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**SAVAGE LOVE** **FRIENDSHIP**  
 BY DAN SAVAGE



*I'm a pretty quiet Midwestern woman currently wracked by a guilty Catholic conscience. My last boyfriend and I were in an open, long-distance relationship. We were together for a year and a half, and things were great fun. We considered each other our primary partners, but I met his other partners and felt fine about most of them, and I got to have some fun playtime back in my own city. Then I finished grad school and wanted to talk about moving to his city. He simply refused to have that conversation, and we broke up. It hurt—a lot—but we resolved to stay friends, and we are still close. A year later, he was diagnosed with cancer. I went to visit him at his request and cuddled him at night as he was wracked by chemo nausea and fatigue. There was some touching (boobs and butts help with nausea, apparently), but mostly I just spooned him and fetched him tea. That same weekend, I met his new, much younger girlfriend (19 to his 28). She is sweet and caring, but she was clearly uncomfortable with my visit, and I belatedly realized that either they aren't doing the open thing or they haven't talked much about it. I suddenly felt a little jealous and a lot like an emotional intruder. Not everyone understands the sort of relationship he and I had, but I'm lost on how to be a good friend/former girlfriend to him now. Am I jeopardizing his romantic life by staying his friend? Is it possible for us to stay close without making his current girlfriend jealous? Did I just help him cheat?*

**Accidental Home Wrecker**

Good on you for going to see your ex-boyfriend, AHW. It was absolutely the right thing to do. As for his current girlfriend: It's possible that your presence made her uncomfortable, AHW. It's also possible that she's socially awkward and you misread her signals. Or perhaps she's never had to interact with a partner's ex before. She's still a teenager—the whole concept of exes remaining on good terms and being there for each other during a crisis may be new to her. If you and your ex are close enough to spoon during a health crisis, AHW, you're close enough to ask him a direct question or two about his current relationship. Is it open or closed? If it's open, are we talking open in practice or open in theory? If it's the latter, you may be the first "non-primary" partner—or the first ex-primary partner—with whom this girl has ever had to interact. Meaning: She may have been more comfortable with You, the Idea, than she was with You, the Person. Another question to ask your ex: Will your being around screw up his current relationship? Your ex may still want you around even if the answer is yes. His current girlfriend is very young, and (provided I'm reading the timeline correctly) he's been with her for less than a year. Right now the support of his old friends may be more valuable to him than this new girlfriend. So don't disappear on your ex because you have a hunch his new girlfriend might be jealous, AHW. Talk to him, let him make his own choices, and be there for him.

*I consider myself one of the lucky ones: happily married for decades, with a long-term girlfriend. GF is at this point part of the family, and while it hasn't always been an easy arrangement to sort out, it has worked for over a decade. Recently, I've been talking with other nonmonogamous folk and find myself wondering whether I have any responsibility to publicly admit details about my multi-partner lifestyle. Though it's probably obvious to those we interact with regularly (GF is routinely part of holiday family functions and picks up kids after school, etc.), we have never been directly ASKED, nor have we told. On the one hand, I want others to know that workable long-term nonmonogamy isn't just a pipe dream, but on the other, the details of my personal life are nobody's business. I'm certainly no role model, but am I crazy to feel guilt for not being openly poly?*

**Nonmonogamous, Utterly Normal, Yet Apprehensive**

Not everyone who's poly can be out, NUNYA, just as not everyone who's gay, bi, trans, kinky, or poz can be out. But the only way to dispel myths about poly people and poly relationships—poly people are all burners, poly relationships don't work out for the long term, all nonmonogamous relationships ultimately fail—is for poly people to come out when and where they can. So if you're in a position to be out, NUNYA, you should come out. And while your poly relationship isn't anyone's business, it's not something you should have to hide, either.

*I am a straight female who has been in a relationship for the last decade. We are high-school sweethearts who lost our virginity to each other. We are now engaged, but for the last few years, we have been having a recurring issue. He wants a three-way desperately. He thinks about it all the time, and it seems to come up in almost every conversation we have. I feel that this goes beyond just a fantasy. We used to have a great sex life, but now I feel as if I have to beg for it. He wants this to happen NOW. I think it should just happen naturally if it is going to happen. I don't think there should be any pressure on it. We tried going to a swingers club, met a couple, and fooled around. He started to have sex with the wife, and it was okay. The wife was not interested in me at all, though. I agreed to all of this because I have always been bi-curious, but I never had the opportunity, so needless to say I did not enjoy myself very much during this encounter. My fiancé was not satisfied, though. He still keeps bringing it up. I think it is a deeper feeling that he missed out because we got together so young. I have repeatedly told him I am fine with taking a break so he can go get some other ass before we get married, but he will not listen. I am completely satisfied. We are both happy and love each other. I just constantly have guilt about being the reason he can't have what he wants. Is there anything I can do? Please, help.*

**Not Enough For Him**

When a person says she wants something sexual to happen "naturally," NEFH, what she means is "spontaneously." Three-ways don't happen that way. An opposite-sex couple that wants to have a three-way is gonna have to make an effort, NEFH. You'll have to take out personal ads, go to swingers clubs, and approach trusted friends or exes and carefully broach the subject. (A gay couple that wants to have a three-way? They just have to leave the house. Pretty much.) So your fiancé is right: This won't happen if you don't make it happen. But your fiancé is also being a douche. If three-ways are all he can talk about, and if he's so obsessed with three-ways that he's not interested in two-ways (with you) anymore, then he's consciously or subconsciously sabotaging your relationship. Offer him a deal: So long as he makes the two-ways happen, you'll help make the three-ways happen.

On the Lovecast, Dan and Janet Yassen from RAINN talk about recovering from rape: savagelovecast.com

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