

**FAMILY COUNCIL**

**Norbert T.** - She's all I have, and she has no time for me!  
**Terry T.V.** - He forgets that I have a home and a job to attend to.

**Norbert T.** - I haven't seen my sister for a year. My work keeps me traveling. But when I wrote her, a month ago, that I'd arrive in her town now and be able to stay three weeks, she wrote back that she'd be too busy to spend much time with me. That's a nice reception, I must say, from the only one I have left in the world.

Just because a person is married, she shouldn't crowd out her own flesh and blood. I have married friends I can call on here, but that's not the same. It's funny, though, they have plenty of time to put at my disposal, family and all. It's only Terry whose whole world would fall apart, I guess, if she took a few days off for her brother.

**Terry T.U.** - Has a brother the right to expect his married sister to fill all his family requirements? As a single fellow, Norbert has no idea of the demands made upon me by my husband, my home and my five youngsters. In addition, I'm a piano teacher in our neighborhood music school, and right now I'm in charge of our summer music festival.

When a man hasn't married and has no wife and children to return to, a sister and her family can fill the bill a little. Norbert writes to me or calls me long distance, and I answer. He knows he's always welcome for dinner, or to spend an evening. But I can't give him the 100 per cent attention a family of his own could extend. I love my brother, but my family and my job must come first.

**The Council:** Woe is he who counts on others to "fill" his life. The crux of that statement is "counts on," because it implies desperation. Norbert's whole world oughtn't to be falling apart because his sister has urgent prior commitments. Over 200 years ago the English dramatist, John Gay, wrote out a sentence which can serve as a useful answer to Norbert. "There is no dependence that can be sure," he said in a letter to Jonathan Swift, "except dependence upon one's self."

In the normal course of events a man usually strikes out to create a new family, his own. In clinging to his childhood family, his sister, Norbert cannot expect the same response as he'd be entitled to if he turned to a group he himself had established. For Terry, in turn, has become part of a brave new one herself now and, as she says, her husband and children and household commitments must have first claim on her time and energies. Since she also holds an outside position, her freedom of action is indeed minimal, and Norbert should not add to her pressures by his self-pity and reproaches.

Possibly nothing would please Norbert more than to have Terry still single and at his beck and call for companionship and care. Evidently he hasn't accepted the fact that marriage changes the availability, if not the affection, of one's brothers and sisters.

This doesn't mean, however, that Terry shouldn't move heaven and earth - well, a rehearsal here and a birthday party there - to include Norbert on as many of her appointed rounds as possible during his precious three weeks of being in or near her bailiwick. Who knows but that he'll be a godsend when there are six important errands to perform and only two adults on tap to attempt them? Maybe he'd love being asked whether the Nocturne for Two Pianos should be retained for the concert, or scratched.

Loyalties exert pulls on us all. In order to function effectively, we must "graduate" those pulls in terms of their rightful place in our lives. Norbert must concede the priorities Terry points out to him.

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