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SAVAGE LOVE **DEVASTATION**
BY DAN SAVAGE

I'm a straight man in a live-in relationship with a beautiful woman. There are no sparks in bed, and it's been more than a year since we've had sex. She says, "I'm sorry, but I'm just not interested." Sometimes she asks me if I'm disappointed, and I say something like "I miss sex." And she says: "Maybe someday. But the important thing is we love each other, right?" Before my last birthday, she asked me what I wanted as a gift. I replied, "A soapy handjob." That would've been the most action I'd had all year. But when my birthday rolled around, all I got was a speech about how she loved me but was not in love with me. My question: In the year 2017, how does a straight man make it clear to the woman he's with that sex is important to him without coming across as threatening? If I told her I'd leave her unless our sex life improved—and I have certainly thought about this—she'd probably "put out" to save our relationship. She has abandonment issues, and I fear she would be devastated if I left her. I only want to have sex with someone who wants to have sex with me, not someone I've coerced. What do I do? I love her, but a sexless relationship isn't what I want or signed up for.
Sexless Over A Perplexing Year

There's being sensitive to coming across as threatening and wanting to avoid even unintentional coercion and being cognizant of the ways women are socialized to defer to men and the ways men are socialized to feel entitled to women's bodies, SOAPY, and then there's being a fucking doormat. She isn't in love with you—*she told you so herself*—and she's never gonna fuck you or soap you up to get you off. If you don't want her putting out to keep you—if you don't want her to fuck you under duress—then don't give her the option. That means ending the relationship, SOAPY, not entering into negotiations about the terms for remaining in the relationship. ("1. Tell me you're in love with me, even if it's a lie. 2. A sad, soapy handjob once a year on my birthday...")

There's nothing unreasonable about wanting a romantic relationship that's both loving and fully sexual, SOAPY, and a man can put his wants on the table without pounding said table with his dick. Your girlfriend's issue may be a mystery—maybe it's her (she's incapable of being in a loving and fully sexual relationship), maybe it's you (you never turned her on or you did something that murdered her libido)—but you're not obligated to stay in an unsatisfactory relationship indefinitely because your girlfriend will be devastated if you leave.

Also, devastation is a two-way street. If you dump her, SOAPY, her devastation will be immediate, like the impact of an earthquake or a hurricane. But if you stay, you'll be the one devastated—but your devastation will be gradual, taking years, like the erosion of coastline or the destruction of our democracy. The destruction of your self-esteem and sense of sexual self-worth could take a decade or more, SOAPY, but it is already under way. She's a lot likelier to get over the devastation she'll feel if you leave—being dumped is a common experience that most people bounce back from—than you are to get over the devastation you'll experience if you stay.

Your gonads/self-respect/preservation instinct are in that apartment somewhere. Get 'em and go.

A man impregnated me about a month into our relationship. He is adamantly against having the kid, as it's too soon. I really don't want to have an abortion—I have religious and moral beliefs against it. He states that since one parent doesn't want the kid, I am wrong for even considering keeping it. Am I wrong? We're both around 30, and this is my first pregnancy. Do I have the right to continue with the pregnancy? I feel like we'd be great parents. He's already left me because I wouldn't make a decision within a week. It's tearing us apart.

Opposing Opinions On Pregnancy Situation

I'm going to sidestep the whole no-abortions-for-religious-and-moral-reasons-but-premarital-sex-is-not-a-problem issue. This pregnancy isn't tearing you apart, OOPS, it *love* you apart. He already ended things—he left you—which was a shitty thing to do, perhaps, but within his rights. It is absolutely within your rights to continue with the pregnancy—it's your body, it's your decision. And while he will be on the hook for this kid financially if you decide to have it, no one can force him to do the work/experience the joy/clean up the vomit that comes with actually fathering this child. I'm sorry you're in this position, and here's hoping you have the love and support you need to raise a kid if you decide to keep the baby, and here's hoping he comes around.

I am a straight woman who just started fucking a hot, younger male coworker. The sexual tension between us was out of control until we stayed late one night and screwed on my desk. Since that night, we've hooked up a few more times. We grope each other in the office daily, as the "fear" of getting caught is a real turn-on for me. The problem—there always is one—is that he has a live-in girlfriend. He told me they are in an open relationship, so being with me isn't cheating. As per their arrangement, he won't tell her about me, but if she finds out, he won't lie. How do I know if he's telling me the truth or if he's saying these things so I'll keep sleeping with him? She comes to work events with him, and I feel guilty because she is sweet and obviously adores him. Also, being coworkers adds another layer of issues. I am a well-liked employee who people consider very professional. He is new to the company and is a bit of a scatterbrain. The sex is amazing in part because he's too immature for me to consider romantically. I'd love to keep seeing him for sex, but I don't want to help him hurt someone else. Can I fuck him guilt free?

Not A Heartbreak Helper

P.S. I've already caught him in some minor lies. For instance, he said one of the rules of the open relationship is no sex in their apartment. Guess where we last fucked?

If the genders were reversed here—if you were an older, more powerful man fucking a "hot, younger" female coworker—I'd have to find you and set you on fire or something. Because even before we get to the is-he-or-isn't-he (in an open relationship) issue, the power imbalance makes this *not okay*. Or it does to some/many/most. But I'm going to let those who object to coworkers fucking—unless both are partners in the firm with equal tenure, power, and salaries—debate that issue in the comments thread while I address the issue you asked me to address: Can you know for sure whether he's practicing ENM, aka "ethical non-monogamy."

Short answer: No, nope, you can't—and the signs don't look good. I was making notes as I read your letter, NAHH, and wrote, "Has he lied to you about anything?" before I got to your postscript. While some couples have DADT agreements—outside sex is allowed, but they "don't ask, don't tell"—the DADT thing makes it hard for their thirds (or fourths or fifths) to verify that the relationship is actually open and they aren't a party to cheating. So you have to trust the person you're fucking—and if they've given you reason not to trust them (like lying about other stuff) and/or demonstrated that they aren't honoring the other rules of their supposedly open relationship (like fucking in the apartment they share), well, then they've demonstrated their fundamental untrustworthiness. Basically, NAHH, if he's lying to her, he's probably lying to you, too.

So you can fuck him—but not without guilt.

On the *Lovecast*, Dan chats with Google powerhouse Blaise Agüera y Arcas: savagelovecast.com.

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