By then, Uncle Mike's nurse will be opening the letters for him, hopefully in a hut in the Caribbean.

THE THERAPY PAGE

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