

A decorative blue ribbon graphic with white and red stripes, forming a large arch over the title. The ribbon has several loops and ends in bows.

The Crabby Critic

An Archived Article Sampler

SOME KIND OF VERSIMILITUDE

The Story of the Crabby Critic

In the Fall of 1989, Nick Zegarac began writing a localized advice column administered to students as part of the Sheridan College newspaper. The column was entitled 'The Devil's Advocate' and it answered first and second year student's questions about school, dating, living away from home and other timely issues facing the novice academic.

When Nick decided to leave Sheridan to attend the University of Windsor in 1991 and pursue his degree in creative writing, he approached the university's paper, as well as their Rampike Magazine with the prospect of continuing his advice column on campus. The idea was promptly rejected.

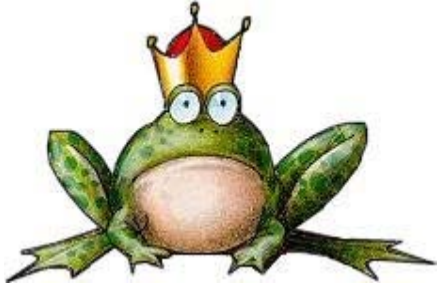
However, having perused some of Nick's old clippings from Sheridan, one of Nick's professors suggested that perhaps he start an 'advice blog' and advertise it using the campus free bulletin boards as his marketing tool.

From that suggestion Nick developed 'The Quotable Me' an online version of 'The Devil's Advocate' that debuted in 2001. Nick assumed the mantle of 'The Crabby Critic' — doling out frank, no-nonsense critiques and opinions to his fellow classmates and those he had never met.

However, an interesting development occurred shortly thereafter. Since the blog version required no formal online registration to participate, Nick began receiving emails from all over the country and later — the world; adult and teen alike, asking for his opinion on a variety of personal topics, current events and world issues.

To date, 'The Quotable Me' has received 6,726 emails asking for Nick's advice. While the content of some inquiries has made them virtually unprintable, most requests receive Nick's immediate attention and appear regularly on that blog — a non-profit web page for anyone who doesn't mind hearing the truth according to Nick.

The sample articles presented in this compilation have been chosen for diversity of topics and do not necessarily reflect either the layout or the chronology in which they appeared online. All are registered to Nick Zegarac: The Quotable Me @2001-2008 (all rights reserved).



Dear Crabby:

I'm getting pretty sick and tired of my boyfriend's lack of interest in my problems. Whenever we go shopping together and I try to get him to give me an answer about what I should buy, you know, color, style – yada, yada, yada – he just says 'I don't know. Whatever you want.' Yesterday I asked him if he thought I was getting too heavy. I've put on fifteen pounds in the last year, and he just shrugged his shoulders and said, 'I don't know. No.' Like, what is that? How do I get him to be more responsive?

Giselle in Naples

Dear Hurricane Waiting To Happen:

I'll bet your boyfriend's pretty sick of you too, getting on his case every time he doesn't give you the answer he thinks you want to hear. Let me give you a few clues.

Clue #1: Some men start out with definite opinions in a relationship and others just go with the flow. Sounds to me like you're lucked out with guy #2. He gives you an answer. I'll grant you that it's not a very decisive one, but it's still an answer and you should be happy with it or you'll wind up making the two of you miserable as I suspect you already have.

Clue #2: A man is not like a house that you buy in the low rent district with visions of fixing it up into your kind of place. He comes with a set of thoughts and ideas, perceptions and personal interests already pre-programmed and built in long before you took him off the market. You came with a set of these principles yourself! It's just that you suddenly realized the two sets – yours and his – are not quite compatible.

I get a lot of letters from women who want to change their guy. Bad idea. It doesn't work. He won't change any more than you will. He shouldn't have to, either!

Clue #3: The perfect person doesn't exist. The right mate for anyone is the person stepping onto that same level of inarticulacy as you. No one will ever be an exact match. So, you find that person who meets most of your main criteria.

What are the main criteria?

I always say that young couples in lust need to have a basic chat about the following fundamentals – preferable before they've slept together, because it alleviates a lot of heartache later on.

Topics open for discussion include (1) kids – when and how many, (2) career plans – if you want a corporate CEO and he's happy just being the garbage man it won't work, (3) sexual frequency, habits and fantasies – you want it once a year and missionary; he needs it twice daily in every position but, and in between trolling the net for lesbian porn (4) place of residence – you want to move to a California bungalow near the beach and he's more at home wearing a parka in some remote outpost in Alaska, and finally (5) hobbies.

This last one often gets overlooked but it says a lot about the guy or gal you've become attached to. It also creates a lot of problems for gals when they discover that their man's a sports freak who blocks whole seasons to indulge in his arm chair viewing while she would rather be ballroom dancing, hiking, having a Cosmo on a beach in the south of France...you get my point.

And **YES** – *I am deadly serious about these criteria.* For the most part, I find that woman just settle

for the guy they're with – problem areas and all – then, spend a good portion of their courtship and/or marriage attempting to uproot all of their guy's trademarks because they suddenly realized they can't live with the boy in their bedroom as is.

Why do women do this? **Well, in short, the guy is hot and he's rocked her world.**

Why do men put up with it? **Well, in short, the gal is hot and she's rocked his world.**

Hey, guess what? You two have something in common!

Clue #4: Finally, stop dragging your beau around mall trips to the ladies department and asking him loaded questions like 'are you fat?' and expecting an honest answer or any answer for that matter. I suspect that radical sixties feminism – that old 'you can have your cake and eat it too' mentality - is to blame for this currency of women who expect that their mates should be joined at their hip at all times.

WRONG!

If you're shopping for clothes with a man just take it as a given that he would rather be looking at power tools, lawn furniture or DVD players than comparing pink chiffon to chantilly lace. **That doesn't make him insensitive or a moron!**

After all, you probably don't care for any of the aforementioned items I just listed that would leave your guy salivating hours on end at the Home Depot or Best Buy.

You want to shop for a new dress and heels? – take your sister, mother, girlfriend(s) with you. You'll have a better time and so will your guy...doing whatever he wants to do without you nagging him.

So, after all that – the short answer to your question is 'you can't get your guy to be something more than what he is.' **He is who he is;** *not a house that just needs a new coat of paint and some shutters and certainly NOT your pet that needs to be house trained!*

Yours truly
The Crabby Critic



Dear Crabby:

I want to get married – desperately! The problem that I have is that I always seem to attract the wrong sort of guy. I think they're normal when I first meet them. Then something happens and I lose interest. What's wrong with me?

Rachel in Nevada

Dear Arid Romantic:

I don't think you're as desperate as you've made yourself sound. Desperation usually breeds conflict and resolution – especially in women looking for **Mr. Right**. Even if you don't find him, you do the prowling, pick a guy who represents 'second best' or a 'compromise' and then find a way to make it work because that ring finger is just too, too bare.

In your case, you've a discerning nature.

You're picky!

That's a good thing, so long as you don't get carried away. Like, if you meet a man and he's literally perfect for you in all respects, except that he scratches his left arm pit from time to time and in public...that's not a deal breaker. You have to be accepting and move on. I don't think that's your problem.

I also think you'll eventually find love. But don't lower your standards to do so. There's nothing more attractive to a man than a woman who knows her own mind. It takes the onus off him for having to second guess every little picky detail and answer a litany of stupid questions that really don't involve or engage him in any way.

Want my advice? If you haven't found Mr. Right in the places you've been looking – make a change of venue to someplace you may not have even considered. For example: if you want a devote Christian who's religious and church going, my best advice is that you don the white gloves and Easter bonnet and hit the holy roller's club.

If you are the athletic type who, say, loves to cycle, why not join a local racing club or hang out with a girlfriend at the local gym where athletic guys are likely to be out in full flourish fleece and muscle tees?

Think of your search for **Mr. R** in the same vane as mailing out your résumé. Example: if you wanted a job as a marketing research assistant with a major design house you wouldn't go around submitting your credentials to McDonalds and expect that they'd call you in to help pick out fabrics for the next restaurant they were opening.

I find that a lot of singles who 'desperately' want to marry think that just by showing up in a public venue it will guarantee their success in procuring a mate who shares their interests and moral ideals.

Big mistake!

Choice of venue is just as important. Give it some thought. Think seriously about what you want – then go out and get it. It's that simple.

*Yours truly,
The Crabby Critic*



Dear Crabby:

Okay, this is going to sound ridiculous but it's true. I was at a family picnic three weeks ago. When my mother-in-law – a devote Catholic – asked if I'd like another one of her sister's homemade donuts I made the off kilter remark, "**Oh, I'd sell my soul to the devil for another one of those.**"

I meant it as a compliment. The donuts were fantastic. My mother-in-law quietly went to the table, brought back the tray of donuts to where I was and simply patted me on the back before returning to the party.

Since then the woman won't speak to me. We used to talk two or three times a week on the phone before. Now I find out that she told my husband, her son, that

perhaps my faith – or lack thereof - is the reason that we haven't been able to conceive a child as yet and that perhaps he might want to consider having children with someone else. I mean, honestly – all this over a donut!?!?

Becky in Woodland Park, Colorado

Dear Tactless Head-Spinner:

On the surface, I'll admit that to bring up the evil one in conversation to a highly religious woman seems a bit of a **'well, duh!'** moment to me. I mean, it wasn't like you just found out yesterday that your mother-in-law took the Bible and her faith very seriously.

But I'll also reserve the right to suggest herein that mama doesn't sound quite as stable as she pretends to be if a little light banter about pitchforks and brimstone is enough to convince her that you're the demon's seed.

You made a mistake!

Perhaps it was tactless and stupid on your part – in point of fact, it was! But it doesn't mean that you're going to start burning live children and house pets in the front yard any time soon.

If you want to smooth this over as quickly as possible, my advice to you is to have your husband bring his mother over to your house for a very heartfelt apology on your part – something so utterly sincere that his mother will instantly see the light, retract her statements, and also be able to have good cause to suspect that the same afterglow of religious fervor is still very much a hallmark of your own spiritual makeup.

Be legit. I don't think the damage to your relationship is irreversible, but it will take some considerable pussyfooting on your part to get things back on track.

And the next time you feel the sudden need to stupidly bring up Satan in mixed conversation, my advice is that you take a wafer and big swig of communal wine and then go to sleep: **pray for brains.**

***Yours truly,
The Crabby Critic***

Dear Crabby:

I lost my brother to cancer last year and since then my life doesn't seem to have meaning anymore. It isn't that we were two confirmed bachelors, lived together and did practically everything together, but we were also twins. Our parents died when we were very young and we never separated throughout the years. There were girlfriends and such but in the final analysis we decided never to part from one another until my brother became ill last fall.

I moved into the hospital with him for his care but now that he's gone I just can't seem to move on. I don't know what to do or where to go. Everything just seems utterly pointless. Please, if you can – help me.

Darryl M. in Lavel Quebec



Dear Loyal Sibling and Caregiver:

You've been looking out for your brother for so long that in his absence it seems there's nothing left for you to do. The good news, Darryl is that it just 'seems' that way.

It's time's like these I wish I had that magic pill or wand or quick reboot so I could just restart the world anew with fresh thoughts. Unfortunately, the 'power invested in me' has its limits. While I can't make you forget the pain you're feeling

right now, perhaps there are a few steps I could suggest to soften the sting of regret that's so persistent in your life at this moment in time. I want to point out that these steps aren't 'cure alls' – they won't numb the feelings you're feeling. But they might change your outlook on the remaining years of your life.

Step One: find some **new hobbies** to occupy your free time. You said you and your twin did everything together and I suspect that when you do those same activities now – or even think about doing them for that matter – all of the old sorrows over your loss come rushing back like a tidal wave.

My advice would be that you do something that's out of character – something you and your brother never tried. It could be something as simple as visiting a new bistro in the neighborhood or reading a book you never thought would interest you before. Or it could be something as drastic as taking a vacation to some part of the world that you always wanted to visit but your brother had absolutely no interest in.

Whatever the change is – change, in and of itself, is generally positive in spirit. You wouldn't be making these changes to spite your brother's memory. You would be doing it to jump start some new memories for the sake of your own sanity.

Step Two: get in touch with old friends – or better still – start making some new ones. They can be male or female; platonic or romantic. But test the waters. See what's out there. **Afford yourself the luxury of companionship without feeling guilty that you're having a good time with someone who isn't your brother.**

Step Three:

get a pet. I recommend a dog. Dog's need people, unlike cats who just want their food and fresh water and then hope that you'll round out your generosity by buzzing off.

A dog is a great companion. No matter what sort of day you've had, when you come home those loveable mutts are waiting for you – tails wagging – looking soulfully into your eyes with 'I love you' written all over their furry facades. Also, dogs are fairly intuitive. If you're going through a rough spot, a dog can sense it and will try to be near you to 'make things right.'

Step Four:

Force yourself to do stuff. I don't mean just necessities like grocery shopping or gassing up the car. I want you to plan at least one major outing for every week. I don't care what it is; going to the movies, jogging along the waterfront, signing up for a fitness club, playing tennis, jogging, cycling, hiking, barbecuing with friends in the backyard.

I'll pilfer from Nike's ad campaign here – I just want you to 'do it!'

No excuses. If you decided today to go for a walk tomorrow but wake up the next morning and discover that it's raining, then (save the fact that it's not a twister or hurricane) I want you to pack an umbrella and **GO** for that walk!

I remember someone telling me that activity merely suggests a life filled with purpose. I would strongly disagree. Activity is purpose. You get in the zone of whatever it is you're doing and the action becomes a part of your emotional psyche. You feel better doing something that makes you physically productive. So, don't just sit there staring at the same four walls you remember staring at with your brother. Get out of your shell and your former self. Do it. For yourself and because if you're brother were here he'd probably be telling you the same thing.

Finally: **Step Five:** I want you to do something nice for someone else. Make it a spontaneous selfless act. Nothing grand. If you know someone who's going through a rough patch like yourself – send them flowers or a singing telegram or a new picture for their office or house. Do it without expecting anything in return – even a phone call. Just put yourself in the other person's place and become actively involved in what's going on in somebody else's life for that moment and see where the inspiration for being charitable will lead. Guaranteed – it won't lead to boredom or regret.

Above all else, Darryl: losing a loved one is never easy.

No kidding.

It also takes time to massage the emotional wounds to a point where our pain is merely residual rather than all encompassing. I don't pretend to have the Band-Aid to your problem. But I do know that the more you function as an active participant in the world outside of your own existence, the more likely you are to rediscover that the world at large has a lot more to offer you than the relationship you lost with your brother.

It isn't that the relationship with your brother wasn't important. It was. But it's served its' purpose and it's over. Rediscovering a purpose to take its' place is the task set before you now. Embrace it with all the time and personal investment you had in the relationship with your brother and I will guarantee that you won't be disappointed with your results.

Remember, all truly great days begin with a challenge.

***Yours truly,
The Crabby Critic***



Dear Crabby:

What are your thoughts on professional bodybuilding? I only ask because I have a nephew who's just turned 16 and is absolutely obsessed with the sport. He has a part time job after school and spends his money mostly on fitness magazines that have all these pictures of gargantuan men who look like something out of a comic book.

His mother and I worry about the dark side of things – eg. steroids and so on. But my nephew wants a weight set for his birthday. Any advice you can offer would be appreciated.

Doris in Manatoba

Dear Dumbbell Trouble:

You've asked two separate questions; the first regarding what is laughingly considered 'pro' and a 'sport'; the second – an inquiry about becoming physically fit. So, permit me to answer these polar opposite concerns in turn, with the disclaimer that I, of course, am not a physician.

First, pro-bodybuilding – whether it's circa 1970s in the good ol' **Arnold Schwarzenegger** days or today – has always been a relatively crude competition exclusively marketed and at the mercy of illegal drug abuse. Not that you can convince any pro-bodybuilder of it – especially when they're peaking during their pre-competition phase. No, then some hulking 300lb. brute will have no shame in going before a television camera with biceps the size of most men's thighs and declare that he built such extraordinary girth through vitamin supplementation, healthy eating and sheer will power. To admit otherwise would force any competitor out of competition.

The hypocrisy within the 'sport' is that no one minds what you're doing as long as you don't talk about it. Yet, year after year we see a healthy sampling of these 'unhealthy professionals' succumb to a barrage of ailments and even death, while still in their late twenties and early thirties.

So, does every bodybuilder on steroids die early of a side effect? No, just as not every chronic alcoholic will die of liver disease or a car wreck. However, most juicing it up will experience some sort of unwanted physical negation.

For every physician who goes on record claiming steroid abuse provided the catalyst for these illnesses there are two or three others – usually funded by some pharmaceutical company exploiting young impressionable men as their guinea pigs – who will suggest that any illness, whatever it may be, was destined to happen to the individual in question with or without steroids filtered into the equation.

To be clear – steroids are an accelerant, nothing more. They **DO NOT** actually build muscle! You still have to pick up the weights and do that for yourself. What steroids do is alter the body's natural chemistry in such a way so that its growth hormone (testosterone) levels are thrown entirely out of whack.

The surge of false energy that follows convinces the mind that the body is stronger than it actually is and, as a result, a man on steroids can lift more weight, harder and for longer periods of time, so that the body is thrown into maximum overdrive 24/7.

With that much physical abuse, the body is forced into a growth spurt cycle that never ends. An average man can pack on twenty to forty pounds of lean mass in several months. Doubling doses and 'cycling' doses – from one drug to the next – can maximize the intake period of these drugs into a perpetual assault of oral and needle injected drug abuse that never allows the body a pause in which to fully recover.

There are all sorts of different steroids. Not all of them do the same thing. Some help build mass – which, at some level involves water retention - while others support a 'cutting phase' where the body becomes excessively dehydrated, giving the illusion that the muscles are larger and tighter than they are since all of the liquid between them and the surface skin has been urinated or sweated from the body.

The problem with all steroids is that they accelerate not only the external appearance of the body but also its internal workings. Heart rate and blood pressure rise and the aging processes wear out such vital organs as the heart, liver, lungs and kidneys.

Worse, steroids often force the body's natural production of testosterone into remission – which means that once you get off these drugs you don't simply atrophy (shrink) to the size you were before you started your cycle, but you reduce to a level of functioning that is less than what your former self was capable of.

I understand perfectly why your nephew is 'obsessed' with the 'sport'. Outwardly, most of today's bodybuilders have adopted the freakish physical appearance of super heroes like the Incredible Hulk. That's a powerful and intoxicating image to aspire to; the envy of other men and the ideal for some women. After all, when you're a boy and you desperately want to be a man, why be average when super human is within reach?

For centuries, artists of human anatomy have had a curious predilection for extolling the virtues of an overtly muscular male form: Michelangelo's statue of David and his painting of the very chiseled hand of God touching a rock solid naked man's being but two prime examples.

You would do wise to point out to your nephew – or, more ideally have some male figure illustrate the point for you – that the irony of bodybuilding on steroids is that it makes you look as though you could uproot an entire tree and carry it over one shoulder like a match stick, but in actuality these drugs have a weakening effect on virtually all normal functions of the body – including physical strength. Bodybuilders on steroids are frequently prone to bouts of lethargy, physical exhaustion and mental blackouts and these symptoms only increase as the drug abuse wears on.

What I find quite serious and rather disturbing about young boys who want to become professional bodybuilders today is how warped their perspective on self body image actually is. This rarely gets discussed, but boys who desire that extreme bizarre shape of a pro bodybuilder are, at least in my opinion, suffering from a similar malaise that afflicts teen girls who never seem to get thin enough to suit their own diluted image of physical perfection a la the super model/anorexia syndrome.

For these boys, an average or even slightly above average male physique doesn't seem to be normal. It isn't enough to have a washboard stomach. The abdominals must be protruding from the midsection like a six pack of hearty English muffins tightly packed in a breakfast tin. Biceps are not big enough unless every vein is thick and popping around a mass of flesh the size of a football. The chest must be so bulbous that nipples are pointing downward from the swollen muscle. Thighs must be so broad that it is physically impossible to put one's legs together without both calf muscles touching.

And even if this disproportionate physique is attained, the goal of being bigger than big is never quite reached to full satisfaction. There are too many reasons to list herein as to why super huge is a big bad idea. Suffice it to state for the record that personal mobility, finding clothes that actually fit and frequent outbreaks of surface acne fall to the bottom of the list of negatives when one is facing drug induced leukemia or a malignant brain tumor.

Finally, steroids – though readily available in every venue from the high school gym to the local health club – are against the law! Possession as well as selling can net some hefty jail time. And anyway – since we all know it is virtually impossible to have a twenty inch waist and sixty-two inch chest at the same time without artificial help is there really any point in being proud of any achievement that is not entirely yours to take credit for?

As per part two of your initial question, my advice is quite simple and infinitely shorter to digest: buy your nephew his weight set. **WHAT!?!?** Why not? There's nothing wrong with getting into peak physical condition the old-fashioned way; through hard work, eating properly and exercising regularly. Resistance training with weights will give your nephew a different body than the one he has now and one he can look in the mirror at without feeling guilty.

Bottom line: you can't fast track your way to a better body! Slow and steady wins the race every time. If your nephew doubts this old adage, tell him that it took sixteen years – from birth to 16 – to properly develop him into his current physical condition.

Yours truly
The Crabby Critic



Dear Crabby:

I just realized that my seventeen year old daughter has a sizeable tattoo of a dove on her back, just above her tail bone. The only reason I saw it was that I just happened to be in the laundry room where she was hunched into the dryer to get some of her clothes. She had low rise jeans (at least I think that's what they are) and a short top that separated as she bent into the dryer.

Anyway, I'm shocked that she didn't tell her father or me about it. I didn't say anything to my daughter about the tattoo, just pretended like it wasn't there or that I didn't see it. My concern now is if she won't talk to me about a tattoo what else is she keeping secret?

Debbie, Sevier Arkansas

Dear Worried About Nothing':

What else, indeed?

Now, before you dive off the deep end of parental paranoia and start envisioning drug induced ménage à trois with your daughter as the fluff and tango girl, let's bring this 'discovery' down to size.

It's just a tattoo – and of a dove, of all things! If your daughter had come to you and said, **“Hey, I'm getting a tattoo,”** would you have said, **“You go, girl!”** and **“let me drop you at the parlor”** or would you have been one of these irate straight-laced prigs who equates a tattoo with hitting bongos and riding gunshot on a Harley Davidson with some three hundred pound hog named 'Biff'? Much as I hate tattoos for myself – but can appreciate them on somebody else - I cannot argue with the fact that a goodly percentage of the population enjoys adding 'body art' to their frames.

Aside: My predilection for a tattoo-free zone on my carcass stems from an innate and general fear of needles, as well as from the realization that if I live long enough I'm going to be the goofy looking old saggy guy with a skull and crossbones wrinkled up on that giggly lump that used to be a bicep. Remember, what looks sexy at 20 rarely gives off the same vibe at 85!

Breathe easier, Deb'. I don't think a dove on your daughter's backside means she's going to start turning tricks for the legislature anytime soon in a free-lovin' retro-hippie sort of way...although, in Bill Clinton's former state anything's possible.

Now, if you're curious as to whom other than you, will be able to see that tattoo in such an obscure location – then, perhaps that's a conversation you and your daughter ought to have about boys, sex and such. Arguably, any tattoo near one's butt crack hasn't been put there for the pleasure of the person wearing it.

***Yours truly,
The Crabby Critic***



Dear Crabby:

My mom and dad are getting divorced I think. I mean they've been arguing for a couple of weeks about some woman my dad took to a restaurant last week that my mom says she didn't know about but found out because my Aunt Sylvia was there and saw them. I don't know much more because when things start getting spacey my mom tells me to go to my room. But they shout a lot at each other and my dad usually slams the door and goes out for a long time. I'm scared. What should I do?

Stacey in Alamosa, Colorado

Dear Tender Lonely Heart:

How I wish there were times when I could wipe out all adult stupidity some people subject their children to. From what you've told me, Stacey, I think it's safe to assume that your father and the woman he took to the restaurant are more than just friends.

What can I say?

Just because some people are fully grown on the outside doesn't mean that they're necessarily mature enough to handle adult responsibilities.

There are a few things I'd like you to know. First, you're not to blame for anything that's happening between your mom or dad. They both love you just as much as they did before all of this unhappiness. So, **you shouldn't feel guilty** – as though you think you might have done something wrong, or could have fixed things by changing something you did in the past. This situation – whatever it may be – has absolutely **nothing** to do with you.

Second, although it may seem as though one or both of your parents might be the 'bad guy' in what's going on, I want you to keep an open mind. You're young and, as strange as this may seem, one or both of your parents might start to rely on you for support. That's okay.

However, you have every right and expectation not to be used as a go-between your mother and father. If one or the other or both starts telling you stuff – bad stuff, I mean – in the hopes that you'll like one parent more than the other, you should just tell that parent that **"I really don't need to know this,"** and then quietly walk away. I'm not suggesting that either your mom or dad is bad people. However, in getting back at one another, parents often forget that they hurt the one person who is a part of them both.

That's you!

Third, I want you to find the very best friend or family member that you can trust. You know; someone who really thinks your good people and loves you just as much as you love yourself – **which is a lot, right?**

You have to be comfortable enough with this person to tell them everything that's going on at home with the understanding that they won't turn around and tell everyone else your story. Only tell this one person what you know and what you're feeling. Then I want you to stay close to this person and rely on them when things get too crazy for you at home.

You're going to be alright, Stacey.

I know it doesn't seem so just now, but you're going to have to take my word for it. Life will get better and so will you. Remember to smile, keep positive and always think the best of yourself. Confidence will see you through. And, if you ever need someone to talk too and no one else is around, at least you know you can write to me here and I'll listen with an open mind and an understanding heart.

Thinking of you even as you read this with good thoughts and prayers.

*Yours truly,
The Crabby Critic*

Dear Crabby:

What type of a man are you?

- Sarah in Texas



Dear Curious About Me:

I don't believe in 'types.' No two humans are alike – not even 'identical' twins. But I'm glad you asked the question. Let's see if I can answer it for you.

Now, for those who regularly read me, the following will come as no surprise – at least I hope.

**I am NOT a communist.
I am NOT a Nazi sympathizer.**

I choose to believe that **George W. Bush** is **NOT** an idiot; that **Michael Moore** perhaps is, and that **Bill Clinton** should not be giving public access on co-ed university campuses. After all, the temptation for **Monica II – the revenge** – is just too great and that's not what anyone's daughter's tuition is for.

Just so we're all squared up and on the same page; my personal manifesto is as follows: I am **against** whacking baby seals for their fur. As far as the rest of the animal kingdom goes – I believe that every living thing should have its place on this planet. A chicken looks pretty damn good in my oven. I also love my leather jacket and couch.

I am in favor of every country living in peace, even though I realize some countries never will.

I believe that there is too much bloodshed in the world – all of it utterly pointless. I pray for the living and remember the dead. But I put away my childish fancies for global solidarity when I turned eleven, because it was just around that time I accepted that some things will never change.

I appreciate sunsets, cauliflower and the satisfaction of a hearty sweat after a healthy workout.

I am a sun worshipper even though I recognize at some subliminal level that it isn't the healthiest of pursuits. I don't go out and bake extra crispy for hours on end. I simply enjoy exposing my skin here and there to the soothing warmth of the sun. Aside: for those who will continue their personal attack on my

work after this, please forgo the skin cancer death wish emails. They're not original.

I am **against** thong underwear being sold to anyone, but particularly pre-teens, because no child should be subjected to adult stupidity so long as their genitalia are matured beyond their intelligence. I feel the same way about some adults too.

I prefer the quiet comfort of a small troop of loyal friends to a flashy flock of fair-weatherers who generally don't know and don't care about me, but will show up regularly to eat my food.

I am usually a private person although, on occasion, I open the Ali Baba cave of secrets to inquisitors who have proven that they can keep them. Sometimes I go out to dinner or the movies with friends. And sometimes I go alone. The former is infinitely preferred but I go either way.

I once contemplated being an animator for the **Walt Disney Company**. But considering what **Michael Eisner** has done, overall I am rather glad that I decided to stay home and wash my hair instead.

I don't think anyone's prior private sexual history should be made public – **EVER**. Although, I have to confess, that if everyone retained those boundaries of general decency and decorum I would not have anything to write about in this column.

While we're on the subject of sex – it's overrated. It doesn't last nearly as long as most men brag to their friends. A man that can go for fifteen minutes is gifted. A man that can go all night is a power tool. Enough said. I believe in tact and humility. Honesty is my hallmark although, I confess, I've told more than a few half truths that didn't pay off.

Oh well, nobody's perfect.

Self improvement is more a valid claim for me than perfection. On that note then, I've come a long way. If I knew then what I know now, I would have told a lot more people to **go to hell** and allowed a lot less of them to be relieved on my good nature. I have never backed down from a challenge, but fighting is just a colossal waste of energy and time.

I consider myself fair and opinionated. I am proud of both those characteristics.

If I could describe the ideal mate, she would have to be more interested in me than in herself, and more interested in the concept of 'us' as a couple than in 'me.' To this equation I would accept her unconditional love, assume at least half her responsibilities and reciprocate all of her respect.

I do not support and have never supported terrorism. I'm not a terrorist either.

I don't believe that being gay is "a handicap" anymore than I believe Anne Heche really thought she was a lesbian. This is in response to some fellow in Florida who thinks I'm homophobic, although I must confess, after going over this column with the proverbial fine tooth I just don't see how that assessment was formulated.

Said critic from Florida also explained in the email – in great detail – just how many ways and positions he would employ in his attempt to expand my mind – other appendages optional. Thanks, friend - but everyone is entitled to their own sexual preference. Mine differs from yours.

To the young lady from Fresno who thinks I need a two by four across the back of my head I say, why waste a good piece of lumber.

To the liberal gent from England who thought my mind needed expanding, I believe your underwear is on too tight.

Ill-fitting undergarments have been the cause of more wars than we may ever know. Crusades, anyone?

To my friends – to whom your inclusion in this batch of quips seems to debase your loyalty, kindness and sincerity throughout the years – **God bless you** for taking the time to get to know me as a person. I could have done it all without you, but the journey would not have been nearly as memorable, poignant or fun.

Alas and finally, to my detractors, those who will continue to believe the worst about me, I hope that I have at least provided an arsenal of facts to add to your insults. I state for the record one final truth; that everyone is entitled to an opinion – however unworthy you believe mine to be.

You'll have to forgive if I smile, but I don't give a damn about yours.

***Yours truly,
The crabby critic***



Dear Crabby:

I have a friend that wants to have her teeth removed to be more attractive to men. What do you think?

- ***Snaggles***

Dear 'Snaggles':

Yeah, toothless chicks rate real sexy on my list.

Right up there with ones covered in warts, flaky patches of psoriasis and four letter tattoos. Well...there's no accounting for taste. Especially if you have none!

Do you mean that she wants her ugly teeth capped and/or corrected? I suppose that's alright. Oral surgery has helped many a buck-toothed babe and porn star assuage the ol' French whore look for some glamorous pearly whites. Aside: a porn star with perfect teeth is still a porn star!

But I would advise your friend of the following: if she's changing her appearance for any man or men in general, then she'd do better to take all her hard earned cash and blow it on some nice vacation to a tropical paradise instead.

Any guy who would say something like ***"Hey babe, I like you, but yank out that bicuspid to swear your love"*** isn't worth having around.

A guy like that is hardly Prince Charming. Tell him to give his molar (and other appendages, if he should so desire) a hearty yank to see how he likes it. Then tell him he has halitosis.

***Yours truly,
The crabby critic***



Dear Crabby:

I have two friends, each married to someone else. They are planning to have an affair. The thing is she's old enough to be his mother. What should I do?

- *anonymous*

Dear Nazi Sex Inspector:

Set up a lawn chair and get comfy for World War III. Oh, and **STAY OUT OF IT!!!** Nobody asked you to vacate your own private **Shangri-La** and move into **Peyton Place**.

Both of your friends disgust me. Anyone who cheats has that same effect on me, I'm afraid. No sympathy afforded there! But the bottom line is you're a bystander. I don't know how you come by this info about their pending affair. Are you a busybody?

But let us just assume, for the sake of argument, that one or both individuals in contemplation of this affair thought little enough of you as a friend to invite you into their looming badinage. What are they expecting you to do with this information?

If the answer is nothing, why tell you? Perhaps they're testing the integrity of your – ahem...*loyalty* to them on this subject. Will you go and tell their respective spouses that the hobby horse is being ridden by proxy at another stable, or will you just stand by and let the manure pile up where it may? Either way, **it's none of your concern.**

A lot of times people contemplate getting involved in situations which do not concern them directly. This scenario would be entirely different if, for example, you were out shopping one afternoon and saw the two of them groping one another like a pair of sweaty farm animals in heat in the parking lot.

If you were a good friend of one or both of their respective spouses, and, depending on the depth of that loyalty, you might have chosen to tell the innocent spouse in either equation that their significant other was an amoral stooge. But since the two perpetrators are the ones sharing their infidelities with you – I say, let everyone find out for themselves what's in store after the condom comes off.

By the way – your reference to the whole May/December slant of the affair is a benign issue. It has absolutely nothing to do with the fact that having the affair in the first place is just plain **WRONG, WRONG, WRONG!**

You want to know how this will play out: he'll get tired of her before she does of him. He'll either keep his wife as a sideline or lie to her until the illicit tart he's bouncing gets pregnant or resentful at the fact that he's not exactly chopping off his wife's finger to slip the wedding band on hers.

If you still feel you should do something for these two morons, my advice is to run out to the closest Blockbuster Video and buy them each a copy of **Fatal Attraction** and **Unfaithful**. Then wish them both 'good luck'. If you've seen either film, you know that they're both going to need just such an intervention very, very soon.

*Yours truly,
The crabby critic*



Dear Crabby:

How do you know when it's time to end a friendship?

- Jessica

Well, Jessica:

The short answer is – when the friend in question becomes disloyal, for whatever reason. I fly on the side of personal integrity. Some people have it. Some don't. But anyone who would cross your path, especially after taking the time to set up a relationship based in trust, mutual respect and good faith is clearly **NOT YOUR FRIEND**.

And it doesn't matter how remorseful after the fact that person may become once they find out that you've found out about them. That's no consolation. They would have kept being disloyal if you were either naïve or dumb enough to keep them on as a confidant.

Life is too short to waste it on people who don't give a damn about you! Both of your 'friends' have proven that adage.

Fair-weather friends come in flocks, but the genuine pure of heart are as rare to discover and keep as finding uranium ore in one's underpants.

*Yours truly,
The Crabby Critic*



Dear Crabby:

Do you think most people find religion because they want too or because they have to?

Maxim in Sweetwater, Texas

Dear Maxim:

That's a very thoughtfully put question. Permit me to speculate.

Organized religion has at once been the most unifying and disruptive force in the history of the world. Fanatics from **Richard III** to **Pat Robertson** feel that **God** is an omnipotent force that will strike us down if we dare step just two Psalms away from the good book. Somebody should remind **Mr. Robertson** that many today are doing a two step on the Bible and seem to be getting away with it.

That isn't to suggest that I think we should all just have ourselves a Bible bonfire and forget about the 'Big Guy upstairs. But it does seem to me that organized religion today is largely a product of man-made

cultism. Virtually every Papal appointment and dear old King James have put their two cents into 'revisions' along the way – updating the scriptures to their own likes, which may or may not necessarily have been the way the original authors intended.

I think most people today want to believe in a higher power – although they don't necessarily think He (or She, for those thinking me a sexist) is watching all the time or perhaps even cares about what's going on down here – except to shake and bow his head occasionally in great regret over ever putting 'man' in charge of the planet.

Oh well, we all make mistakes.

I'm hardly what you would call a religious man. But from time to time I do contemplate the bigger questions. From that broad level of interpretation (and you may take it with whatever quantity of salt you feel it may require) I tend to look upon the crucifixion as the divining moment between God and man.

Hence, when people say **“oh why is the world like this?”** or **“how could God let innocent people die?”** of whatever ailment or natural disaster befalls us, I simply reserve the right to say to those people sitting in judgment of God, **“Well, what did you expect? We (meaning the human race) murdered his son.”**

Although I don't believe that God is vengeful – I also don't think He's a doormat. Lessons need to be taught. If they're taught by omission...well, they're taught, nevertheless.

I also tend to get miffed at people who treat God as though he were some secular proprietor of wish fulfillment – like a genie or the tooth fairy. To those disinterested parties who only think of what God can do for them, or believe that God should be on 'prayer speed dial' whenever we decide it's time to give him a buzz, I suggest the old adage: *“God helps those who help themselves.”* And anyway, nowhere in the Bible does it say that He's obligated to fix everything we've screwed up.

I do find that most people turn religion inward, however – amplifying it to suit their own agenda. Churches employ it to fill collection plates. Politicians think they'll win votes with the growing liberal wing nut faction by snubbing it. And we've all probably shouted **“oh, God”** out loud while in the throws of passion at one point or another – hardly the purpose for which the phrase was coined.

If anything then – it's a wonder God doesn't strike more of us down than he has. Perhaps, he understands the inevitable – that we're taking care of ourselves faster than Mother Nature ever could. We are – after all – a mildly idiotic species if you think about it.

We kill animals for sport; murder each other for greed or profit; we cultivate jealousies against people who don't deserve them; we hear and believe lies practically every time the cable channel is turned to C-Span; we place our faith and trust in false prophets and we continue to use the Sabbath for cutting the lawn, shopping at Costco or working that extra shift for a little bit of extra overtime.

Do I think most people find religion because they want to? Sadly, I believe the answer is **NO**. God is an afterthought for most – something to turn to when all earthly means fail us. Do I believe God would cure everything down here if he could?

I think if we were to collectively get down on our knees and ask him to perform such a miracle, he'd simply reply, **“What for?”** And, of course he would be justified. We'd only mess things up again if we started from square one. Didn't Eden already prove that fallibility?

To agnostics: those who think that my speculation in these last few paragraphs have been a colossal waste of time and space because God does not exist (*though at least half of these same spiritual nay sayers probably believe in aliens and ghosts – now there's human logic for you!*) I simply will conclude with the following:

**To those who believe - no explanation is necessary.
To those who do not - none will suffice.**

Thank you for your question, Maxim. It's given us all something to think about.

***Yours truly
The crabby Critic***



Dear Crabby:

My name's Bernice. My boyfriend Tom is way too into his car. He's always cleaning it, fixing it or driving it somewhere. I want him to spend more time with me. I'm better than a car. I hate that stupid car! I want to tell him to sell it or else. What do you think?

Dear 'Burn-ice':

What can I say? Your boyfriend undoubtedly prefers the smoother of the two rides. If you give him an ultimatum it'll be your butt that goes for the trade-in - not his car.

If his obsession with wheels is getting on your nerves, why don't you go out there the next time he's pattering around and help? Couples carwash can turn playful – if you get my hint. And anyway, unless dude's sleeping in his car, making love to it or calling it by the pet name 'Christine' I really don't think you have any sincere worries.

Grow up!

It's silly to be jealous of an inanimate object, Bernice. He's not cheating on you with his car. I'd also suggest you take up some hobby that is as benign as his. He clearly doesn't think his love affair with his wheels gets in the way of his affections for you. Why not drive that hot rod around – I mean the car, Bernice. Or, if he won't let you drive it – ride in it with him...do things in which you, he and the car are together. The vehicle should bring you two closer together – not drive a wedge between you and his stick shift.

***Yours truly
The crabby critic***



Dear Crabby:

How should I approach my mother-in-law about her constant snide remarks?

Brian in Tulsa

Dear Brian:

With a crucifix and a pack of wild hounds.

I'm kidding!

In my experience, the template for compatibility in any marriage should be a boxing tournament and pie-eating contest in which not even the most distant relation is spared.

Historically speaking, the mother-in-law is ascribed the same rights, privileges and access to the happy couple as that nattering little Pekinese the husband wishes he could step on...and quite often, should. But let us be serious for a moment – this woman is, after all, at some base biological level, responsible for providing you with your wife.

Mother-in-laws hate son-in-laws for a variety of reasons. Provided you're track record – prior to hitching up with her daughter did not involve renting hookers, embezzling money from rich widows, or multiple incarcerations for drugs, murder, etc. (translation: you're an upstanding guy) it's really not up to your mother-in-law to accept you or find you acceptable, unless she's also sharing your marital bed.

E-yuck, now there's a nasty thought!

Riddle me this – did Mommie Dearest despise you prior to the wedding, or after all the rice had been pitched? The distinction is significant. Sometimes the mother of the bride just doesn't like the guy her daughter's picked for herself. Maybe she doesn't think he's handsome enough or financially successful or a combination: too young/too old: too short/too tall: too controlling/too stupid...you get my point. Bottom line: she had many months leading up to **"I now pronounce thee..."** to launch her litany of objections at both her daughter and you.

However, if everything was placidly acceptable prior to publishing the bans, then your mother-in-law's bitter rejection of your now might be more problematic. Perhaps she and your wife were 'a team' so to speak, before you came into the picture. Maybe they hung out all the time and confided intimate secrets to one another.

Your arrival on the scene was deemed acceptable because – after all – you went home at the end of the night, leaving your wife to 'dish' with mama until the wee hours of the morning. Particularly, if your mother-in-law is a single woman, she might be feeling the pang of her daughter's sudden absence from the fold and resenting you for it.

If that is the logic behind why she has daggers for you now, there's really not much you can do to change her opinion. If you try, she'll most likely wind up hating you more. You're already the interloper. Don't become the 'know it all' too.

If you feel like making the concession of having your wife spend more time with her mother – then gradually tapering off her visitation, so as to wean Mom from her co-dependency – that sounds like an admirable plan of action. However, it should be decided on by both you and your wife. I also want to

make it clear that you are under **NO OBLIGATION** to do anything of the sort. Newlyweds need time to adjust to one another and the idea of living together without immediate family sticking their two cents in.

I must tell you: this isn't about you – it's all about your mother-in-law. She needs a hobby or a guy of her own to keep her busy. Have you considered that maybe there's just a twinge of maternal jealousy for her daughter who seems to have found marital bliss where Mom otherwise has failed? If that's the case, then her manure pile of personal resentment would be heaped on any guy who married her daughter – not just you. So cheer up.

In most cases this 'hell hath no fury...' scenario will eventually cool – particularly if you prove to Mother that you're not willing to bale out any time soon.

***Yours truly,
The crabby critic***



Dear Crabby:

I met a woman off the internet. We exchanged email for three months before we decided to leave our spouses for each other. She was nothing like I pictured, she did not look half as good as she did in her photos and she is unemployed. Do you think I could get my wife to take me back?

- Ned

Dear Net-fingered Noodle-head:

You're a pig. There's just no subtler way of putting it. You're like the thief who isn't particularly sorry he stole, but he's frightfully upset that he got caught.

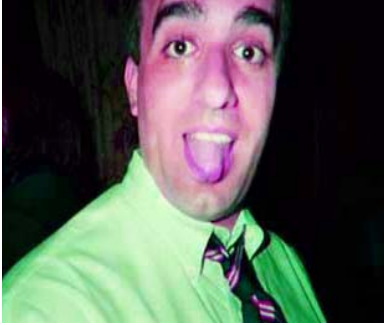
Get your wife back?

What would she want with you when you're so easily swayed by the swill some Internet Porky put out to drag you over to another trough? You made a mistake, Ned. You toyed with a woman's affections and there's no reprieve once the damage has been done.

If your wife still has affections for you – which wouldn't surprise me, depending on how long it's been since you bolted from the family stable – then she might be desperate or dumb enough to give you a second chance.

My advice to you, Piglet, is that if she's either or both then you get down on your knees and not only beg for her forgiveness but spend the next seventy to a hundred years proving you're worthy of her faith and trust. Or just start typing sweet n' lovelies on your keyboard again. There's a bacon-burner born every minute – **fool!**

- C.C.



Dear Crabby:

Why are some men pigs? Why do they only want the pretty ones and then dump them after they sleep with them? Why do men stare at women like they are pieces of meat anyway?

- Anonymous

Dear Anonymous:

Why are some women sluts?

Answer: just goes with the territory of being a woman...if one is so inclined. Not all are!

Same holds true for men. Some treat women disrespectfully because they just think they're entitled. That doesn't mean that they are. But on that score, it's you women who have all the power. All you have to do to a guy who's treating you like a side of beef is stand up to him and say something like

“Get a clue, Sherlock. Just because I’ve got boobs doesn’t mean I am one. Take your tragically sexist head out of your macho tooty and go back to your centerfolds, because I’ll never be able to satisfy what I can’t respect!”

Really, it's that simple.

What I find appalling about some women today is how much they put up with from the word go. Time and again I see women out on a first date with some guy who's calling them 'baby' or 'sweets' or 'honey' or some other term of endearment but in such a way as it's meant to make them feel like stupid, oversexed Barbie Dolls awaiting his pleasure.

And time again those same women just roll their eyes and take it, or worse, go out on more than one date with that jerk. I've even had some of my female friends in prolonged relationships with these village idiots and in one instance marrying the Bozo!

If there's one thing ALL women should know about ALL men it's this: a guy is not a house.

What?

By this I mean that you can't renovate what you don't like after the mortgage has been signed. You can't change, fix or alter anything either. A lot of women don't get this. They find some stud who's superficially attractive or hung like a Shetland pony or some guy who is sporting very deep pockets...and then they just throw up their hands when he embarrasses them in public and say – ***“yeah, well I know he's a gross pig of a human being...but it's only when he drinks. I can fix that.”***

“Well, yes, he does treat me like I'm 'knockers a la carte' but I can fix that.”

“Okay, he did hit me once, but he said he wouldn't do it again. I can fix that.”

“It'll be different because he's with me.”

“I'll complete him. I can change him.”

NO YOU WON'T!!!!

Ladies, guess what? You are not Super Girl and you don't have the Jedi mind trick down pat. **YOU CAN'T CHANGE A MAN**, but especially **IF HE DOESN'T WANT TO CHANGE FOR YOU.**

If he's a jerk on the first date he'll be a jerk on the second and the third.

Now, there's one addendum to this 'Can't Change Men' philosophy, and it's this: sometimes you'll get a guy who treats you right, right from the start and suddenly, two months, six months, a year into the relationship he decides to get a little fresh with you because he thinks you won't mind.

You have the right to say to him with all the stored up confidence, respect and mutual understanding you have both cultivated from the moment you laid eyes and hands on one another – ***“You know, that's really hurtful”*** or ***“That's not appreciated. I expected more of you”*** or something that will let him know that he's impacted you in a way that is unacceptable.

If he's the right kind of guy he'll apologize for that misstep. He'll say, ***“You know, I don't know what got into me. I respect you. I love you. I'm sorry I said something as stupid as that.”***

On the other hand, if he just looks at you and says, ***“Hey, it's no big deal”*** then maybe it really is time to move on.

Just remember this: respect is a two way street. You can't go around calling him a turkey while making fun of the size of his giblets to your girlfriends and then expect that he'll excuse it all just because you're a woman. Treat your guy the way you want to be treated and expect as much in return.

Finally, I don't want you to be mad about your past experiences any longer. Stop lugging around your emotional baggage. It's a badge of honor, but actually, it's not.

Furthermore, it will be perceived as totally unattractive by whatever guy you hook up with next. No man wants a little shrew for a girlfriend.

You can say, ***“Well yes, but I'm determined not to get burned again”*** and that's commendable, just as long as you don't stick the same red hot poker into some guy who doesn't know where you're coming from, and, more to the point, had no part in getting you to that place that you're consternating at.

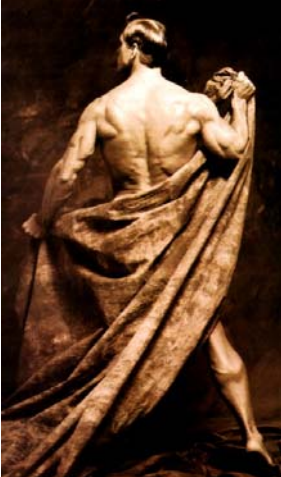
It's over.

It's done.

You're rid of your pig.

Now go find a guy who doesn't treat you like one.

***Yours truly,
The crabby critic***



Dear Crabby:

I'm a second year student in a nude figure drawing class. I've always thought I was above such things but over the course of this last semester I've been developing this severe crush on one of the models.

I don't know what to do about it. Clearly, it's not the most ideal of circumstances. I'd think it was pretty tacky if the tables were turned and I was the one not wearing anything. Could I approach this guy? Should I? Please help.

Helena in Oakville

Dear Patron of the Arts:

At this point I'll assume the only reason for your crush is raging hormones. I took a nude figure drawing class once. The models weren't allowed to speak to us and vice versa.

So, let's get real for a minute.

You like what you see, above and below the equator. But consider the disadvantage on his part. He hasn't a clue whether you're hiding a jelly roll under a girdle or utterly svelte from horn to hoof.

I'll assume since this guy isn't ashamed to show all of himself to whoever's taking the class that he also wouldn't be terribly shy about accepting advances from anyone in the class. Here's the thing – you have to be extremely tactful about how you carry it off. You can't just go up to him as he's slipping into his BVDs after a session and say something like;

“Hey, Mr. Fuzzy-Long...I think you're just my size, life's too short and besides I'm legal and test driven and going absolutely nuts (no pun intended), having been forced to sit on this side of the easel and drawing gesture and impressionistic odes to your girth in charcoal.”

My advice: don't even make sultry eye contact before, during or after the drawing session. You don't need or want to set yourself up to the scrutiny of the class. If you think this model is your romantic ideal, chances are some other aspiring *Mona Lisa* in the audience is using her *mental Xerox* too and making triplicates of all the same places.

Find out where this guy hangs his artful assets after hours. Then go there and hang out too. Let's face facts: you don't even know if he has a girlfriend. He might. I mean – cute and single rarely go hand in hand for very long. Chances are someone's already snapped up this Renoir Romeo. But, on the off chance that they haven't I really can't see any problem with you pursuing this guy behind the scenes.

Word to the wise: **NEVER** (even if things work out between you two and you're planning to pitch a little rice before graduation) **NEVER** expose this secret crush to anyone in your class. You'll instantly become a cliché and the brunt of all campus jokes.

**Yours truly,
The crabby critic**



Dear Crabby:

Last night I discovered the...uh...girl I've been out with on three dates is really a drag queen. I'm so ashamed. I always thought I could spot one a mile away. The only reason I found out was that we were getting ready to...you know...and suddenly she leaned into me and said, "**I'm really a guy.**" At first I thought it was a joke. Turns out the joke was on me. Obviously that killed the mood. My question is where do I go from here?

Chad in Manhattan

Dear Mislead:

Obviously not back to the same club where you picked up Victor/Victoria.

Whoa! Sounds like you had a bad rewind of 'The Cryin' Game' or *Rocky Horror Picture Show* over at your place last night. What's distressing is not the fact that you went out, made out and nearly laid out with a man who obviously was clever enough to deceive you into thinking him your Ms. Right, but that you were deceived – period.

Clearly, this cross-dressing imbecile thought it would be a conquest to latch on to a heterosexual man – for what purpose, I can't say, since as a heterosexual man you were no more inclined to move south of the border than he was to turn suddenly north. Not all drag queens are devious, although this one clearly was.

If it's any consolation: not knowing doesn't make you gay – which is what I suspect you're wounded male pride and ego are primarily concerned about. But in the future, may I suggest the **Crocodile Dundee** approach to finding out gender. Rent the movie if you don't know what I'm talking about.

G'day, mate.

**Yours truly,
The crabby critic**



Dear Crabby:

Okay, this is beyond embarrassing.

I had a disastrous sexual experience last night with a girl I really like. I mean I just couldn't perform no matter how hard I tried. Finally, I just gave up. The girl said it was okay but I felt like a total idiot. Should I try again or see a doctor or something?

Farley in Maine

Dear Fisherman's Friend:

Sounds like **Sea Biscuit** had a misfire while trolling the oceans of romance; happens to the best of us...and the worst. That it happened to you at a moment when you were out to impress is unfortunate but maybe a mixed blessing.

Here's a thought to put any lingering doubts about your male prowess to rest. Have you tried getting excited without an audience? Yes, that's exactly what I mean. If you can still raise the flag poll just by thinking dirty thoughts I don't think you have to worry about erectile dysfunction.

ED is a chronic condition that plagues over 30 million men and is often a precursor of other things like heart disease.

**You don't just have misfires.
You have NO fires.
Not even blanks.**

If you can whittle yourself into a hardy mast with x-rated thoughts then maybe it's time to try and shiver your beloved's timbers again.

Just remember this Chris Columbus – in order not to have another failed voyage around the world you're going to have to block out that first dry dock experience completely from your head...both of them!

*Yours truly,
The crabby critic*



Dear Crabby:

I've just been diagnosed with cancer. I'm only twenty-one and terrified. I don't want to have an operation or Chemo or anything even though I know I have to. I read you often and you make me laugh. Is there something you could say to get me through this? I hate my life right now.

Erin in Marlin

Dear Erin:

You don't hate your life. You hate the illness.

Hang on to that hate and translate it into courage. Often life throws us many curves that seem insurmountable at the start. But like all great journeys we have to face the adversities head on with a smile and defiance that proves – if only to ourselves – what we're made of. That's much easier said than done, but there's greater strength building inside you today that wasn't there the day before.

You have a cause and a purpose and the guidance of those that love and care about you on your side. Yours will not be an easy journey – I make no such claim. I am a realist first and foremost. For me to state that you'll get through cancer unscathed would be a lie and I suspect deep down you know that.

But I will offer you this little pearl of wisdom to hang onto – **Fight the good fight however best you know how. No one will think the less of you for trying – even on days when you feel as though you’ve miserably failed.**

Don’t look back. Consider what might be gained at the end of this journey rather than what’s been lost from the start.

Everyday that you are able to look up into the heavens and feel sunlight pass across your face is a **GOOD DAY!**

And on that morn when your doctors officially pronounce you in remission we’ll all drink a toast to your recovery. I’m going to start chilling that bottle of wine for the occasion right now!

*Your truly,
The crabby critic*



Dear Crabby:

The other day two friends of mine and I were horsing around near a farmer’s old barn out in the county when one of my friends – I’ll call him, *Larry* – thought it would be a cool idea to strip naked and throw our clothes in a pile inside and then set the barn on fire. The trick was to see who would wait the longest until the barn was burning to rush back in and save their clothes.

Only the barn was dryer than we thought. It went up fast and we were stuck in the middle of nowhere without our clothes. Here’s the problem. I left my wallet in my pants. So far nobody’s come around to ask what I was doing there so I guess they don’t know, only the farmer has an insurance claim and I don’t want to get caught. What should I do?

Terry in Idaho

Dear Au naturale:

Okay, so we’ve established Larry. Which one are you – Moe or Curly?

In between comparing Johnsons you played juvenile arsonists you torched some geezer’s loft. So much for the concept of ***‘It seemed like a good idea at the time...’***

What ever happened to chores?

I thought life on the farm kept everyone busy and out of trouble. **Cock-a-doodle-doo, and guess again!**

But now is not the time to turn chicken, Terry. You have to acquire a set of giblets and come clean. The three of you acted badly. In the grand scheme of things I suppose you did nobody any great harm, except obviously the barn.

Boys will be boys? Time to step up and be men.

If I were you, I'd go over to that farmer and tell him it was you guys who did this foolish thing. If the barn was of no use to him – he'll probably be good natured about it. After all – he was a yungin' once too. Maybe, he did something just as inane and colossally stupid at your age. But I doubt it. He was probably too busy feeding the hens.

***Yours truly,
The crabby critic***



Dear Crabby:

I'm dating a guy who I love but is not my equal physically. I've always been considered attractive. He's not. But he's a great guy and he makes me laugh.

The thing is, I feel uncomfortable with the stares we get when we're out together. It's like everyone's saying "*what's she doing with that ugly guy?*"

What should I do?

Brenda in British Columbia

Dear Self-Inflating Ego Tripper:

That isn't what people will be saying about you after they read this. They'll be saying, "*Why is such a great guy hanging around with that arrogant and self-indulgent airhead of a princess!?*"

If you truly loved this guy his looks wouldn't matter – **AT ALL** and **PERIOD!** You'd find his inner-self ultra sexy and think that anybody who didn't was a superficial idiot. Sadly, **for the guy** – I mean, you're just as hung up on physical attraction as the rest that you report to find so misguided in their judgments. Here's the deal with attraction – personal or otherwise: it comes from within.

Personality – the right kind - is infinitely more enticing than just a set of firm pecs or sparkling blue eyes. The problem with you, sex kitten, is that you still can't classify personality because you can't see it.

This guy is the hottest property in town – but you seem to think that invisible quality pales because he doesn't look like Antonio Sabato Jr. in his Calvins. What a pity. I only wish your man would write me for some advice. I'd start by telling him not to invest so much of his personality in you – you clearly haven't invested any of yours on him!

***Yours truly,
The crabby critic***



Dear Crabby:

You've gone on record as criticizing people who are...shall we say...sexually experienced. What's your glitch? Why are multiple partners a big **"no-no"**?

Brandi in Jonestown

Dear Brandi:

Because you don't want to be known around town as a little "ho-ho"!

- C.C.

Dear Crabby:

What's your definition of a hero?

Jamie in South Carolina

Dear Jamie:

It's simple. My definition of a hero is just an ordinary person who does ordinary things without first considering the impact he or she might have on someone else's life. Selflessness is a quality in short supply these days. Any man or woman who indulges in random acts of kindness without expecting anything in return is my hero.

So do something for someone today without first thinking about whether or not it'll benefit you in the long run. Then you'll not only be my definition of a hero, but one you can look at with pride in the mirror. Expect great things from yourself first. I always do. The rest will follow.

- C.C.



Dear Crabby:

What's your idea of a patriot?

Mark from Pembroke

Dear Mark:

Someone who does more than play for New England. Living nobly, day to day - now that's patriotic. It's something the founding father's fought for when they created this country from nothing. Who fits the bill today? Try Christopher and Dana Reeves on for size. Even the words integrity, spirit and positivism seem grossly inadequate to sum up their patriotic lives. Permit us to worship.

- C.C.

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