

The Collected

Ray's Place

— Advice and exposition from one
of today's most highly regarded
social thinkers

All content © Chris Onstad, achewood.com, under the nom de plume Ray Smuckles, excepting the actual reader submissions.

Apr 30, 2003

My First Column!

Hello, what's up doggies. Ray here. Gosh, this is my first column for y'all but I am just so darn tired. I really should have started this earlier in the week. I would like for my first column to have been better but I guess already it is pretty bad.

Wait! I can go pour myself a little Ketel One and be back in the saddle just long enough to bang out my five hundred words! That would help wake me up after that huge Mexican dinner that Téodor made tonight. Man...between the beans, rice, tortillas and brew, I just feel like one big gas bubble, on the *brink*. But anyway, hold on. I have to go to the kitchen for a minute and pour me some *diamond juice*.

Hello! I'm back. Man, I just had a sip and already I can feel it cutting through all that heavy jive in my belly. Whew!

WHOA! Alright, I didn't say this at first but I put a little tonic in the vodka. The bubbles helped me make this massive, *incredible* burp just now! Oh my God it was like a huge amount of what was bothering me after dinner just came shooting right out. I feel so relieved. It was like what it must be like when the people on death row get that needle in their arm: it was the *final release*.

I just realized that I might get a lot of hate mail about that last line, the one about death row and comparing involuntary death to the relief I felt when I burped just now. I guess that is pretty bad and I think I could do better. Hold on.

Alright, I think I thought of something. The relief I felt after that massive burp was like the relief you feel when you're way too turned around on liquor and you know you're gonna puke, and then you finally do, like in an upstairs bathroom where the party can't hear, and then it's like immediately all better. You feel great. You even go back down and talk to people.

Man, this isn't starting out classy at all. At first I thought I would kind of have this "Playboy" type column—you know, real gentlemen's stuff, but with kind of a sense of hipness and adventure. Good clothes, good food, high-end electronics and digital cigar cutters, maybe a little bit of etiquette and tips on personal grooming. But here I go, talking about puke. Man, this has got to be the worst "bon vivant" column ever.

What does a real gentleman talk about, anyway? I guess a real gentleman doesn't do the talking, but rather guides conversation in a clever yet undetectable way. Man, I ain't no good at that. Plus, a column only has one person talking, so it's got to be kind of self-directed.

Alright, I'm sorry this has been so pointless. I am feeling a lot better now though and I think I'm ready to get started. It's kind of like the gassiness has all either blown out through my mouth or is just makin' its way down through the pickle factory. Maybe it's time to choose a topic! Alright, I think I'm going to discuss the right way to eat Mexican food and some things you should avoid. Here we go!

GENTLE READER: few things in life are so uncomfortable as the enormous "wind bubbles" one's body creates after eating some delicious, tempting Mexican food. And just what is it about Mexican food that creates such a troublesome atmosphere within us? The answer: it is a complex system of enzymatic

chemical reactions which occur when soft, starchy foods meet the digestive acids which naturally pool in our stomachs.

Oh man, I can't write like that. It sounds too much like the regular Playboy writer. I feel so phony and additionally I think people will feel like I am just ripping him off. Why don't I just try to write in my normal style. I think that is the only long-term solution. Okay, here we go! (and no italics this time.)

Look people, if you are going to eat a bunch of Mexican food then you are basically just screwed. You're gonna blow up like a balloon and feel all disgusting, and you are going to hate yourself. Man, if some jerk-ass friend of yours has a dinner party and makes some cheesy "burrito bar," just play it cool. Eat a full meal before you go there, so that you aren't tempted by the hugely gassy foods. This way, you can tuck into a cold Bohemia or Negro Modelo and not worry about it reacting with your dinner, requirin' all kinds of suspicious private walks on the driveway.

What you'll find at one of these "burrito bar" parties is that the food is so delicious, all salty and filling, that everyone just fats up on the stuff, getting seconds and thirds of the tasty cheeses and beans. They stuff themselves on tortilla chips and tortillas, plus nice Spanish rice. Then there they are, sitting like powder kegs lined across the couch, trying to ask each other to change the channel from C.O.P.S. to the ball game, but they can barely get more than one or two words out at a time because these real acidic tomato sauce flavor hiccup-burps keep punchin' back on up their throat. And do you know what the flame is, that will ignite the fuse of their esophagus?

It is a beer. Man, if you were to take the contents of one of their stomachs after that big dinner, and just pour it in a steel mixing bowl and then pour a nice Mexican beer all over it, you'd get one of those little volcanoes like you made as a kid, all with baking soda and vinegar. Now imagine that happening inside a little bloody balloon, and you'll know what's goin' on with your stomach next time you eat Mexican food. You can see why the stomach is so distressed. Play it cool and just just do some tequila shooters (tequila-salt-lime), maybe dip a chip or two with the hottest salsa they have (hot salsa thins the blood, which is excellent for you). Then you will escape the pain of a terrible Mexican food party.

Okay, maybe this wasn't the best first column a guy could write. I mean, I really wanted this to be about like jet skis, night vision Ray Bans and the double-stitched pebbled leather interior that you can get in the new Hummer. I looked back over this and it's all just about farting?! Man, I wish I hadn't signed a year-long contract, goddamn it. Next time I go to negotiate I am definitely not going to get all torched first and then just repeat what anyone says to me right back at them.

Until then, Gentlemen,
--Ray--

*-- * --*

May 14, 2003

What Is With Tequila Shooters?!

Okay, so in my last column I mentioned sort of as an aside that the right way to do a tequila shooter is to slam the tequila shot, then lick the salt, then bite the lime wedge. Apparently some people think this is not the right way to do it. Man, at first I was all like “who cares, leave me alone” but then I thought maybe I could get five hundred words out of the subject and finish my column for the week, so I grabbed this old bottle of Cuervo I had lyin' around and brought out the limes and salt.

The first thing we got to do is figure out why exactly drinking tequila is so complicated that you would need so many outside ingredients. I mean, you can drink beer out of the bottle, and vodka out of the glass, but tequila needs this special fruit-and-gurney operation just to get it past your tastebuds. What's up with that?

I asked a friend of mine, Dr. Paul P. Davis of the Larhova General Medical Center, to help explain why exactly tequila requires so much ceremony to be enjoyed properly.

At least, I thought Dr. Davis was a friend of mine. He seemed all chummy when I went in there for a bunch of ingrown toenails last summer, but when I called him on the phone just now he totally blew me off! *I guess some people just tend to forget who butters their bread.* I had even sent the dude the rest of this bottle of Grey Goose that I really liked!

Well anyway, I need to have at least some factual information in this column, so I guess I will look on that “Google” for why people need all the salt and limes when they're drinking tequila.

Okay, so I looked on Google using search terms of “salt, tequila, limes, why, shooter, reason, help” and all I got was like this real messed-up story about a guy who wanted to lick his own mom's nipples. Is that all that's out there? Should I just give up on the Internet now? It seems like every time I try to use the Internet it's all just this garbage, about a weird sex pervert who has dirty ideas he wishes to express. This is why I don't have an e-mail. I had an e-mail briefly in the late 90's, you know, all being into the new technology, but I immediately got like seven unwanted letters from someone I did not know named “DJ Pubes.” I quickly realized that e-mail is is pretty much just a whole bunch of garbage, and that people like “DJ Pubes” were actually probably just computer robots designed to sell fake porno passwords that never even work.

Well, at this point I'm pretty far into this Ketel One that I poured myself and I'm not really interested in exploring that whole tequila thing anymore. I mean, tequila is pretty bad business to begin with! Maybe I shouldn't even be exposing everyone to the idea of it. Tequila should basically never be drunk unless (a) you are a young college lady who is trying to shed her inhibitions and become a new person who completely likes crazy sex and then barfing before the sex is over, or (b) you are a young dude who wants to get so plastered that he summons a 12” Pullman Sleeper into his underwear in the middle of the night. Try explaining *that* one at the laundromat!

So basically I am saying that you should not drink tequila unless you are really looking to get crazy and make a mess of things. That is mainly what it is for. For those of you still looking for whether the salt or lime should come first, I hope you realize by now that no matter what order you put it in, it's all just doing its job as long as you don't taste the Cuervo.

Until then, Gentlemen,
--Ray--

May 21, 2003

I Have Just Had Italian Food

Whew! Man, do I got a weakness for that *veal saltimbocca*. For those of you who aren't in the know on this delicious dish, it is a real flat-pounded piece of veal, with some kind of thick-cut prosciutto laid on top, all sauteed up together with this delicious salty brown sauce. Damn, man, and this place in the Underground serves it with these hella browned-up red potatoes...every time I go there I just come home feelin' like a big fat fool. I get so excited by eatin' the saltimbocca that I even eat like six pieces of the bread, all with both olive oil *and* vinegar *and* some salt! *Damn!*

So I guess what I'm saying is that I over ate and I am not sure I can do a column this week. Maybe if I go and get some scotch to sneak through it, maybe that will wake me up.

Okay so I found this bottle of Blue Label way at the back of the liquor cabinet, with a pretty good amount left in it. I don't usually dig too much on scotch, as I find it gives me a pretty bad hangover. But what the hell, you only live once, and all that Italian food in my belly is gonna have me down for the count if I don't take some measures.

I added some ice so that it would seem more decent. It's not bad! Got kind of a sweet nose to it.

Hold on...damn, someone is brewin' coffee! I'm gonna go get a mug of that and add the scotch to it, like Irish Coffee. Hey, did I just invent Scottish Coffee?! ?!?

It was Roast Beef. Sometimes he will just drink a whole mess of coffee and sit with his computer for hours, completely concentrating on his ideas about computer code. So anyway, I sat and had a cup with him and now I'm back, all with my Blue Label and steamin' hot mug of Joe. This is smellin' so good, I just might write my best column ever tonight!

Whew! I just had a blast of that coffee/Blue Label combo and I tell you, that is some kinda rocket fuel. What I said before about how this is gonna be one of my longest, best columns ever - that's *definitely* true!

So what was I talkin' about? Oh yeah! I had too much Italian food, like I always do. But that ain't no kind of discussion topic. It's not like people can debate whether I had too much Italian food. It is a stone cold fact. I don't see a lot of new ground bein' broken there.

Shit, what do people like to talk about? Drugs? Crime? Sex? Yeah, I guess all those things. I am against Crime, sure, but not in an interesting way. I just don't want to get all robbed by some man at the door. Maybe I should start carryin' a weapon. I've thought about it before. I'm sure everybody has. Mace, gun under the car seat, chef's knife hidden in a part of the wall that is the same color as the rest of the wall but is actually just a thin paper panel that you can punch through in an emergency...we all get these moments of paranoia and start gettin' wild ideas about personal protection. Maybe that is my topic.

I think there are like a hundred armed robberies a day at private homes in America. Imagine investing all that money into building your house, all with the carpet and swimming pool and such, and yet any old fool can just walk up and stick a knife in your face and take it all away! It seems to me like people should be more aggro about trickin' out their house, you know, with like a button that starts a secret lawn sprinkler system that just shoots acid, or an exploding front door that kills whoever is on the front porch. Or how about a little door peephole that sizzles out the eyes? Awesome!

Oh man this Blue Label coffee drink is really messing me up! And I don't mean in that fun way where I dabble at the piano or go jump in the pool. I mean I feel all nervous and sick and pretty unhappy, and like that feeling is growing so quickly that it's gonna get to be too much for me soon.

Okay...ugh...as I was saying, every homeowner should be able to kill burglars with some fun Macgyver-style weapons. I wish I had thought of this idea a few days ago so I could go to the Home Depot and do some actual research. As it is, I'm just sittin' here feelin' completely turned around from this damn screwy drink I thought was gonna save me.

...

Shit, this just isn't happening. I'm just gonna make a list of home-made anti-burglar weapons that I will research for my next column and then I'm probably just gonna go lay in bed.

Ray's list (for next week)

1. sprinkler system which sprays acid (I already mentioned this one)
2. exploding front door (I already mentioned this one also)
3. wear a priest outfit to the door; often times an Italian criminal will not mess with a priest
4. get one of those little chains which just allows the door to open a few inches
5. electrified doorknob - this should be pretty easy - could work off a car battery
6. exploding doorknob (instead of the whole door)
7. I bet there is something awesome you could do with one of those pressurized paint sprayers and a movement-sensitive floodlight

Oh, god. I got to take, fellows. I think I'm gonna die.

until then gentlemen
Ray

— * —

May 27, 2003

Man, I Had the Greatest Day!

Hey! I just had the greatest day! And I bet it's not even over yet, even though I am up in my room in my robe and I have brushed my teeth and stuff. That's how good my day has been, that I would still expect further developments.

You know, I been kinda healthyin' it up lately. Wakin' up kind of early, like while the mail is still bein' delivered, and eatin' up a quick banana and OJ smoothie before a real long walk around the neighborhood. Not goin' anywhere, but totally just straight-up walking. And I have cut way back on smoking and what some people call "daytime drinking." Now I have like much higher energy all day, which turns out to feel excellent.

After my walk I showered and put on just the *smoothest* white Fila warm-down suit. It has this black piping that makes me feel like a goddamn *sex genius*. Then I was feeling so refreshed and benevolent that I took Little Nephew down to the shops in the Underground to get him some new Nikes and even, I was thinkin', a dope Fossil watch. He was so excited that he was just chattin' up a little storm around himself, and all I could do was smile. I remember how important it is to get little treats like that when you're his age and you ain't got no scratch in your pocket.

So anyway before we get shoppin' we pull into that Burger King they got near the entrance and I look at him real stern and say, "Little man, you can order whatever it is on this menu that you want, but if the names of the food items in your order are not preceded with the words 'super-size,' for each item, then you are hella in trouble." I guess that wasn't the best way to say that information, because he kind of got the idea that I was mad at him, so he just ordered a plain hamburger and a cup of water. I felt pretty bad eatin' my big-ass Italian chicken sandwich with cheese in front of him, plus western barbecue bacon burger, plus fries and rings, so while we were eating I explained what I had meant and sent him back to the counter with a fat ten dollar bill. "Go on now!" I yelled, in a super friendly way. It nearly brought a tear to my eye to see him so relieved and excited. I figured he was gonna get himself a pretty fat spread so I put the bbq sauce and some bacon from my western burger onto his little plain hamburger and ate it while he was ordering. When he got back he noticed that it was missing and I said "Oh my god! A rat took it! I was so scared!" We laughed because I always say that when I eat something of his. It's kind of our thing.

We were pretty jazzed up after that beautiful perfect lunch, so I laid it down that we were gonna pick out a watch for him. Not some plastic kind of thing, but a real man's watch, all shiny metal. I knew he had been eyeing this Fossil brand of watch because he leaves his little magazines by the toilet and they're always open to some kind of Fossil ad lately. So in we go to the Fossil store and the lady there was just *fine*. Her ass was like ten kinds of round, like some Galileo map of the universe. She was squeezed into these real tight brown pants and this sweater that wasn't actually very tight but showed some...hell, you get the idea. She was just all smilin' and couldn't do enough to help us. I could tell she liked that I was there with a kid, because a guy with a kid seems like someone who has his shit together and can be relied upon.

I thought to myself, "I got an ace in the hole here! When I drop that he ain't actually my kid, and that I'm single, she'll start puttin' two and two together! Best of both worlds!" So anyway Little Nephew is just goin' crazy lookin' at like every watch in the case, which gives us all kinds of opportunities to give each other sort of those knowing, adult smiles, and I am just ten kinds of imagining romance with this lady. Actual romance, you know, not just the Act. I'm talkin' sayin' words like "love" and sharing ideas at a nice little restaurant, but also there bein' an intentional baby between us at some point. Daaamn, that's real.

So finally I help him pick out this watch that was probably way more expensive than I should have bought him (I only let him wear it in his room now), but hell, I didn't want to seem like a tightwad, you know? Then

I worked it in: I just said, “Well now, you're gonna look like quite the man in that one, Little Nephew!” and as soon as she heard that word Nephew I could feel both of our hearts just drawin' closer together.

While we're payin' she writes her phone number real discreetly on this slip of paper and staples it to the receipt, making sure I see. That was an old-school move, which drove me crazy. If she had just been all “yo yo yo homeboy gets me on some mad two-way pager, I'm Alisha, aiiight,” the spell would have been broken, but this girl kept it real. I was mad in love and I think I even took a brochure about the Fossil Visa card, completely not thinking clearly.

So then we're pickin' out Nikes at Foot Locker and he's just runnin' all around, tryin' on this and that, pilin' up a big stack of Air Jordans and Micro-Trainers and whatnot. But now I'm so happy I don't even notice his happiness so much (although I am still glad he is having such a nice time), and I get so distracted thinkin' about this girl that I kind of wander back past the Fossil store (except from the other side of the walkway so it's not too obvious what I'm doing). Then I wander into that Williams-Sonoma where they sell all that fancy kitchen equipment and I start puttin' together like a dream kitchen me and my lady could cook in. I'm all daydreamin' about pullin' a succulent crown roast out of this twenty thousand dollar French oven with her, me behind her, my arms wrappin' around as we lift the roast together and set it on the black granite counter. Daaamn. But then my daydream is interrupted when the security guard taps me on the shoulder and asks me if I'm Ray Smuckles. There he is with a cryin' Little Nephew, who apparently was reported as abandoned at the Foot Locker because he'd been there for like over an hour. I felt just terrible about this because I knew I couldn't go back to Foot Locker and get all glared at by the employees while he picked out his shoes again. To make it up to him we went to Florsheim and I got him some cute little tassle loafers that he can wear on school trips and stuff.

After the Foot Locker debacle the mall was kind of ruined for us so we walked on back home and I sent him to play with his things. Some new video games he had ordered were in the mail so he got all cheery and forgot all about being abandoned. And there was a message from Lyle on the machine! The dudes were playing poker at 3, and it was 2:50. I just had time to throw some chilled Asahi into a backpack and beat a trail over to their place. Everyone was just havin' a great time and I went on a tear like I never have before, clearin' like sixty bucks, floppin' full houses and flushes like nobody's business. I think I also caught on some of the dudes' tells, like how Téodor tends to place his cards closer to himself when they're good, and pushes them close to the pot when they're bad, like he's all ready to fold. And I can usually see Pat's hand in these dumb mirrored shades he always wears when we play. By the time it was head to head and I put the burn on Roast Beef with pocket kings that went full, folks were in a pretty good mood and we decided to light the grill back at my place. I had these filet mignons wrapped in bacon, some jumbo prawns all marinated up, and even a couple of those mini-kegs you can get. Téodor whipped up some twice-baked potatoes while we jumped all around in the jacuzzi and pool. I got the perfect buzz goin' from this chianti we cracked, and it was just *beautiful*.

Between the poker win and the buzz, I had my confidence going on strong. I dug up that phone number of the girl at Fossil, just knowing that I could smooth the hell out of a phone call. Hell, maybe I'd even invite her over.

I grabbed the cordless and headed to the other side of the pool so that people couldn't hear me and heckle me, but close enough to the party that she could hear the fun goin' on. Roast Beef had put on some of the better Steve Miller songs, and there was splashin' and laughin', so I figured that was a good enough backdrop.

Sure enough, she had just gotten off work (her name was Crystal, I think I forgot to mention that) and said she'd grab a swimsuit and come on over. At this point I was on cloud nine. I could not lose. I even said these clever things on the phone that implied that I liked her while also keeping this real sexy distance.

Well, as ladies do, she took like seventeen hours to even show up and by that time the party was just ash. Everyone was gone, bottles were floatin' in the pool, and someone had shaped hamburger meat into the letters C-O-C-K on the grill. By the time she came walkin' around I was just bored and kind of upset and I didn't notice her at first. I guess she read me pretty well because she said she was sorry for bein' so late. One look at her though and I knew it was worth the wait: she was done up all fine in this nice little dress, all makeup on and hair real carefully arranged. She was puttin' her finest foot forward, so I showed her around the pad, made her a Sea-Breeze, and then she noticed this Pretenders CD I keep around. I don't like most people knowin' I dig on The Pretenders...but anyhow, out of like six hundred CDs she spots that one. I pop it on and we just sit right down on the carpet in the living room, talkin' for hours. I didn't even notice the time pass, but next thing I knew it was 2am and she had to get home for work the next day. Just one little kiss at the end of the driveway and that was enough, that was it. Any more would have been wrong. Now I'm gonna see her again on Friday! But we're gonna go out somewhere proper, just the two of us, so I can show her what a gentleman I can be.

Wow, I really wrote a lot today. I think it's like 4am now, and I am pretty beat. But remember how I said at the beginning that I bet it's not over yet? I was right. For the next few minutes until I fall asleep I'm gonna hold onto this scrunchie that Crystal left on the counter—I'm gonna put it around my wrist and smell her sweet perfume. Man, I feel like I'm thirteen again. And it feels *damn* good.

Oh, crap. I just remembered that I have to take Little Nephew to the dentist at 7:30 this morning. Dammit. I better go see if Roast Beef can take him.

Until then, Gentlemen,
--Ray--

— * —

Jun 4, 2003

My Date with Crystal

Okay, I don't know if any of you read all of my column last week. They told me it was like over eight pages long, and that some of the language was either too lame or too dirty for most people to like. I'm sorry, people. I got kind of carried away with what a good day I had had, plus talkin' about the new lady I had met (Crystal from the Fossil store).

So anyway! Crystal and I went out on Friday night. I had a pretty good time plannin' the date out, you know, like choosin' which restaurant and outfits and all that stuff. I was real good: I let her know ahead of time what I'd be wearing so she could choose an appropriate outfit (ladies don't like to be under- or over-dressed compared to their date). I love bein' old enough to really know what's classy and what isn't. The other day I saw a bunch of high school prom kids, all in just the most ludicrous rented tuxedos and dumb dresses, gettin' outta this big white limo. Sure enough, they all went into the most expensive restaurant in town, the dudes' cummerbunds matching the girls' dresses, everyone trying as hard as they could to fake that they knew how to be classy. Man, prom should be all casual, like with dudes wearing just jeans and their first dry-cleaned shirt, and ladies in some low-rise jeans and a scoop-neck top with real adult perfume that doesn't smell like it just sprayed outta Hello Kitty's *ass hole*.

Seriously! I know not to go over the top on the first date. I wasn't gonna get no limo or anything, and I sure as hell wasn't gonna show up in no tux and tails with a top hat and cane, all with some man on a small flat trailer behind the limo playin' a baby grand. That is so bogus. I put me on some rad full-cut distressed Calvins, kinda loose with a nice black leather Coach belt, and a pretty sweet lavender Armani Exchange button-down made outta that fabric which kind of shows different subtle color qualities in different light. Footwear? You guessed it: Kenneth got me covered in some thick-tread black patent buckles. I was stone cold casual, but polished up like a diamond. Like a diamond drenched in some hella musky Gucci Rush.

Now let me drop some first date science on y'all. I been on enough of these suckers to write a college textbook on the matter, complete with my picture in the back, all wearin' a kind of corduroy coat with contrasting suede elbow patches. On the subject of restaurant choices I would have an entire chapter, complete with graphs, photos and marginalia talking about things like the difference between scampi and bay shrimp, or charts of how much to tip based on the quality of service. I am serious: there are things to learn about first dates, and I have learned them over and over again.

My first point goes mainly out to dudes, but some ladies could learn from it as well: *don't look like you're tryin' too hard*. If the other person senses that you're pullin' out all the stops, they're gonna be repelled by all your attention. The game ain't no fun if one person is in control from the get-go. And you can't respect someone who treats the date like some sort of old-fashioned courtship ritual, all with doors bein' held open and the man ordering food for the lady so that she does not suffer the rudeness of speaking, etc. Things got to flow. You can't practice clever lines in your room before you pick her up because they will just seem phony, and you will probably say them at the wrong time. Ain't no lady comin' back to the table from the bathroom want to be told that she looks like a "delicious, silken rose"! Hell, she probably just spent five minutes usin' some *SPRAY* called "Silken Rose"! Under her armpits, all out into the hallway in front of the bathroom, in her hair, all up in—ha ha, I'm gettin' carried away, but you take my point. Even though a lady is beautiful, certain things about her are always ugly.

Like I said, I been on a thousand first dates. So what do I pick for me and Crystal? I know right away that Olive Garden would be too tacky. That's the kind of place we'd go when we had kids already, and were interested in greater food quantity over quality of food or experience. And some three-star French place would be too much, with all huge drapes and over seventeen forks to the left of the plate. So what did I choose? Easy. There's this little Italian place called Cucina Della Mamma down in the Underground, and it's

not a chain or anything. There are real actual Italian dudes there, and it is some damn good food without a big showy atmosphere or “™” after anything on the menu. A dude and a lady can be alone there in their own booth, just a couple candles and low light, and it's not a big production. *Always* go Italian on the first date, I say. Sushi is so dicey with everyone, Chinese is so salty and oily, and Mexican has all that bloaty rice and beans. There's a reason that Italian people are known for always gettin' it on, and why all the other cultures are known to at best get it on maybe a couple times a year.

Okay so it's this casual date and we're hittin' some good Italian place. I swing by her apartment fifteen easy minutes late (never visit a lady on time, they are *ridiculously bad* about preparing for a date), and she invites me in to sit on the couch while she puts a few finishing touches on. The place is kind of simple—spare, even—and it's like this brand new apartment building with light brown carpet and white paint everywhere. Some sliding glass door goes from the living room to some patio, and floor-length white vertical blinds hang all along that. There aren't any books or anything, which is kind of weird, but maybe she has her bookshelves in her bedroom 'cause she likes to read in bed. There's just like one plate and one glass in the dish drainer next to the brand new sink and I get all like immediately emotional to think of this fine lady spendin' so much terrible, empty time alone. I promise myself that I am going to take her on the best first date ever.

To get my spirits up after that painful emotional moment, I look around in her kitchen cupboards for a little nip of somethin' somethin'. All I can find is this brand new bottle of blue curaçao, so I crack that and take a healthy swig. I guess I didn't hear her finish up in the bathroom, because when I lower the bottle she's standin' there lookin' at me. I just try to laugh it off, but I guess my mouth was all blue because she got this real uncomfortable look on her face. I apologize and have a glass of water to clean me up, and then we take a nice walk down to the Underground.

I remembered that she smokes Marlboro Ultra Lights, so I have a pack of those all ready to offer during our walk. She seems impressed that I had remembered this small detail, so I figure I'm even for chuggin' blue curaçao outta her cupboard without asking. Life is good...for a while.

Before a first date I like to stop and have a cocktail, usually at a different place than the restaurant, to sort of show that I know my way around. We walk into Lorenzo's, sort of this upscale piano bar with real plush booths where two people can have good privacy. It's early, it's not too crowded, and the light is real nice. I go up to the bar to order us a few Bellinis, but I guess I forgot that Lorenzo's has a cocktail waitress, because when I get back with the drinks Crystal is sitting there with an additional round that she had ordered in the meantime. She had also gotten us Bellinis, so we had a good chuckle over that. And then the waitress got confused because the bartender had somehow misused the drink-ordering computer, so she brought us four more Bellinis. It was great! We just had the greatest laughs about that. Things felt *great* between us, and the Bellinis really helped us relate on an honest level. We cut through a lot of jive and I think at one point we even talked really pleasantly about my penis.

So, eight Bellinis and eighty bucks later, we find our way out of Lorenzo's and go lookin' for Cucina Della Mamma. Walking a bit made us both realize how turned around we were, her way more than me, so we decide to have some water first. There's a drinking fountain at the park, so we chill there a bit. She's not gettin' any better, though, and I've seen a lady in this condition before: she needs food in her to absorb the alcohol, and fast. I run into the Carl's Jr. next to the park and get us a bunch of fries and a burger and water. When I get back she's all lyin' on her back, napping. Real playful I put a fry in my mouth, and lay down next to her to kiss her and feed her the fry. I guide the fry into her mouth, which sort of opens and then I close my eyes and our lips meet.

I guess the fry fell down back into her throat and triggered some sort of reflex, because the next thing I knew my mouth was filling with this nasty warm liquid. Sure, it was mostly Bellini, but there were also some solids sort of the texture of crumbled hamburger. This made me urp too, so it was a pretty bad scene, both me and

Crystal gettin' sick into each other's mouths. I use my shirt to wipe us both off, then we swig on the water. She's pretty embarrassed and doesn't say much, but she does kind of make a disgusted noise when she sees me start munchin' on the fries and eatin' around the part of the burger that got soggy during the incident.

Pretty soon she's ready to walk back to her apartment (we kind of mutually decided that we needed a rain check on dinner) and we sort of make it awkwardly home, not much talkin'. I have the shirt tied around my waist (I just couldn't throw that beautiful shirt in the garbage even though it was soiled) and these damn dogs keep tryin' to walk with us and sniff it. Finally we get to her apartment, but a kiss is kind of out of the question, you know, just on the primal level, so I lean against the doorway with my hands in my pockets and we kind of agree that I should probably call her next week. She sort of smiles and closes the door. Poor thing.

Since it was still early I went over and chilled with Lyle and we got pretty bent out of shape, throwin' back Stoli gimlets and listening to this Motörhead box set he found on eBay. I don't much care for Motörhead, but it was nice to unwind after what I guess was a pretty bad first date.

To tell you the truth, I don't think I'm gonna call Crystal back. I just feel kind of bad about the whole thing.

Until then, Gentlemen,

--Ray--

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Jun 11, 2003

Advice Column!

Dear Reader,

We received literally hundreds of inquiries from troubled people such as yourself. I am sorry that I cannot answer* them all in this column, but I have made efforts to address those which seemed either most important or most easy. Keep sending in your questions, because I'm just going to delete the ones I didn't feel like answering this week.

--Ray--

ray(@)achewood.com

H E R E W E G O !

I've got the charms and some decent looks, but I can never pick up the signals from the ladies. How do you know if a gal likes you, and how do you make the first move? —J.R., Internet

Dear J.R.,

A lot of guys think they know that I always do the right thing where women are concerned. Well, I'll let you in on a little secret: sometimes when a woman is flirting with me, I don't always pick up on it right away. Every woman has her own subtle style. However, the following clues are pretty universal:

- She establishes eye contact with you, then suggestively places a maraschino cherry between her lips while grinding on her barstool
- If a woman is talking with you and basically not trying to get away, you have a decent chance.

I hope that helps, J.R. Thank you for being the first person I ever gave advice to.

I'm having a little trouble with the drink. I'd given up liquor, for it turns me into a smallish, chubby man who thinks he is a hulking brute. This past weekend, I forgot my promise to myself and put my fist through my wall, nearly breaking my hand in the process as I punched one of the studs. How can I maintain a penchant for sobriety? Failing that, how can I keep myself on beer and wine, and not fall through to the temptation of liquor? —A.A., Atlanta

Dear A.A.,

Do not blame your bad attitude on liquor. It makes me feel terrible when people blame alcohol for things, because alcohol is an innocent chemical substance, much like a carrot or a tomato. It's like what they say: "guns don't kill people, people kill people." In the case of liquor the saying should go, "liquor doesn't punch holes in walls, you just hate your dad."

However, if you want to stay off the hard stuff (which has more of the Devil in it), try just drinking like five times as much beer. You'll thank me.

I hope this was good advice.

I went out to a club last night and at one point in the evening this woman came up and started talking to me and we chatted for a bit because she thought she recognised me. Her name was Kira, and oh my goodness I am such a fool for not talking to her more and getting her number.

What can I do, Ray? Liverpool is a city of many hundreds of thousands, how can I ever find a Kira amongst all of them? —N.R., Liverpool

Dear N.R.,

Maybe if you say her name a few more times the whole Internet will get annoyed and look her up for you. Sheesh.

Hey, Ray. I've been away at college for a year now, and I feel like my relationship with my friends from my hometown is slipping away. I know people always say that when you leave home you meet new people and move on, but my friends from home were more like my brothers, I used to spend probably 20 hours a day with them, lightning fires, stealing, running amok... I miss all that [stuff]. —M.R., Boston

Dear M.R.,

Yeah, this is a tough part of life. It's best not to go back to your home town if you can avoid it, because you'll always run into your old friends, all like pumping gas and folding shirts at Macy's and stuff. It's weird. In general, try finding new friends every couple of years - that way you can never tell if anyone's changing for the worse.

I'm a gin gimlet girl at heart, but now that summer is fast approaching, I think I need a new signature cocktail for the season. Any suggestions? —J.D., Milwaukee

Dear J.D.,

You are a very thoughtful lady. Gimlets are a good drink for late fall, but you are correct in discerning that they are too severe for summertime. Summer is a time for crisp lagers, chilled Pinot Grigios, and mixed drinks with a bit of fruit to them, in harmony with the ripened fruits of the season. Don't be afraid of Midori.

If you wanted to attach a picture next time, I could probably find the time to look at it.

The other day, while watering the hanging plants on our front porch, I noticed that in one of the plants there is a small bird's nest with two eggs in it. I accidentally watered the eggs too. There was MiracleGro in the water. Do you think this will pose a health risk to the embryonic residents of the eggs? —J.B., Connecticut

Dear J.B.,

Yeah, you probably messed those little guys up pretty bad. I'd advise you to just smash them before they hatch into little birds with like human thumbs for wings, but then the Mama bird would probably be all heartbroken and commit suicide. I guess it's your own little hell on earth you gotta deal with now. *Maybe you should just stick with succulents.*

*I've been courting a lady for some time but she just doesn't seem to be showing any interest in me. In fact, she shows interest in several other guys. I would usually move on but this one is fine...I mean **fine**. What can I do to catch her eye? —P.*

Dear P.,

It straight-up isn't happening between you and her, dude. Step aside, quit being a douche.

I'm with a girl. She's wonderfully attractive. In all honesty, she has the best tush I've ever seen, but she is SO boring. Our leisure time is composed of either Monopoly, Scrabble, or horrible movies like Maid In Manhattan [...] I can't figure out what to do. [Do I] accept being beaten at Monopoly every day, because [I] won't meet anyone [this] gorgeous [ever] again [,] or run like a madman [before] I cut my Scrabble tile-laying hands off [?] —No Name Given

Dude, you are a douche also. I spent so long editing your letter that I decided not to help you.

I have an internship in New York City for the summer and I miss my boyfriend back home. What can I do to keep myself busy so that I don't feel sad about missing him all the time? —S.X., NYC

Dear S.X.,

Forget it, baby. Once you taste NYC you ain't gonna go back home and marry that dude from Jiffy Lube. Get freaky and maybe you'll meet Lenny Kravitz.

My question is whether or not I should be getting it on with one of my professors. I mean, she is a total fox, and she's giving me those eyes all the time. Man, you know what I mean. The problem is though, that it isn't very professional, and I guess we could both get in lots of trouble. —T.P., California

Dear T.P.,

It sounds to me like you haven't read the Sex Rulebook! The first rule of Sex is that everybody can always get it on. Man, go for it! Awesome! *Awesome!*

I am looking for a new stereo and I'm trying to decide between getting a record player or a CD player. Which do you recommend, analog or digital? —J.B., Arkansas

Dear J.B.,

I know a lot of people are all hot on old vinyl, trying to make some stance about all these hard to define qualities of it, but basically digital is way better. You can take a CD and make an "MP3" file out of it and it never scratches or gets broken in half if you leave it on the floor and step on it in the dark. Plus vinyl has been phased out due to not being as good as digital.

A lot of people would like to become famous weekly columnists, just like you. Do you have some advice for young doggs who want to be large in the daily paper like Ann Landers and so forth? —K.L., Reno

Dear K.L.,

I think what a lot of people don't realize is that the newspaper has kind of gone away. Sure, you can still find it in the lobbies of certain kinds of old-fashioned businesses, and also in the driveways of old people who have died, but for the most part everyone is getting hip to saving paper and just using the Internet. I would focus on the Internet.

My sister's boyfriend is a loser. Do I have to out-and-out have him killed, or is there a way to break them up without going to jail? —Revolted in Raleigh, NC

Dear Revolted,

These things usually work themselves out in time. If he disappoints you, chances are he'll disappoint your sister soon enough. If they end up getting hitched, however, it won't be the first time someone in North Carolina made a bad decision.

A few days ago my best friend said that he loved me! I'm not homophobic or anything, in fact, I always knew he was gay even though he had never technically come out to me. And it was cool. I was cool with it. But then he told me that he thought he loved me. And that was not cool, because I am not gay. What should I do, Ray? I don't want to hurt him! He's my best friend! -N.H., TN

Dear N.H.,

A lot of people know me as kind of a man's man, a real stone cold player from the old school. However, I am quite in tune with gay society and, moreover, the general concept of love. It sounds to me like there was just a little bit of miscommunication here. Your gay friend obviously knows that you aren't gay, and wasn't trying to convert you. I think he just wanted to tell you that he was your best friend, and that he loved you. Don't flatter yourself. You sound like you might be kind of an asshole.

I have an ex-husband who won't leave me alone. He keeps violating restraining orders and keeps somehow evading the police. —J.

Dear J.,

I just had a crazy idea. Maybe you could hire a judge to pose as a cop outside of your house! That way when your ex came around, the judge could prove that he was violating the restraining order and immediately sentence him to prison. Just a thought.

Is there a good, classy way to go about getting a lady's attention in a bar? If so, what is it? — "Confused in California"

Dear C.C.,

This is probably one of the most often-asked questions of any advice columnist. I would say offhand that the best way to get a lady's attention in a bar is to walk up to her and explode. Or, be the lead singer in the band that is performing at the bar.

I am afraid of flying in an airplane. I used to really enjoy it, but lately all I can do is imagine things going wrong the whole flight. My heart races, I shoot looks at the other passengers to see if they seem alarmed, and I have to admit I usually go through my stash of tiny bottles of booze way too soon. —J., CA

Dear J.,

A plane is kind of like a metal tube that will fall straight to the earth and explode if anything goes wrong. Everyone will die, and they will know that they are going to die for at least thirty seconds before it happens, the certainty of death increasing exponentially with each second that passes. I've pictured it in my head but obviously I can't know for sure how terrifying it actually is.

Confidential to the guy who was turned on when his one night stand farted in her sleep: you should not have been turned on by that. Shame on you. Gross. There is a problem in your brain. Or: maybe this rudimentary biological function has made you realize the simple animal connection we all have with one another, and has awakened your sense of carnal honesty. Due to this development you may be able to communicate with this person more meaningfully than you ever have communicated with anyone before. Incredible.

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Jun 18, 2003

Advice Column for June 18, 2003

This week Ray continues to answer actual reader questions. Got an issue? Need some advice? Email ray(@)achewood.com. Serious inquiries only, please.

HERE WE GO !

Recently I paid a visit to my cousin's house, and noticed that his dog, Butch, was in terrible shape. For a while now he's been somewhat blind and has lost his sense of direction, which causes [him] to walk backwards and run into things. Now he has to take medication if he falls down, or if he freaks out and barks and scratches walls. Yet my aunt says Butch is "just fine", and continues to believe that [he] will live forever, while she dresses him in embarrassing bandanas and he continues to walk backwards. Any advice?

J.E., Rehoboth, MA

Dear J.E.,

Hm. A blind dog in a bandana who is walking backwards. This does not sound good. I mean, if the human lady's dad (your grandfather?) had like Alzheimer's and he was all in a bandana and walking backwards, they would probably try to do something about that. You might want to hang a little sign around the dog's neck that says, "What If This Was Dad?"

Just a thought. I hope this information helped you.

I want to do something for my boyfriend cause he`s always so good to me. Should I make him a nice dinner or just show up naked at his apartment. Please give a girl som[e] advice.

Love M

Dear M.,

You seem to have good intentions. I am a little turned off by your bad grammar, though, so I am wondering about your other qualities. Are you a good cook, or would you just make like spaghetti on a plate and then

put some microwaved sauce on top? If you showed up naked, are you sort of bad-looking? Would he be mad? (I am picturing kind of a gut on you, no offense.)

Send me a photo and I will decide for you and maybe provide recipes.

Last year this girl and I got together and I liked her a lot but as it turned out she played me real bad. Well recently she and I have been talking again and now she's telling me that she likes me and all. She's telling the truth this time too. She's a neat girl, but my question is should I try and hook up with her or should I play her back hard just to get even? Both options sound good to me. And I'm not lying, this really happened to me.

-R.D., Houston TX

Dear R.D.,

This actually happened?! *No Way*. Dude, I would not believe that this happened in a million years. I cannot believe a story like this. How could it be that these events could occur?! Man, this is EARTH, not some kind of "Crazy-Dimension X-12"!

Fuck you.

I'm an 18 year old male from Buffalo New York. I have never had any friends growing up, let alone a girlfriend and I find it pretty hard to meet people. I'm a pretty nice person, and easy to get along with, so what's the deal? Maybe I don't know how to talk to folks or maybe I gotta wait until I can go to bars and clubs and such.

Lonely Outcast, Buffalo, NY

Dear L.O.,

I guess I think it's kind of strange that you've never had any friends. Maybe you should tell ME what the deal is? The only person I ever knew who had no friends was this guy named Gabe who always had tiny pieces of that yellow "egg crate" foam in his hair. He also had pretty bad buck teeth. People did not want to be friends with him because he seemed unappealing.

This is weird. It's like, if you have no friends, then who can you ask what is wrong? Maybe next time you write in you could give us all more details about what's weird with you. Hope this helps.

*I was just wondering how you would advise someone to go about making tuna tartare.
Max with Issues.*

Dear Max,

As you will recall from the strip, I'm not actually that good with Tuna Tartare. Téodor is the one to ask. I rang him on my cell, and he was recording some music in his room at the time, but he did volunteer that

kind of a spicy bottled Vietnamese chili sauce like you see on Spicy Tuna Rolls will often wake up raw tuna. He also mentioned throwing in some toasted sesame seeds. Heck, I guess that makes me kind of an expert now, too! I guess I would also add to serve it on chilled plates with toast points, a raw quail egg yolk and toasted pine nuts. Mix everything but the toast together at table and you will have a damn fine dish in front of you. Sprinkle with finely minced chives.

I need some space but my girlfriend comes over to my apartment every day. I told her I need my privacy, and she said okay, but she hasn't changed her habits. We've been through a lot so I want to be gentle; how can I get some breathing room without hurting her feelings?
-T.S., Oklahoma

Dear T.S.,

It sounds like you need to break up. Show some long choad, brother.

Man, It's not even halfway through the month and my paycheck is already gone. Friday night is approaching and I wanna get all loaded up but I don't have the dough. How can a smart guy get boozed on the cheap?
Sober in SF

Dear S.F.,

Here is one thought I had: are you one of those guys who insists on like Grey Goose in their screwdriver, and Jack Daniels in their whiskey and Coke? Top shelf liquors are only for drinking neat or solo on the rocks. I know that when a lot of younger dudes get started in the bar scene they try to go all fancy all the time, thinking this makes them look sophisticated. All it basically does is make them look like a guy who just paid nine dollars for two ounces of vodka, which no one who wears a name tag on weekdays can afford to do.

Have you tried just ordering a soda and emptying a flask into it? That is another trick from my 'banger days.

Why are you such a dick to Little Nephew?
J.M., Virginia

Dear J.M.,

I guess you've never been an uncle! It's a whole different mind game. Most of what I do is based on psychology, and many prominent child-rearing experts have written me letters about my techniques.

I have to go to the dentist to have some fillings done very soon. I have been putting this off for ages because I hate the dentist. The dentist is, quite possibly, my greatest fear. I hate all dentists. I'm sure there are very nice ones out there [etc]. All I can think about is sitting in a chair for hours experiencing physical pain and

[etc]. Please help me overcome my ridiculous, childish [etc].
"Anti-dentite," Internet

Dear A.D.,

Many are afraid of the dentist because of a bad childhood experience, such as incredible pain and huge ugly braces and stuff. Now that you are older (I assume you're "older," by now at least, because it took me nine years to read and edit your letter) you should be able to use your mind to get past simple instinctive reactions. Thanks, and hope your checkup goes well. The teeth are truly a great part of the body.

There is a girl I really like, she is extremely fine, but not very intelligenet. Taking this into account, I was wondering; is there some way to trick a girl into falling in love with you?
-N.S. Wisconsin

Dear N.S.,

You sound perfect for each other. I don't have time for this.

I enjoy my drinking, and have a great time. But the morning after I always have bad farts. But it ain't just that, the farts tend to come with a little, uh, "extra credit." I can't keep throwing out my chonies, they're too fancy for that. You gotta know something I can do ray.
-Pants Chili, CA

That's disgusting! Don't tell me about that.

Please settle an argument that my friend and I are having. Which is the skankiest hard liquor: rum or vodka?
No Name, No Address

The skank level is based on sugar content. Rum is obviously more skanky than vodka, but depending on what mixer you use one can out-skank the other. The least skanky drink is a Ketel One martini (proven lowest glucose content), and the most skanky drink is a Godiva sour. Lagers are less skanky than ales, white wines more skanky than reds. Hope this helps in whatever it is you are doing.

I am a vodka martini man. No gin, just vodka. The problem is I like them dry and neat. For some reason, though, this doesn't seem to impress the classy ladies. Is there basically a way to make a martini look smooth without resorting to olives and wimpy juices?
-P.S., Colorado

Dear P.S.,

Man, the glass and the garnish are the *only* things that make a martini look smooth. Just remember, Mr. Clean Plate Club, you don't have to eat every olive they put in front of you.

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Jun 25, 2003

Advice Column for June 25, 2003

Ray continues to answer actual reader questions. Got an issue? Need some advice? Email ray(@)achewood.com. Serious inquiries only, please. Inquiries having to do with something other than booze are now given first priority.

H E R E W E G O !

I've got an amazing woman coming over for dinne[r], and I can't dec[i]de what to put on as background music. I was thinking Miles Davis' Birth of the Cool, but I don't want to come across as too "slick." Can you recommend some good music?

L. M., Port Richey, FL

Dear L.M.,

She's "amazing," huh? Sounds like you need to have some amazing music on, then! How about like Beethoven's Fifth Symphony with a laser/water show set to the music, and dry ice smoke pouring out of your cooking pans and microwave?

I am just kidding with you, L.M. Seriously, don't try to make a statement with the music. Just put on stuff you like that's not too intense in one direction or the other. You don't want to play some really loud, powerful song about how Ted Nugent loves to look at his own balls, but you also don't want to play a song about how that guy from Smashing Pumpkins wishes he was a dead butterfly.

You know what my secret is? I have all these CDs from Pottery Barn, like all tango and mambo music that was recorded just for Pottery Barn, and I pop those in the changer. Damn, it's like puttin' the evening on auto-pilot.

Hey Ray,

Like you, I'm a man who likes his drink. But I'm also a man who gets hit by some really killer mornings after. Is there a patented Smuckles hangover cure, or do you just ride it out?
SF in the UK

Dear SF,

I really ought to write a book on this subject. I bet the book would be big enough for them to consider putting into hardback form, so much have I learned on this subject. Basically, a hangover is a combination of body poisoning combined with dehydration and withdrawal. I know this doesn't sound like a lot of fun, but for every drink you have, pound a glass of water before you have your next drink. Believe it or not, you'll actually get a better buzz on! Then, before you go to sleep pop an aspirin and chew a Tums. (that's kind of an Asian secret, you know: taking care of mind and body alike).

If you didn't do your part to pre-empt the situation and find yourself with a hangover, first try to decide which kind of hangover you have, and then use the provided remedy:

1. Plain old little hangover: you have a headache and are in kind of a bad mood. Pound a few glasses of water, hold your nose and take a shot of vodka. The Hair of the Dog is best in situations such as this.

2. Class Two Hangover: you are actually wondering if you might throw up, and are kind of scared of that. SLEEP is what you need. Drink at least one glass of water and sleep it off. Don't kid yourself — you're gonna be worthless until this passes. Remember: you won't puke if you haven't already.

3. Class Three Hangover: you've got the shakes, you've been sick on yourself, and you notice a little bit of dried blood in your ears. Don't worry! You'll be fine as long as you drink lots of water. You may get sick again if you try a Hair of the Dog so just do your time. Try not to let any light into the room.

*my roommate and i are moving to a new apartment soon, and the apartment that we are moving to is on the campus of the college that we used to go to. my roommate thinks that this is great, because it is a great apartment, and cable is included in our rent. however, i have my reservations, because i do not want to look like an overgrown college student wannabe who cannot leave her party animal habits behind. do you have any advice for me?
not ready for animal house*

Dear Not Ready,

When you go back to college to learn how to use capital letters, you will find that you fit right in with the enrolled students again.

Why is it everyone asks you relationship questions? I know you're about as good as they come when it comes to the ladies, but it must be boring to answer the same questions all the time.

*Also, what kind of drink would you recommend for a guy who normally drinks darker beers, but is looking for the whole alcohol experience?
Joe*

Dear Joe,

I think a lot of people ask relationship questions because relationships are difficult and confusing. As for your question about drinks: lately I have been into that tequila that Sammy Hagar makes. It is really nice. It's called like Wobble Wobble or something. You can probably find it at the store.

Everyone I know seems to swear by a different kind of vodka. My friend Bill always has Absolut in his freezer, my friend Plake tells me that Grey Goose is the ultimate, I learned about Ketel One from you, I've heard people order "Stoly" at bars, and I've seen some brands with very very high price tags.

I've wondered if there really is a difference. I've tested the low end, and found that cheap, cheap vodka has a gasoline taste that I don't like. I would love to have a "vodka tasting" at my house, but it would cost quite a lot of money to buy a bottle of each premium vodka to taste.

So, Ray, can you tell me if there is a qualitative difference between brands of vodka, and if so, could you attempt to describe how gray goose differs from Ketel One?

Doug

Dear Doug,

This is a very good letter, and a very complicated question. The plain truth about vodkas is that, yes, the more you pay the better it will taste when drunk chilled and straight. Most inexpensive vodka is sold to be mixed and tastes rather nasty plain.

I personally prefer grain-distilled vodkas such as Ketel One and Grey Goose, as I enjoy their lighter body and flavor, but there are those who enjoy the thicker body of potato vodkas such as Chopin. Definitely get your friends together and sample vodkas, as that sort of party always ends up with a lot of incredible fun being had. Don't let them help pay for the vodka up front: wait until they're good and lucid on the stuff, and then they'll try to act all kingly and pay you like way too much.

Give this a try:

"Chile 'N Cheese Roll-Ups"

Ingredients

4 ounces soft cream cheese

1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

4 ounces diced green chiles

1/2 cup sliced green onions

1/2 cup chopped ripe olives

4 six-inch flour tortillas

1 case beer

Instructions

Combine first five ingredients. Spread mixture evenly on the tortillas. Warm the tortillas slightly to soften but not hot enough to melt mixture, too hot will make it hard to spread. Roll up and wrap in plastic wrap and chill for 2 hours or can be made ahead for the next day. Just before serving, slice the roll-ups into about half inch rolls and watch your guests try to guess what is inside! Drink the beer. Makes about 48.

Thank you reader

What is your position on Strip Clubs and places like that. I like to go there, but feel like a chump the next day. Is there a way I can still see some naked asses but not feel like some sort of country rube when I walk out?

P.

Dear P.,

Why do you feel like a “country Rube” when you walk out of a strip club? Experience tells me that you may feel bad about spending so much money on something that should essentially be free (naked waving of ass in the face) but come on now, let’s be real here. Someone had to build that building, and hire strippers, and give them a place to get ready, and get a liquor license, and rent a gleaming pole, and that ain’t cheap. People pay like nine dollars each to see “The Matrix II” but you won’t tip a dollar per dance to some lady who is creating an intriguing show just for you?

My position on strip clubs is that I love them and they are a lot of fun.

My girlfriend and I broke up but are still great friends, seeing as we always have a good time even when our pants are on. We want to keep spending time together and also have sex together, but also see other people. Is this a bad idea? Will it threaten our new friendship?

B.F., Madison, WI

Dear B.F.,

Okay, so you have this lady who wants no commitment but still wants to regularly “Enact a Humping Congress” with you. Obviously that’s a pretty decent situation, but as soon as she’s got all kinds of slimy guys on her “roster” you’re probably going to feel weird about “Collecting Taxes From That Ass.” This is basically turning into a situation where someone wakes up with “AIDS” so I guess you should just double-bag your little “Franking Privilege” and enjoy some “Pork-style Politics” while “I Continue to Mimic the Zagat Guide.”

Why is it that males whom I would otherwise consider not entirely devoid of intellect ask questions that boil down to, "What will impress The Ladies?" As if we a) were all exactly the same and b) could be obtained by a scam, as long as it were exactly the right scam?

Puzzled By Previous Questions.

Dear Puzzled,

Men want to impress ladies because they have a strong desire to mate with them. Sure, most guys don’t really have the best approach, but did you know that the dogs who climb on the most lady dogs eventually get one of the lady dogs to let them stay on? This was a study done by the University of Chicago in like 1582

In a few weeks I can look forward to the date where I come of legal age to imbibe alcohol in our fine nation. I'm not a totally inexperienced drinker by any means, but, well, I doubt I have the class to know exactly how to go about downing liquor like you do, seeing as how you drink enough to [etc]. So here's my question: come my 21st, I want to get good and tight, but what should I drink? I don't know much about liquor, but I want to pass out in style. What's your advice?
"Nearly Legal" In San Antonio, TX

Dear Nearly,

Identify a particular category of drink (beer, wine, clear liquors, colored liquors, etc) and stay within that category. Would you put seventeen different kinds of fuel in a car? Man, treat yourself like a Formula-1 vehicle and reap the rewards.

Settle a bet for me. If one were to take out their own eyeball and eat it, would it be similar to biting into a grape or sucking on a jawbreaker? My friend and I have been debating this for years but neither of us has the cojones to try it.
PM

Dear PM,

Not really sure about this one. Glad you wrote though. Good luck.

Regarding your response to Mr. Clean Plate Club, I have to say I am disappointed in you. Obviously the solution to his problem lies in requesting a different kind of garnish. Any bartender worth his salt rimmer knows that the best garnish for a vodka martini is a twist of lemon. I can tell you from personal experience that a twist also has a way of impressing the ladies.
Beachview Bartendress

Dear BB.,

Yes, a twist is a perfectly acceptable garnish for a martini. But why do you have to get all on your high horse and treat me that way? Damn, lady, I am feeling hella burned right now.

I seem to have trouble with opening lines [and] the ladies. I always seem to give the impression that I'm wanting to be their friend. And you know there's nothing worse than being stuck in the 'friend zone'. How do you get past this without being a complete asshole (Australian spelling,) I mean, no one wants to be a prick, but I seem to over-do that.
N., Australia

Man, you are doing the worst thing possible: acting like you're another girl. Being all "the friend." All "listening" and all that. A woman wants a Man! Capital M! Long D! Jackhammer hips!

Be the man that women talk ABOUT, not TO. Because the man that women talk TO is essentially another woman, at least sociologically.

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Jul 2, 2003

Advice Column for July 2, 2003

Ray continues to answer* actual reader questions. Got an issue? Need some advice? Email ray(@)achewood.com. Serious inquiries only, please.

H E R E W E G O !

Ray, I have worked with many a she-bartender, and I can tell you that those girls have to be ready to straight up immasculate [sic] a guy at any given moment. They're not only dealing with men, but drunk men that are dumb enough to pay for Budweiser. Now, I'd say you come off as one slick son of a bitch, so [Beachview Bartendress's] attitude was more than likely just defensive instinct kicking in. So don't feel too bad about it.

-Dawa

Dear Dawa,

I always find lady bartenders kind of kinky. You know they have to deal with all kinds of nasty "shit" what with people who fight and throw up and have relations in the bathroom before leaving and stuff. I like a woman who can hold her own in those situations.

I guess this is not really advice so much as me saying that I like tough, kinky women. Thank you.

I am a pretty decent cook, but unfortunately my recipe canon is limited to "pasta" and "more pasta" and "things that taste like pasta." And "dessert." I am cooking for an upcoming date, and would like to try something different. You have many signature drinks; do you also have a signature recipe I could attempt to duplicate for this occasion? Thanks for your help.

Kitchen Bunny, PA

Dear Kitchen Bunny,

I think I can set you up. Pasta is pretty easy and pretty versatile, so a lot of cooks sort of use it as a crutch when they're cookin'. You know what I do that is pretty fun? I hella just cook up what I call "childhood food"! If you have a date comin' over, don't try to impress him by like baking a whole sea bass in a salt crust with Mario Batali's face all carved into the salt like Mount Rushmore. Have some fun, show your sense of humor!

Make grilled cheese sandwiches, Campbell's tomato soup, and Strawberry Quik! I guarantee you a dude will love this food and in time he will grow to love you for who you really are.

I am in love with two people, I think. They are both very smart, funny, wonderful people. One is my highschool sweetheart, one is a guy I met in college. I have been seeing both of them, simultaneously, for about a year now. Does that make me a horrible person? I feel kind of bad about this and should probably choose one of them- I have a lot of history with my highschool boyfriend, obviously, but the college guy buys me flowers and indulges all my kinks. Which should I go for? Of course, I am still young and cute and carefree, and they live 500 miles apart, so I could conceivably keep seeing both of them. What do you think?

-JD

Dear JD,

I think at the core of your situation is the so-called Phrygian knot. Both relationships are irredeemably infected with the deception you have perpetrated, and like a mother bird you should dash these hopeless eggs to the ground before they mature any further. I am sorry to be the one to tell you this but perhaps in the future you will think more about the lives you are hurting in pursuit of free flowers and two minutes of insincere cunnilingus.

Sometimes writing a song can be troubling and difficult to start. [...] Sitting in front of all the drum machines and 'puters and robots get me down when I really want to say something personal and write a song that tugs on the heartstrings of all the [etc]. But with all the cybernetic implants and firewire cables it takes for me to make music, it seems that i should "Man-Up" and learn how to play the guitar. Any words of wisdom?

T.D.o.B.W in Allston Rock City

Dear TD,

I think I see what you are saying. You are sad that you need computers and other "dishonest" digital equipment to make music. Music should come from a more meaningful place than an "Apple Macintosh G4 Qube." Music should come from the heart and ideally use an honest, real-time instrument such as a simple wooden guitar.

One time I thought I would try to be like all this romantic poet and I went out in the woods with a nylon 6-string and a bottle of straw Chianti, all planning on writing some beautiful song...I didn't know what I was doing and I fell down and broke the guitar, but I know what you mean.

Since I never really got the hang of the guitar I asked Téodor to give you some advice. He said that the most important thing you can do is develop an articulate right hand? Is that right? He went off on some sort of "telephone essay" about cellists and emotion and shit but I think what he means is to focus on your right hand. Did this help? Man, I'm sorry. I don't know what in hell he meant. Maybe he should have like a "Guitar Corner" here. Crap.

Lying on the floor of my bedroom is a bottle of Jim Beam my cousin gave me for my 21st. I'm not a drinker of wide experience but it turns out I hate bourbon. I'm now 22 and short on funds for what I DO like (scotch, guinness.) So how do I get this damned bourbon down me as pleasantly as possible?
Anonymous, Internet

A-ha! You say you hate bourbon, but you do like Scotch! I think we have the keystone which will unravel this puzzle.

Jim Beam is a good bourbon which you can drink straight, along with the other name brand American whiskeys such as Jack Daniels, Knob Creek, Ancient Situation, etc. I'm guessing that if you like Scotch but don't like bourbon you are turned off by its relative sweetness. Certain palates find the extra sugar in bourbon medicinal. Drinking it over ice reduces this sensation somewhat, but if you still find that you can't stomach its extra sugar we'll do something counter-intuitive and mix it with three parts of cola. I think you'll find that anyone on earth can enjoy a nice, sweet bourbon and Coke.

*I DEFINITELY helped you with **this** advice.*

A couple of months ago, I got over a depression that has been with me for three years on and off now. To get to the point, I am scared that I'm going to get depressed again. Any advice?
—Pathetic in CT

Dear PCT,

First of all, I am glad to hear that you have defeated a long-standing depression. I know that must have been quite an ordeal, based on my experiences with friends who also suffer from depression. You are to be congratulated. I am wondering how your depression was alleviated, be it therapeutically, chemically, "spiritually," or none of the above. I guess my advice is not to suffer alone with this problem and to seek the help of someone who is trained in treating it, as it will definitely recur. I mainly deal with the subjects of mixed drinks and aggressive sexual conquest.

Hello Ray, it's me again. Lonely Outcast from Buffalo. As far as what's wrong with me, I have no clue at all. I'm not that dumb, not that fat, and not that ugly (at least I don't think so). You can catch a glimpse at me here:

<http://servidas.org/photos/me.jpg>

I'm 16 in that picture, and I got a short normal looking hair cut now but you get the idea. I'm a little shy, like with starting conversations, but once they get going I can be real easy to talk to. Sorry I can't be more descriptive, but I don't even know what to look for and like you said, I don't have anyone to ask. Any advice you have would be much appreciated.
Thanks in Advance, Lonely Outcast, Buffalo, NY

P. S. It's okay to link that picture, my host can handle it and I don't mind.

Dear Lonely,

By all accounts, you look like a young Bob Dylan. Bob Dylan is one of the most famous people in the world, so no foul there. And it doesn't seem as though there is anything particularly problematic with your appearance, if in fact you are telling the truth when you say that you went and got an actual normal haircut.

Listen, guy. I am gonna take you under my wing and we are gonna do one of those "Actual Hollywood Makeovers" via the Internet! Each week you and I are gonna consult on a particular area and we are gonna make you into a Honeymoon Hero! I am not saying that you will get married or anything, but maybe at least we can pinpoint what's going on with you being so lonely.

My first tip is to get way better glasses. Send in the latest photo and we'll work from there. Also good would be a darker shirt; women hate a man in a white shirt.

I used to be a big vodka martini man (Belvedere or Grey Goose [are] my preferred labels) but I've moved to another country where it's tough to get anything better than Absolut, which I personally find very over-rated. I like gin and tonics, and am considering a move over to gin martinis, i.e., with Bombay Sapphire or some other top-shelf brand. Is it possible - or wise - to make such a big switch? I love the whole martini experience, but won't do it without top-flight hooch.
~JM, Sydney

Dear JM,

You would be surprised to hear how many people scoff at such a question. Not me, though. It's all about the sugar, and boy do I hate a big-bodied gin or vodka. Crisp is the name of the game, and I am ready to slap anybody who does not belong in the game, completely slap them on their faces and the sides of their heads/ears. I will slap them.

It sounds like you'll need to move over to an extra-dry gin martini, and the down-low on gin is that the ~80 proof Plymouth or Gordon's are the best ones going. Tanq and Bombay are way too strong at like 95 proof, tasting too harshly of alcohol. Either way, take these shaken with a twist in a chilled glass.

I'm having lady trouble. I fear that I am now in the deadly "friend" category with this foxy girl I know, when for the last week or so I thought I had been getting signals. [...] She's even bringing me a home-cooked meal at work! I fear, however, that I have just been relegated to "friend" because her ex-boyfriend is putting the moves on her, and she's been talking more and more about him lately. [...] That said, what's a guy to do? At the very least, how does one extricate himself from the "friend" list?
Thanks much, J. B.

Dear JB,

Okay, it sounds like you are having trouble interpreting the signals this lady is giving you. Her signals show that she is interested in her ex-boyfriend. Her act of bringing you food at work shows that she is trying to be good to men in general (i.e., a useful woman) while she is unsure of how she actually feels about particular individuals. The food act is probably a generalized symbol of atonement. It is a strong indicator that she has a functional sense of moral obligation, but essentially you have no chance of scoring.

Who would win in a fight, a Polar Bear or a Walrus?

N.S., Internet

Dear NS.,

Polar bears are larger and much more powerful. There is no chance that a walrus would ever win a fight with a polar bear on dry land. If they were under the water the polar bear would abandon the fight and there would be no clear winner. Hope this helps.

As a popular and sentient cartoon cat, and therefore as fine a candidate as any for a democratic presidential nomination, what is your stance on the current curtailing of American civil rights? I know this is a forum for asking questions about alcohol mostly, but I could really use some insight into how and why we are all being led by fear towards an Orwellian state where Big Brother is always watching. Please advise.

-J.H., Chicago

Dear JH,

Your letter makes a lot of assumptions about my political leanings. In fact, it's mainly kind of a jerked-up advertisement for college-style thinking! In reality, you just pay your taxes and they are misused sometimes and used properly some of the time. No one ever guaranteed anyone a life in Utopia, so just go suck on your "college lollipop" until you realize that your "wonderful childhood" is "over."

For the last week, I've wrestled with a regrettable priapic condition - I've had a five-day stiffy [sic] and no matter what I do, I can't bring it to heel. My dong is strictly average in length, but it's freakishly thick, and when engorged, its girth is very, very noticeable. I've gotten so many smug looks that I've begun waiting til everyone's left for lunch to use the men's room. You seem to have gotten over this hangup we call "modesty". What's your secret?

Yours Truly, Jumbo in Colombo.

Dear Jumbo,

Alright, alright, I didn't need to know about the thickness thing. Man, actually I think you are making up this letter so that you can be weird. On the off chance that you aren't, you should see your nearest doctor because this sort of condition can permanently damage your (admittedly gross) cock.

I used to be friends with this girl who lives far away, and we used to write letters back and forth. I haven't written her back in a year and a half, and I don't know why, probably just depression. What does a person write in a letter after that amount of time. [...] And don't say "write anything, it doesn't matter" because that's BS and you know it. Even if you were happy to get a letter, it would still be in the back of your mind.
H.D., Internet

P.S. If you don't feel like answering this for the column, I will straight up pay you to write the letter for me.

Dear HD,

You sound kind of angry at me, but that's cool. Maybe we dated before and I forgot? I don't want to be a jerk to a woman who has become a lesbian after dating me. I think lesbians are among the greatest people to talk to, because they are strong and humorous and most of all, honest. So if you are a lesbian woman, just know that I totally respect you, and that we'd probably have a great talk over a beer or chai sometime. Maybe we can catch up soon. -- Ray.

Ya know, Ray, you must get frustrated sometimes, everyone all writing you with "what should I drink?" and "How do I get with the ladies?" and such. Like alcohol and copulation are the ONLY vices in which the true gentleman can indulge! Personally, I would like to know your views on fine cigars. Do you smoke them? If so, what country/brand do you swear by?
Macanudo Man, NJ

Dear Macanudo Man,

I don't actually smoke cigars. I find that they completely dull the palate for at least 24 hours. I really don't understand the tradition, in fact. I like to get a smooth post-prandial buzz off some quality tobacco smokes such as Nat Shermans, smokes which I can taste as well as mellow out on.

Surely B.F. shouldn't be double-bagging the "franking priviledge;" [sic] the condoms will rub against each other, increasing the likelihood of catastrophic breakage and "waking up with AIDS." B.F. wants one of those "extra-strong" condoms made for "anal sex" if he's particularly concerned.

You probably already know that, and I know you've got the disclaimer and all, but the multibagging thing is a dangerous meme to propagate. Everything else is fine.

Dear Reader,

Thank you for bringing up this point. I would like to reiterate that anyone who does anything based on what I, a cartoon cat, says, holds me in total eternal indemnity, because I was joking, and also I am fake.

I was reading a book about dolphins, and there was a chapter on dolphins that seem to seek out the company of humans, like 'Opo' in New Zealand or the Monkey Mia dolphins in Australia. And there was a description of a bottlenose dolphin off the coast of England who likes to swim and play with people, and get this, he quite often sticks his penis out and tries to get it between their legs.

In your opinion, is it bestiality if the animal started it? And should we maybe stop swimming with dolphins if we are giving them the wrong impression? I don't want to lead anyone on.
Sarah

Dear Sarah,

If a dolphin wants to have sex with you then you should probably just go back on the beach.

Sup ray hows it goin chief. Now boss man i got this major beef with my mate Tom u see this guy is one stellar bloke but his bitch has got him under her thumb, dude im talking sum major leash action here like how Schwarznegger owns that Achillion dudes ass in The Running Man. So anyway comrade,Toms now bitchin abt how he can no longer go out on the sauce or partake in the herb coz his missus says so i mean fuck sake man wots a mate to do i mean he IS gettin his bone on but fuck sake man he aint drinkin no more man dude hes been sober for almost 2 weeks now it hurts inside man u dig?
Big G , Scotland

Dear Big G.,

I love the way you talk! You are like how Russell Crowe probably would sound if he had any friends. Unfortunately, he is an angry little "brown pebble" and I should probably just end this here.

PS You can't change this guy's life so don't try, the old days are unfortunately over for him.

On the 25th of June, a reader by the moniker PM asked if eyeballs were soft (like a grape) or hard (like a jawbreaker.) I believe I can help. I once had the ate a [? -sic] rabbit's eyeball, and it was more like a grape than a jawbreaker. It had a sort of skin or shell, which, while soft, was not as soft as the inside.

As far as why I ate it, it had been a week and a half with no food, and they're full of electrolytes (which give you a bunch of energy when consumed in mass quantities.) I hope this hellps PM and PM's friend, while keeping them both with two eyes.

Dear Eyeball Eating Person,

Thank you.

Do you have any suggestions for a really tasty vegetarian entree? Something kind of nice, you know, for impressing ladies or special occasions. I used to make this orange pepper risotto but I'm kind of tired of it now and looking for something really good to feed my vegetarian friends at my next dinner party.

(I hope you're not one of those snotty meat-eaters that won't even try a vegetarian dish.)
Thanks! — SPS

Dear Vegetarian,

I guess I do eat meat but I can still think of some things which you may like to cook, even though you have pre-emptively insulted me. A Nicoise salad without the tuna, a gardenburger with grilled onions and sharp cheddar cheese...you know what? *Fuck you vegetarians.* It's like, every time you write in for help you're actually just looking for another opportunity to push your retarded agenda. Meat is part of the diet. Did you see those sharp teeth in the mirror the last time you pretended to smile? Eat it in moderation, buy it from

responsible sources. Don't go flappin' your pussy lips in my face just because you misunderstand your place in the food chain.

I *hate* that shit.

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Jul 9, 2003

Advice Column for July 9, 2003

Ray continues to answer* actual reader questions. Got an issue? Need some advice? Email ray(@)achewood.com. Serious inquiries only, please.

H E R E W E G O !

*I try to be like you, but I look horrible in a thong. Can you recommend an exercise regime?
S.B., Colorado Springs*

Dear S.B.,

Just like how Mr. T is the only one who can get away with his unique signature haircut, I guess I am sort of the only guy whose body lines are in unique harmony with this little black devil. I wouldn't try exercising if you don't already—it's something you either do or don't do. If you're mellow, stay mellow. Don't fake a bunch of energy.

My lady's parents hate me—partly because I am also a lady, and partly because they are extremely rich and sophisticated, while I am more "down to earth". Do you think I should try to get them to like me, or just figure that they never will and get on with my life? Getting them to like me would probably involve (for starters) learning Spanish (they are Puerto Rican), learning which of many forks one should use when at a fancy restaurant that I could never afford to go to, and possibly becoming a celibate nun.

Thank you, cartoon cat!

P.S. This girl is FINE, and also, I really like her a lot.

Dear Lady,

Yeah, have you seen Six Feet Under on HBO? The Puerto Rican guy, "Rico," is also totally against gay sexuality. He *hates* it. It's too bad that Puerto Ricans have sort of been painted as "the future of Republicanism," but what are you gonna do. Maybe they'll take over the White House, and then it will be awesome Adobo pork sandwiches for everyone.

As you probably know, I have a really soft spot in my heart for lesbians. I even have this special part of my corkboard to which I staple pictures of my lesbian readers. Send in your picture(s), you crazy holding-out chica(s)!

Anyhow, as far as the parents go, don't live your life around them. They may flex, they probably won't. Why let someone who hates you determine how you feel about yourself? That sounds like a couple of *male objects* on the chin, and I know you aren't into that!

Hm. Looking back over this advice, I guess it is not very helpful. Let's see if I can do better.

Ahem! Lady, this girl's parents are ALWAYS gonna dislike whoever their daughter brings home because they aren't down with her being gay. So just do your thing! It's your lives, not theirs. You and your sexy chica should send me some photos.

I've been married for just a few months, and life in the bedroom is swell. I was just wondering if you had any experience with Tantric Sex, because we've got this book on the shelf we haven't pulled down yet, but I thought I'd consult the Baron of Bone before I gave it a spin. Have [you] tried this amazing technique or is it for the birds?

J in Atlanta

Dear J.,

All I know about Tantric Sex is that someone told me that Sting does it. Allegedly he can do it for like nine hours or something? Anyhow, whatever. It all sounds like homework to me. If you need a book to tell you how to get a massive freak on, then you need to get a massive freak on with the idea that you are a *nerd*.

This is my problem. My girl can't handle her liquor but she likes to drink. I'm always cutting her off because I don't want to be on Puke Patrol anymore, plus it's not good for the "bedroom activities," if you know what I mean. The thing is, she gets like one cosmopolitan in her and she's done. I'm on beer number 2 and not even clipping a buzz yet and she's slurring her speech. If I don't slam my beers or take shots, I'm on "drunk watch" before I got a buzz. I tried suggesting other drinks with less alcohol but she doesn't like beer (sigh, women) or the various Bacardi Silver type drinks, or "college drinks" like a screwdriver or rum&coke. She's classy enough to want a martini or other respectable mixed drink, and she can handle the taste of straight liquor just fine, but her tolerance isn't up for it.

This isn't a problem at home where I can just slam a few mixed drinks to "catch up," or I can make her a weak drink. But out at bars you can't ask a bartender to make a weak drink without looking like a chump. What I need is a classy drink that a girl looks good holding and that she can drink a few of in a night. I figure most dudes would be happy if their girlfriend was a cheap date, but I really love this girl and want her to enjoy herself and don't mind shelling out the extra money for a successful evening.

D.R. in Chicago

Dear D.R.,

Man, this girl straight up has a problem. It doesn't sound like she should be drinking at all, since she has like zero tolerance for the stuff and routinely becomes a burden to her crew, who obviously know how to handle their stuff. But I'm not going to tell you which clinic to refer her to or anything, since I am a cartoon.

I think one good trick is to get the bartender to make the lady a mimosa. The best part about mimosas is that they make you take a real weird green shit the next morning, and so you kind of feel less sexy about drinking. Hope this helps.

So I do this thing where I get totally slammed and act like a big slut. I've ended up fucking a few guys that I'm not interested in under sober circumstances (the last one admitted he had a crush on me and now I feel crazy uncomfortable around him). So I end up feeling shitty for being a drunken whore, but at the same time, if there isn't a guy wanting to get in my pants I get pissed off and feel all rejected. On the flip (non-drunken) side, the scene never changes with the guys I am interested in. Like I get all stupid girly and lose the already minute amount of game I've got going on. I feel like I'm going to be alone for the rest of my life and it sucks hard balls. I think I need validation from men and it's sick. I just want a boyfriend.
L. P., Internet.

Dear L.P.,

It sounds like you like to let loose and have a crazy hedonistic time with strangers. It also sounds like you tend to feel guilty about this behavior later. Basically, there is a whole complicated set of reasons we could look into based on your analysis of self validation and self esteem. I am going to recommend that you see a professional therapist here, because I have been around the block with your type before and I got to tell you, no dude digs to be with a lady who will hop any old "Anonymous Johnson" once she downs a 7&7. Hope you find help.

I appreciate your stance on the herbivore diet, despite it's [sic] somewhat misguided assumptions (the human body is evolved to subsist on nuts, berries, bugs, etc.). However, I must know, how do you feel about dishes which use felis domesticus as their primary ingredient? Ordinary house cats, such as yourself, are consumed regularly in many Asian and African cultures, often as part of very complex and aromatic gourmet cuisine. The (your?) meat is somewhat gamey but with a delicate flavor, I hear...I wouldn't know because I'm a vegetarian, and would never eat you.
Gabe from Oregon.

Dear Gabe,

Way to go, playin' the big vegetarian card and sayin' that you wouldn't eat me because you are so amazing and full of advanced thoughts. I am so moved with these huge realizations I'm havin' about how your way of life is so kind and beautiful. *Dude, you wouldn't eat me because if you tried I would cold drop your narrow ass!*

Anyhow, ain't you watched "Walking With Cavemen" on Discovery? Those cavemen went *!!apeshit!!* when they could get their hands on some meat! Also, there was no "emotional" distinction between a gazelle and a potato, both were just food (although the gazelle was better food and helped them live longer and produce stronger children, which eventually led to your dumb ass existing and setting things in reverse). Sure, we have the luxury of plentiful food supplies, but to deny our omnivorous instincts just sounds like kind of a college/wimp thing. Tell me your chilies don't stand at attention every time you catch a whiff of barbecue.

Here's what I want you to do, Oregon Vegetarian: stand in front of a full-length mirror looking at your body, and then smile really nicely at your body as you say to it, *I am so much smarter than you.*

That is what it means to be a vegetarian.

Ray, in your column you have now twice made vodka recommendations [sic] and both times repeated the myth that better vodkas are necessarily more expensive. Vodkas, like tequilas, can't be gauged by price. Two of my favorites, Monopolowa, an Austrian potato vodka, and Wyborowa, which is a Polish rye, price in under \$20 a bottle and have both outdone Grey Goose and Absolut in tasting contests.

*So, what gives? You get commission from Chopin or something?
Gray, Chicago*

Oh man! I totally forgot about Monopolowa! It's tasty and a great deal at around ten bucks. I am not a "price fascist," (particularly when it comes to wine), but hey, up to a certain point you get what you pay for. I wouldn't go paying like three hundred dollars for a bottle of wine, because that is the height of asininity.

Anyhow, Monopolowa ain't exactly stocked in every corner grocery, so I didn't mention it. Personally, I find it at my local Underground Trader Joe's. Okay, let's move on.

*Lately I've been noticing that when I'm around people, awkward silences arise and I can't think of anything to say next. I've always considered myself a pretty good conversationalist, and it's only recently that I've had to suffer embarrassingly long pauses around others. What kinds of things should I be talking about to keep my conversations fresh, and what should I do when I can't think of anything to say?
Melissa*

Baby, sometimes the chemistry just ain't right. If you're just being your free-ballin' self then it's the other person's fault for having a small and uninteresting brain, unable to go with your flow. There are a lot of duds out there. Just look at how many people genuinely cared about the outcome of "American Idol" this year. I heard some reports that people actually bought CDs by people who were on that show! I mean, come on! Who cares if some overgrown meat-bug re-sings an already famous song with a generic band behind him, taking all the cojones out of the music? What a waste of various types of resources.

Anyhow, if you are having trouble warming people up, then just send me some photos of you and I will try to figure out how to help.

*Let me set this up for you. [Readers: you do not need to start a letter this way. --Ray] I met a fine woman who enjoys a smooth single-mail [sic] scotch (a rarity indeed!). However, she explains to me that her favorite scotch drink (with the straightest of faces) is "scotch n' blood." My initial reaction was perhaps the "blood" was the juice from a blood orange, which might be damn appealing. However, I could find no evidence online about the existence of "Scotch and Blood." Perhaps she is full of it. I'm a Chivas & Rocks man, I have no clue. Please help.
Evan R.*

Dear Evan,

There are more pet names for drinks than that Google can ever hope to hold. Let's just work with some common sense and perhaps we can arrive at the recipe which has come to be known as "Scotch 'N Blood" to this lady.

My initial thought is "Bloody Mary," so perhaps she has come up with some concoction where bloody mary ingredients are mixed with Scotch instead of vodka. Given the intensely-flavored nature of a bloody mary, this is entirely believable. Give it a try and see if you can't submit a recipe next week. Maybe also send some photos of the lady (this will help me to better judge what kind of lady she is).

Hope this helps.

Look, me and this girl have been nuts for each other for years. Recently we decided to become a little more than [sic] girlfriend/boyfriend (ie engagement plans). And now theres [sic...] a "friend" of mine who seems to be trying to wedge his way into our relationship. He has a history of skeezing on other guys [sic... :(] loves and keeps repeating to everyone "They come to me". What can I do to remedy the situation without injuring either party...most of all not injuring myself?

Mort

Dear Mort,

This guy doesn't sound like a very useful friend to keep around! Also, if you're so close with this girl that you are considering committing the rest of your lives to each other, you should be able to talk frankly about him. By not talking to her about him you are essentially disrespecting her intelligence, because she sees things just the same as you do. One of the biggest problems in the world is that all people think the rest of the people somehow have a weaker grasp on things than they do. I think this is because we all grew up watching Leave It To Beaver sitcoms where a child always tried to perpetrate a falsehood as far as he could. TV taught us that it was okay for Beaver to help hide Eddie Haskell's stolen comic books inside a giant steaming teacup on a billboard, only to later be rescued by his father after getting stuck in the teacup, and be forgiven after a meaningless slap on the wrist.

Anyhow, if some guy is trying to muscle in on an established relationship then he's just a garden-variety sociopath and should be omitted from your life. If your girl is genuinely too dumb to see him for what he is, then get rid of her too. Maybe someday after the dude goes insane and has a transsexual operation they'll both wind up in the same prison and poison each other with D-Con. Just a thought.

I am 27, recently single, and about to start my 2nd year of law school. I have no desire to relive the cheap beer and sleazy hook-ups of my college days, but I am getting my J.D. from my undergrad alma mater and I find myself back at the same bars, drinking the same beer, and surrounded by the same throngs of 18-22 year olds as in the days of yore.

I have never had too much difficulty with the ladies, Ray, [over 150 pages omitted here. —Ray.] but the grad school dating pool is small and relatively unattractive. How do I approach a lady 5-8 years younger than myself? And what does a man who prefers a diamond juice martini order in a bar where \$2 pitchers are the rule?

California Urbanite Trapped in Virginia College Town

Dear CU,

Man, that was like readin' *Moby Dick* or James Clavell's *Yokohama* or something. Way too long! May I give you a tip? Please ask *at least* one question every sixty-five pages.

Alright, let's look over what you said, which took you so long to say. Basically, you are older than the girls you're back at school with, and even though you use a lot more words than them when you communicate, you would like to date from their pool and not out of the pool of women your own age. I guess you are saying that the women your own age who are still in college are kind of "stringy-haired" and sort of "extremely messed up." Hell, I'd believe it. Any chick (or dude, for that matter) who was still going to college after the regular college part of life probably played the violin way too much as a kid, essentially locked in a room with like the Periodic Table of the Elements on the wall.

Anyhow, you want to relate to younger, more sophisticated women. It may surprise you to hear that lots of younger women drink liquor instead of beer. I bet there are lots of honeys who want you to take them off-campus for a better scene than the usual on-campus Natural Light assembly line. Maybe park your car outside of the Student Union with a banner made out of your white bedsheet, on which you have written in shoe polish that you are going off-campus to buy sophisticated cocktails.

I used to do tech-support alongside a man with a worse case of acute-Tourette's syndrome than had ever been parodized [sic] in any joke or movie. Having a voice like Pavarotti, he would blurt obscenities, and sexpletives, and slurs at well over 130db. Evaluating him, it seems like the disease keeps you from refraining to speak your mind. Is this why more improvisational forms of lyrical music seem to involve so much profanity, because there is not enough time to filter out inappropriate word choices? Similarly, I often find myself whispering to nobody about how a person or object is a mother-fucking-cunt and how I intend to set the entire world on fire.

Man, a cussing Pavarotti! Fully belting it out! 'FUUUUUUCK AAAAAAAAAALLLLLLL YOUUUUUUUUUU shitFAAAAACES!' That sounds awesome...except I know that in truth it is just a depressing manifestation of an unhealthy mind.

Anyhow, I think that the reason most freestyle/improvisational forms of lyrical music are plagued with profanity is because the average mind is not up to such an intensely creative task. Cuss words are perhaps the easiest way to provoke a reaction from people when you don't have an actual idea to convey. A lot of stand-ups work "blue" for this very reason. It's just a crutch. Shock value only goes so far before you get pigeonholed as a person who lacks new ideas, and instead just goes around telling people that he looked in the mirror at his own clenched purple asshole.

These are just my ideas.

I have a history question for you: what ever happened to the Tiki/Polynesian lounges of the 50s and 60s? There don't seem to be many left. I know some of them were pretty campy, but they still seem like they would have been a good place to get your slant on. And if you could play Nostradamus for me, can you tell me if you think they will ever come back?
Tiki Tom

Hi TT,

Tiki bars weren't ever big enough to get campily resurrected as a full-fledged nationwide "retro" cultural movement (such as what happened with disco or hippie stuff), so they'll always just be tangential. Plus, all that dried grass stuff is a fire hazard and a target for mildew.

Hm. How to predict when they will come back in full fashion? I predict that they will come back in the year 55378008, the year which when, typed into a calculator and turned upside down, spells "BOOBLESS."

Just a fun thought I had just now. --Ray.

I'm not really into alcohol so much, but i've [sic] found it to be both inconvenient and a little shameful to have to always get a soda. I've tried beer, vodka, and some wines, admittedly the cheap boxed kind, and i've [sic] found them mostly unpalatable. So i come to for [sic] [sic] advice, what do you advise drinking that's not too hard or bitter, but not too sweet either?

T.R. in MA

Dear T.R.,

It's totally cool if you don't naturally enjoy alcohol. Just like how some people can't stand the flavor of chocolate or hate the smell of a rose, so is alcohol an unpleasant substance to some. What I want to do is recommend a drink to you that will (a) not raise suspicions of you being a weirdo teetotaler, and (b) be pleasant to drink.

I asked Pat what he likes to drink, since he is kind of weird and uptight about drinking, and he said (after he read the laser printout I made of your letter) that you probably haven't ever really had any good wines. I said "fine, fine, Pat, but he isn't gonna get any good wines as a totally new consumer of wines, buying by the glass at bars and restaurants," and then Pat just sort of acted the way he does and left. So! I came up with a cocktail for you to ask for. It is called a Hornsby's Cider, and it is actually a cider and not a cocktail, and there are other brands of cider usually on tap such as Wyder's or Blackthorn etc., but there you go. Slightly alcoholic, not so sweet as a soda, and you won't look *too* crazy ordering one. If that doesn't work out for you, just get a Guinness. There is no way that somebody doesn't like a Guinness.

Does beer really make you fat? Or does it just make you tired and lazy, and the tired and lazy makes you fat?

Tim, San Diego

Dear Tim,

Life makes you fat. When you are a kid you all just run around and stuff and it is just the most wonderful time. When you get older you love that you have earned some peace and quiet and tend to overdo it on the "relaxation" thing. Beer has nothing to do with it. As I have said a hundred times before, don't blame alcohol for your problems. Blame yourself for using alcohol as the solution to your problems, which were caused by you being lazy and just drinking a bunch of alcohol, which can be a lot of fun.

Back in April, I slept with this incredible punk rock girl, took her cherry even. No real problem so far, in fact, she was more than grateful, but she is much younger than I. To make matters even worse she is my buddy's ex-girlfriend and he's still way into her. I told myself that I would just sweep it under the carpet and stop seeing her, but she seems bent on continuing it and I am not strong enough to say no to such a super rad girl. Now I'm seeing her several times a week and I find myself digging her more and more. I don't want my bro to feel like I've betrayed him and I certainly don't want to end up in trouble over her, but I really do feel something for her and don't wanna let her go, I've been lonely too long and this girl is everything I've wanted. What's a poor guy to do?

Country, VT

Dear "Country Hick Ham Bacon Meat Onion Skillet,"

Okay all right I will answer your question. If you really think that a girl is a piece of social wampum and that somehow this particular girl is still subservient to your friend, then you should just date an oven mitt. If you are able, at my recommendation, to respect another...ah, forget it. You kids and your problems. I really don't care and don't have the time. Basically, you'll just mess around for a few years and then eventually settle into a more stable routine where things make sense to you. Try not to get AIDS. Always use a condom on whatever part of your body you are messing around with.

do you think it's ok to pretend to be sensitive, just to get laid?
-insensitive and horny

In terms of your question, I guess you should just do whatever you feel like. If you like to lie to someone in order to get some sex on, then do that. Try not to get AIDS, or to spread it. Personally, I don't have to lie to get some country-style ham-n-jam, if you know what I'm saying.

Man, whoah! "Country-style ham-n-jam" was totally wrong for the image I was trying to get across just now. It's this damn "Unix" word processor I'm using while my Powerbook's in the shop. Where the hell is the "delete" key?! ^X ^C which one did he say it was]B]D]B]D SAFFAFFFFDDDDDD

I haven't had a drink for over 16 years now though I did my best to swallow all I could until then. [long boring stories omitted here --Ray.]

Anyway, it's a long time between drinks and I'm getting tired of smoking even the best Dutch shit which is why I can't remember that hotel's name. What else can I get high on that won't make me head for the booze?

T. P., Dallas, TX

Dear TP,

So, you turned from alcohol to weed and now you are tired of weed. Hm. I guess some people get "high" by running like a triathlon or something, or by helping people who only have one leg to learn to walk again, or something. I guess if you aren't into that then just get some Scotch, that can be a lot of fun. I also understand that a few people like to get into Bondage and hit each other.

Recently my friends and I have had a good number of drinking parties. For whatever reason though, I just can't seem to have much fun at them. I'm not sure what bothers me or what's missing, and no matter how I approach the party as far as mood goes, I just can't get into it. Is there something you do at parties that help[s] you get into them and really enjoy yourself?

Anonymous, Internet

Dear Anonymous,

It sounds like you're bored. I don't know what you are bored *with*, but you are bored if you are not having a good time at a thing where your friends are. You probably already know what it is you would rather be doing and you should just do that instead.

Personally speaking, I always love a party, and if the party doesn't have its foot on the pedal then I mess with the stereo and start a drinking game. Every party needs a President, and sometimes I just have to swear myself in and wrest control from whoever it is that's throwin' the bloodless shindig (usually Pat).

I've got a dilemma I could use your help on. My ideal night on the town is going to my favorite pub here in Austin and having a pint, and kicking back with good friends for good conversation. When I go back home to visit old friends (which I do fairly often), I'm generally roped into hanging out in some terribly cheesey bar with disco lights and blaring "top 40" music. My question is this: is there any way to tell your friends that you don't like their "scene" without completely offending them, or do I have to endure watching people in shiney clothes dance to the latest horrible Justin Timberlake song if I want to see my friends?

Fed-Up Cowgirl, Austin, TX

Dear Fed-Up,

No, they will always like this stuff because this is who they are and where they are going to stay. You will gradually evolve away from these people and create new roots in the place where you've relocated. Eventually you won't hear from your old friends so much anymore, but you won't notice. Everything should turn out awesome.

I'm at a point where I have to make some decisions about my future. I have a year left in program at a "technical institution" (college). I will be certified to work in the radio industry, as an announcer, producer, writer, whatever. The problem is that I have a passion for education that I don't want to leave untapped. Everyone says "teach broadcasting!" as if they're a genius for coming up with this. I want to teach highschool English. I just don't know how I'll afford all the school it takes to be a teacher after all the school it took to be a broadcaster.

Do I go for it and hope I can afford it, or do i suck it up, do what I was trained for and give broadcasting a shot? I think i'd be good in either field. Please give this some serious thought.

Mr DJ

Dear Mr. DJ,

Radio broadcasting is actually pretty unimportant. Plus, you wouldn't get to do anything interesting in that field until you had like twenty years' career experience (you would mostly be selling ad space to like a place that sells you a pizza while they wash your car). You should be a teacher, particularly since you want to do that more. Radio is extremely stupid. I'm sorry to be so boldly against what you have devoted your life to, but by your very inquiry I can tell that you want to change your plans.

I started seeing my first girlfriend when I was twenty-one. Now, eight months later, we're living together, and planning to do so at least until next summer, when she graduates. That's cool with me, but I think she's planning on us being together much longer. She likes me, she says I'm smart and funny and handsome and perfect for her, but I don't know if she's perfect for me. She's attractive and I like being with her, and the sex is great, but I don't feel like we connect in any deep way. I'm an easy going guy, I could probably live with her for the rest of my life and not be unhappy, but I don't know if that would be fair to her. Maybe it's not fair to me. Being single isn't too bad, and I might find someone better for me. What should I do?
K.S. in MI

Dear K.S.,

Whoops! Man, are you obvious. I have never seen a clearer case of a guy who wanted to ramble the hell out of "Boring Town." Your whole letter basically says that you are unfulfilled. Man, why the hell did you write to me? You know what you want to do, but you are a few buckshot shy of a full round, if you know what I'm saying. You've latched onto a good, stable relationship, but it's not what you're looking for. Break it off, life is a long time. Simply "not being unhappy" is not enough to tie the knot. Come on, idiot.

Sorry to be so rough. Pretend I am saying the word "idiot" with my arm around you, like a friend.

I have always been a gentleman, and now I have a great wife and a good kid, both of whom I love a lot. Last week I was in a class where I met this lady who really swept me away. We became great friends, and our conversations were [sic] immersing. Now that I've returned home, I'm still haunted by the experience.

There were no sketchy situations between us; we are both married. I'm not interested in getting lucky, as I'm quite lucky already. I guess what I'm looking for is a healthy way to cherish and cultivate this friendship, with respect to our marriage vows.
S., Internet

Dear S.,

Man, who are you kidding. You know where this is going. You think your wife is gonna be down with you having another "soul mate?" Don't be a bullshit-type guy. You're already worried about it getting out of hand. Go buy your kid some toys. You "friends with women" guys make me sick.

I've found my new favorite mixed drink, Kansas City Ice Water. Fill a tall glass with ice, 3/4 oz gin, 3/4 oz vodka. Shake. Add 1/2 oz lime juice, then fill with 7-Up. Garnish with a lime or a cherry. Make sure you don't overdo it with the lime juice, as it becomes far too bitter.

For hot July days, I've found a Kansas City Ice Water to be a perfect anywhere, anytime drink, should one somehow get tired of martinis. Thoughts?

Dear Anonymous,

That sounds tasty! I hope my readers make that drink and enjoy it. I didn't have any limes on the night I read your letter. Thank you.

I recently discovered tequila at a party, while doing shots. I usually stick to whisky when taking shots but I would like switch over. Can you offer a suggestion for a good chaser? Is there a particular brand that is the best?

PRG in Ottawa, Canada

Dear PRG,

If you're shooting tequila then it doesn't really matter what you're drinking. Good tequilas are like good cognacs or scotches; they are for savoring. I think what you really like to do is get trashed fast. Always make sure that you have your address written on a laminated card in your pocket, so the cab driver knows where to take you.

Ray, I need some advice. I am a reasonably cute girl (I guess) who works at a large chain bookstore, usually as a cashier. My problem is middle-aged men who think that my working retail is an invitation to hit on me. These guys will come in with their kids who are my age, all hella balding and usually sweating profusely/chuckling to themselves, and wink at me or make bumbling, vaguely sexual conversation while buying "The Kama Sutra: For Dummies" or "101 Erotic Haikus"- you know, just basically acting like sex-starved clowns while implying that I should do something about it. I have pepper spray, but as I like my job I have refrained from using it on customers. I've considered buying a fake wedding ring, gaining 90 pounds, and/or giving up showering altogether. Do you know of any ways I could discourage this sort of behavior?

MJ

Dear MJ,

Yes, stop working at Borders. Have some dignity.

Recently I was approached by a friend of mine looking to sign me up as an Amway distributor. It sounded like a pretty sweet deal, until any non-Amway-supported research I did made it seem like a cult-like pyramid scheme. Have you any experience or advice for these shady dealings? I'd appreciate hearing it.
Pete

Dear Pete,

I have no direct experience with Amway but from what I understand, most people can just buy Windex and dish soap at the grocery store, eliminating the need for door-to-door salesmen. *Have some dignity.*

I'm dating this great woman right now and she is working in Quebec City for the summer on a short contract. While there, she is living with her parents, who from my point of view are extremely cultured (ie. European). I've met them once before and felt like it was a positive experience and I would like to continue to leave a good impression with them when I stay with them. I'm considering bringing a gift, but I'm rather at a loss as to what I should bring. Is there some sort of protocol for this? I've thought of bringing a bottle of good wine, but am not confident that my tastes are discerning enough.

Obviously I'd like to impress them, and obviously you could just say something like "give something from the heart and they'll respect the real you" or something, but these people are French and the rules of try your best might not necessarily apply in this situation. However, any advice you could give me would be greatly appreciated.

T., Toronto

Whoo hoo! My last letter! Let's see what he needs.

Hm. It sounds like he is all biased about the French, due to the bad press they always get. Dude, don't do the wine thing. Wine is totally a French thing, you will just look like a rookie. Give them something you actually know anything about, whether it's a picture of hockey, a six pack of Molson, or something else appropriate to your own culture. The first mistake a lot of people make when trying to impress foreigners is to give them something from the foreigner's own homeland. Would it impress you if a Frenchman came to your house and brought you a Krispy Kreme donut? What would be the point of that? Who is learning anything there? *Have dignity.*

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Jul 16, 2003

Advice Column for July 16, 2003

Ray continues to answer* actual reader questions. Got an issue? Need some advice? Email ray(@)achewood.com. Serious inquiries only, please. But no more stuff about suicide!

H E R E W E G O !

What kind of noises do you think deaf people make during sex? You know, the kind that were born deaf?
Richard, *The Internet*

Dear Richard,

This is a very good question. I did not know the information you needed right away so I asked a friend of mine, Dr. Paul Andretti (you may have seen him in the strip, he is a very good doctor), what sort of exclamations the “congenitally deaf” make during intimacy. He thinks they make the usual sounds of passion but slightly weirder, like if their voices went through a “wah-wah” guitar pedal. I’m not sure if he was serious, he was in kind of a hurry to get off the phone.

Anyhow, for what it’s worth, you can probably find out for sure on-line. I personally have never gotten past second base with a deaf woman (my choice).

*As instructed, I'm including a picture of myself, just another loyal dyke on your bandwagon. I even ordered a thong the other day [shop URL omitted— this ain't the Yellow Pages!] so I could be just like you. I don't really have a question; you were just asking for pictures from your invert constituency, and I delivered. But in case I **have** to ask a question or I get booted out by your venomous email guards or something...well, see, it's like this: I'm butch. As you can see. And I go for the toughest, baddest-ass, bruiser-type butch girls. With biceps like girders and filthy mouths. But I'm also this, like, nerdy little pantywaist on the inside — I'm all into opera and reading and stuff. So how do I get an ass-slapping bulldagger who won't smack me down for my faggy proclivities? You don't have to answer this. But if you got any ideas, I'd sure be grateful.*

M. K., Internet

Dear M.K.,

I didn't include your picture here (legal stuff, etc.), but I did look at it. Anyhow, you look like a very tough customer in your black 3-piece men's suit and short gelled hair! I feel like I'm on Law & Order, and I'm the bad guy, and you're mad at me! Anyhow, I showed this picture to Téodor and he cleared up a few things for me that I did not know before.

I guess I didn't really know the main difference between a dyke and a lesbian. You'd think a guy with his own advice column would be more tuned into this stuff, but I guess a lot of the research I do is actually more about lesbians than dykes. Lesbians tend to wear almost no clothing and lie around in bed together, frenching, while I guess dykes are too busy to pose for Internet pictures because they are out punching men in the face and stealing their clothes.

Alright, enough of my waxin'. You want a big mean bitch of a lady, a real "Fifth-Gear Frances," someone who can take a bite out of a lead brick and spit out a small die-cast model of a sailing ship. Yet you worry that your own less-than-butch interests will make you unappealing to such a lady. Listen, M.K.! People who are all tough and mean on the outside are, I often find, the ones who also have the softest hearts. Why else would they develop the armor? The studded, chapped exterior is just extra protection for the vulnerable, beautiful tenderness that a dyke such as that has inside. Scratch a big old bull-dyke and find a diamond, the saying goes.

Ray, I was wondering what you think of the Atkins diet, because I think it's total bullshit. It seems like it would help you lose weight but then mess you up even worse than you were already. However, if you defend it, then I will be forced to stop telling people it's total bullshit.

Anonymous, Internet

Dear Anonymous,

Man, is your timing great! I was watchin' on TV tonight that like NBC news or something is doing this special segment where they help a bunch of fatties get in shape for their 25-year high school reunion. They all weigh between about 300 and 500 pounds, even the women.

Anyhow, one of the guys is using the Atkins diet! At first he was the total star, because he lost more weight than anybody. He would eat cooked hamburger patties for breakfast and lunch, and a steak for dinner. It seemed awesome. But then he got the gout! Ha ha! WHOOPS! (The gout is a disease that pirates got from not eating "carbs."). So, it looked like the diet worked for like fifty days or something, and then his body completely tried to die.

Therefore, it would seem like it is a bad diet, and just an excuse to eat beef entrées three meals a day. Also, Lyle basically lives on that diet and he's built like a bowling ball (Sorry, Lyle! You're ugly!).

I am a slightly kinky lady. But i am also a very good girl. I'd like my boyfriend to call me a dirty slut in bed but i don't know how to accomplish this without him beginning to think of me that way out of the context of the bedroom. Men are silly that way. A little help please?

Anonymous, Internet

Dear Anonymous,

Man, that ain't kinky! That's just boring. Kinky is, like, making your boyfriend wear a pig's carcass while getting it on in the mud. Your small ideas about what is kinky are *tame*.

*Man, I can't get it right. I dig grilling but don't seem able to buy the right cut of steak. I don't want to drop **too** much coin, but I want something tender and nice that will respond to a nice garlic/teriyaki marinade and then some blue cheese melted across the top of it at the last minute. What is the cut, Ray? And what about fat? What kind of marble should I be looking for?*

Tongs Agape In The Midwest

Dear Tongs Agape,

The best steaks for your grilling dollar are Ribeyes, Market Steaks and New York Strips. They don't really even need a marinade, although it sounds like you like to do that. If you buy them from a responsible butcher shop that gets that "sustainable-style" raised beef, they'll be full of tons of natural beef flavor.

Confidential to the same guy: you want all the marbling you can get, knucklehead!

MEOW --Ray--

In the last week before I quit my job, I was going to throw caution to the wind and ask a regular customer on a date. She didn't come to the store that week, so I missed my chance. My coworker and his buddy, who are friends of hers, have decided that since I am such a great guy (their words; I'm actually pretty modest) they must hook us up. So in a week they'll be bringing her out to a pub we usually hang out at, giving us a comfortable group situation to initially meet and possibly get to know each other. She is not aware that a setup is underway. Should she be informed? If she's not told, how should I act that night?

Feeling Sorta Sneaky, Canada

Dear Sorta Sneaky,

Man, I can't imagine a worse situation. I'm sorry your friends are doing this to you, all "forcing" an activity which needs to be spontaneous, plus misleading the key participant (don't pretend she won't notice that she is bait in a trap: girls have an eerie sense for this stuff). This is like the absolute best way to make sure that the girl has an awful evening and feels used and dirty.

Look, guy. The right way to meet a girl is just to be out walkin' around with a small puppy that you have checked out of an animal shelter. If some chick starts mackin' on you because you have a puppy, then after you get her number go back and adopt the puppy. If you don't meet any honeys and it's getting dark, just drop the puppy back off at the shelter.

If things don't work out between you and the girl, just drop the puppy back off at the shelter.

I have a former boyfriend who now suffers from fairly severe paranoid schizophrenia. He is on medication and is undergoing treatment for his illness, but is still very sick. Sometimes I see him around and chat with him, although he has gone into a recluse-esque stage and has more or less cut off all connection with former friends. When he asks me about things that aren't true, that are part of his delusional world, should

I answer? Am I reinforcing his delusions? Does this matter? He's going to think these things anyway, right? He gets frustrated when I just say, "I don't believe in what you're asking me about." What should I do?

Drive Safely, S.T.

Man, don't you people get it? I ain't no damn doctor! I'm just some player with an Internet connection and a huge head full of ideas. I can't tell you how to help a damn man who is sick! Sure, in a pinch I can make a surprisingly good cocktail out of fig schnapps and chicken stock, *but I ain't no damn doctor.*

Whew. Okay. Anyhow, I cooled off a little just now and it sounds like you aren't actually asking how to help him, but rather how to help yourself. I guess I can kind of take a stab at that (whoah—sorry for the unpleasant imagery). Um, let's see. Don't lie to the guy by playing along with his delusions, because you shouldn't relinquish control to the mentally ill. I guess change the subject to actual things which exist, like Chinese food and Mexico? Or, wait! Talk about...oh, I don't know. I don't know any people with this condition. I guess just be nice and WHOOPS the phone is ringing got to go bye

I frequently go to bars with my friends as the designated driver. Sometimes I get a bit bored with drinking cola while my friends have more exciting beverages. Do you have any suggestions for worthwhile non-alcoholic drinks that I can get at a bar, or should I just stick to the cola and be grateful that it's not as lame as a Shirley Temple?

S. in PA

Dear S.,

What should happen is that you and your friends should share the designated driver responsibility equally. Right now it sounds like they're taking advantage of you, and that you are kind of a sucker, and now I am wondering if you ever even see these people on days when they don't call you up for rides to the bar?

I notice you seem to be fond of spirits. Can you recommend me a good Absinthe? I've tried a few and the only two standout brands are extra strength deluxe Hapsburg (85%) and La Fee (68%). The former is expensive at £40 per 50cl and also is so strong that you cannot drink enough to get the "Absinthe effect" from the Thujone in it (similar to the hallucinogenic chemical in Achewood). The latter is a bargain at £20 per 50cl and is weak enough that I can drink enough to get the Thujone high from it before getting too drunk. Please recommend a brand that is:

- a) Not extortionately expensive.*
- b) Contains a high volume of Thujone.*
- c) Has a more pleasant flavour than La Fee .*
- d) Is not stronger than 70%.*

— Ceri, Wales (UK)

Dear Ceri,

Is this some kind of “goth” thing? I once read about people getting all dorked up on Absinthe in like the first part of this “Anne Rice” book I found near the bus stop. It seemed like a neat liquor so I picked some up. It

just made me super melancholy and deeply pensive. Which sucked, because I was hosting a dinner party. I would just look from guest to guest and say things about how their skin was “like a poor artisan’s glass” (someone told me I had said this).

Anyhow, if you want to have a good time then check out the “normal” shelf at your liquor store. It should be right there with all the other shelves.

You mentioned Clavell and Melville in your last column, and I was wondering if you might be able to make a reading recommendation for me. [Most of long letter omitted]
S.S., Internet

Dear S.S.,

Actually, I haven’t read any Clavell or Melville. They were just the most unexciting names I could think of (Mr. Bear usually leaves books like that lyin’ around over at their place). As far as things I actually like to read go, I can get pretty far into Howard Stern’s books, and in fact I usually keep two or three by the toilet. I also have some old Dice Man albums on CD.

I'm really annoyed at the other vegetarians who've written for advice. I really don't want to impose my views on others - I say to each his own. Bugging people about what they eat is like bugging people about their religion - it's none of your business.

But, herein lies my problem: My boyfriend's parents are hog farmers, and even though they know I'm a vegetarian, they always serve a teeny-tiny bowl of vegetable, where everyone only gets maybe a spoonful, and a huge meat dish. They live really far out of town, so the meal they provide has to be fuel for a whole day which usually includes hours of weeding their huge garden (I have no idea where these veggies go), and lots of other physical work.

I know that farmers don't get the respect (or money) they deserve as the hard working people that feed the world. I really love my guy, and certainly don't want to get into an argument over the issue with his family. His mom is a gourmet cook and I'm pretty sure she'd be insulted if I brought my own food. How can I handle this situation?
M.B., Internet

Dear M.B.,

The smartest double play you can make here is to bond with the mom by helping her in the kitchen. Work alongside her and prepare vegetarian dishes that you know the family will love (garlic mashed potatoes, roasted root vegetables, bruschetta, homemade minestrone, a big bowl full of fried dildos, big composed salads, etc.). You’ll be winning the war on both fronts.

Ray, what are your picks with respect to rum when you're making a kickass rum and coke? I'm partial to Mount Gay Rum myself, but I'd like to see if there are any other ones that I should look out for.
J.D., Ottawa

Dear J.D.,

A rum and Coke gets most of its character from the Coke. Cheap rums like Bacardi will be fine, since they are being mixed with large amounts of overpowering soda and ice.

This was a very simple question.

At the end of this August, I will be leaving home for college. While I am very excited about this and eager to go, I'm also a bit nervous since it will be the first time I'll be living (essentially) on my own. Do you have any advice to offer me? Some on the subject of roommates, parties, college ladies, or even classes would be great.

Pao, New York

Dear Pao,

You have just asked me for seventeen volumes of information, and also to be your father. I'll try to boil it down for you in a nutshell, since I'm not getting paid for this.

- 1) Always wear a rubber. Although not necessary except during sexual intercourse, it'll give you something to laugh inwardly about during long, boring lectures.
 - 2) Imagine that the lecturing professor is also wearing a rubber. If the professor is a female, imagine that she has a rubber over the stick shift in her car.
 - 3) Often times students bring big "thermos" cups to lecture, filled with coffee. You can mix bourbon or Kahlua into the coffee.
-

I work at a computer programming place where all the dudes look like sloppy computer programmers, i.e., ill fitting t-shirts with funny slogans like "GOT ROOT" tucked into those dumpy levis 550 loose-fitting-with-tapered-leg jeans. The manager guys wear those stretch cotton gay guy shirts from club monaco...unless they are the old married manager guy, those dudes wear dockers and a blue denim button down. Anyway, I usually dress like a skater bum which is dangerously close to the programmer style. It looks ok but I'm getting old and am thinking maybe i should upgrade my appearance so I can meet one of the hot chicks from the bank when I'm on lunch break. I have this Armani suit I found at an outlet mall, but that seems like overkill for my programmer job. What is a good style for a dude that doesn't want to look like a slob, an in-the-closet dot com manager, a 55 year old dad, or a wedding guest?

Anonymous, Internet

Dear Anonymous,

I'm glad you wrote! Chris has been on my ass to push his "Achewood" clothing more heavily lately, since I am always writing to people. He even wanted me to put a link to the store as a "signature" line after each of my responses! I ask you, how lame can a man get.

[Visit The Achewood Shop! Dozens of Items to Choose From!](#)

Anyhow enough about him. The style for dudes in your position these days is sort of up in the air. It's an exciting time. You can wear these expensive leather "tennis shoes" from Italy/Europe, which look retro but also futuristic, and you can pair them with classic indigo 501s or fun trousers from Calvin. No-nonsense is the name of the game. The upper body is where you make your impression: since you work in a place which lets you wear t-shirts, why not up the ante with an untucked Lacoste short-sleeve polo? Real crisp and clean, and the old-school alligator logo on the chest will be sure to charm the girls from the bank. Also try some Aveda "Be Curly" in your hair for a fun, tousled look. *Excellent.*

So my best bro and bandmate is all pussy-whipped by his new girl and it sucks for me because I only see him at band practice, never for social occasions. Fairly average complaint, right? Happens to every man, correct? Quit your whining? Well, Ray, it gets worse.

*This lady is five years older than my friend and has a two year old. They have been together for five months; I've talked to her maybe ten times. He is always at her house, babysitting, making them dinner, being the daddy, etc. He has a baby seat in his car. On top of all this, the lady is straight up crazy. She did acid every weekend for like three years and it whacked her head. She is insanely jealous and wants to read all my bro's emails. My crew has straight up held an intervention on him because we all can tell he is not happy, but he insists that he is. This man is a naturally funny dude; now it is rare that he even cracks a smile. But he is a hopeless romantic and would probably slit his wrists if this relationship ended. How can I get my bro to show some stones, Ray?
d.e. in oly*

Dear D.E.,

It's like that Police song: "if you set a thing free and it comes back, then that's great, but if it leaves then that's fine too." Your dude is exploring other life options (albeit not fun or good ones) and has decided to "play house" for a while, getting ready to be an adult. Until (if and when) their relationship breaks up, you and your boys are just going to have to do without his particular instrument in your band, and without his particular friendship in your lives. It's like that Beatles song: "Let it be (x3), (guitar solo)."

*I'm a big fan of the vodka martini. The problem is the glass, which doesn't accommodate my natural clumsiness (especially after I've had a couple). Whatever supposed classiness it might have imparted to me immediately disappears after I've spilled the drink down the front of my shirt. I've considered drinking it out of a tumbler, but am worried that this would turn the drink lukewarm, not to mention make me look like a chump. Should I give it up and drink something else, or do you have any advice for how to keep from splashing?
-E.M., San Diego*

Order it on the rocks

I'm pretty down. My boyfriend is having a tough time at work -- he doesn't much like his job right now, thanks to new management taking away his autonomy and making him do more boring useless stuff. This makes him cranky. When he hangs out with me after work, I try to cheer him up, but then I end up depressed even after I've cheered him up. This has been happening for a couple of days now, and it's gotten

to the point where I don't have the energy to do my work well and am not pushing myself on the job the way I'd like. He reads your column too. Any advice for him or me?
This Too Shall Pass in San Francisco

Dear SF,

Hm. This is depressing. Unfortunately, a recent study shows that over 99% of people completely hate what they have to do for money all day long, so he ain't exactly alone in that rowboat. Maybe he could start like one of those Fight Club...aw, that's stupid. I'm sorry. Other thoughts running through my head: eBay PowerSeller...invent new shape of pasta/flavor of sauce...sell things over the phone...shit. I guess that in these tough times he should just stop feeling sorry for himself and work on finding something else he'd rather do? *Maybe instead of complaining about his job he could tell you how much he appreciates that you care about his sad ass.*

Send in a picture if you guys break up.

Basically every girl I date turns out eventually to be crazy. One minute she seems to be very sweet and loving and the next minute she is doing everything she possibly can to undermine my confidence in my penis or cheating on me or lying habitually or whatever. I am aware that my decision making ability is impaired by my basically being a little fucked up myself, this much is very obvious, but that in no way implies any solutions other than "ignore all your instincts and screw whatever appeals to you least." Which would, I think, probably be a mistake.

So basically what I'm wondering is, is there a more or less trustworthy way to find out if a girl is crazy, before getting yourself too emotionally involved? One time somebody asked me what my favorite color was, and then my favorite animal, and from this we learned that I was unhappy and sexy. I'm thinking maybe something like that, except accurate.
Pun on "gaydar" involving the word loonie, Indianapolis

Dear Indianapolis,

My, what bad luck! Let's see now. Okay, here is the test: if a girl is willing to hang out with you, then she must be crazy. Do not develop a relationship with her. Have you heard about "Fleishlights"?

I have this major problem. First i got to let you know that even though i spend all kinds of time with the ladies, i don't get too much romance. I generally pick ones who are either taken, or too young. But just a week ago i met this totally awesome babe, everything i could want in a woman. we hit it off real nice and i'm thinkin that this could go somewhere. Problem is that in just over a week (by the time you get around to answering this) she will have gone to Europe for College. should i try to start something and keep a long-distance relationship? or should i just forget about the whole thing and maybe try to start something when she comes back to the states?
Pickel, Internet

Dear e.e. cummings,

This is just about the most hopeless thing I have ever heard. You are both in the part of life where you are doing all kinds of exploring and are totally excited about things. This girl is definitely going to meet some new guy about six seconds after she gets on the plane, and will probably have been meaningfully involved with three others by the time the plane lands. She will probably flirt mutually with a young, handsome Turkish dude while waiting in the luggage carousel, and then ditch him when a suave, deeply-tanned young Italian saunters by (she will make an excuse about needing to run to the bathroom). After a torrid liaison with a handsome Englishman on the shared cab ride to her dorm, she will meet a young Swiss fellow whose parents own a small but popular ski resort in the Alps. They will make exciting love. Afterwards, they will enjoy wine and flavorful European cigarettes before falling asleep in each other's arms.

Hope this helps you see how it is.

I see that you enjoy the finer things in life, but as a full time university student my financial situation dictates that I may not enjoy these as frequently as you do. I have not yet chosen a career path and wanting to be a distinguished gentleman such as yourself I would like to know what lucrative industry you are involved in. Can you suggest some possible careers/industries that are capable of supporting a gentleman like yourself. We all know you have had startup companies and advertising agencies [sic] and even a brew bar. Did you require training for these? And what does Ray Smuckles call a nine-to-fiver? W., Brisbane Australia

Dear W.,

I mainly printed this letter because I wanted to show people that I have readers as far away as Australia! Neat!

My fellow is allergic to furred animals. We live together, so I need to find a way around this situation, as I enjoy pets. Unfortunately for me, he doesn't like the idea of taking allergy medicines on a regular basis. Do you know much about allergens? More specifically, can you give me advice on how to covertly medicate someone's food? JK, Pasadena

Dear JK,

Yeah, this is a tough one. On the one hand, you like to have a human around who you can tell your opinions to, and who will drive to the store if you are sick and need some medicine. But also you want a cat. You want a cat, all soft fur and cute face, completely loving you and cuddling like crazy with you whenever you need it. And sometimes making you cuddle even when you didn't realize that you wanted cuddles (although, as he will show you, you did). This cat would not be embarrassed if you needed to take a shower or try on new clothes in a full-length mirror. He would probably just curl up on the bed and completely approve, just completely wanting to cuddle you. *Call me.*

Some friends and I are heading to Bandon Dunes on my birthday to play a lot of golf and drink a lot of scotch. However, since my birthday's in November, we're going to need to bring some along on the course!

Can you suggest some single malts that'll keep us warm?
T., Regina, SK, Canada

Dear T.,

It's no secret that I like a round, whether it be on the course or at the "19th hole." However, I rarely mix drinking with golf, especially at such a nice course as "Old Lady B." Sure, it's fun to hit balls while all turned around, all just drivin' a golf cart straight into a tree and laughin' about that act for several minutes, but if you're gonna drop real coin on a golf course, take it serious. Scotch makes you good at a lot of things, like yelling at your wife, but it's terrible for hand-eye coordination.

For the last 2 years I've been dating this girl who is very anti-drinking because her dad is a major alcoholic and an asshole to boot. She's more or less concerned with anything that would result from my having a drink, much less getting drunk. For the last year I've been off at college while she finished up High School, being able to pretty much do my own thing, party and drinking wise. Anyway, this fall, she is coming to my school and that is definitely going to put a hamper on my drinking-related fun. I don't know how long I'll be able to claim that the fridge full of beer is all my roommate's, so I was wondering if you could give me advice on how to get her to see the social side of drinking-- the fun side. How likely would she be to come around on her own once she has been at school for a while?

Rob in MD

Dear Rob,

How many times do I have to tell you guys! Don't lie about who you are. You are not Leave It To Beaver, lying to a brown-faced Wally about wiping with his washcloth because there was no toilet paper. Dammit! Be your damn honest self. This girl needs to come to the realization that not everyone who drinks turns into a monster. Don't shove it in her face, but don't make any apologies about who you are or how you like to enjoy yourself. And if this big magical visit isn't happening until the fall anyway, she'll probably break up with you way before that, like on the first day she starts at her own college and meets someone else (see previous letter about girls and boys and long distance).

Dork.

Ha ha! I'm done for the week!

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Jul 23, 2003

Advice Column for July 23, 2003

Dear Readers! Boy, am I glad that I said I quit writing my advice column. I got so many fewer questions to answer this week! Anyhow, here they are. Send me email at ray (at) achewood (dot) com if you have a problem you'd like me to help with (but NOT anything about suicide! *Damn* you people who don't listen!).

NO SUBMISSIONS FROM READERS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE – NEW RULE

H E R E W E G O !

I'm considering getting a handgun, and I was wondering if there's anything you'd recommend. I considered getting a Beretta 92FS or a Czech CZ-75, but I'd like something a little rarer (and I don't really like the CZ-75's lack of a firing pin block). I'd really like a Beretta 93R, but I'm not sure how easy it would be to legally acquire one... so instead I've been thinking along the lines of an HK USP .45 ACP or maybe a Browning HP-P .40. I refuse to buy any model of Glock, and I don't care much for revolvers (notable exceptions are the Taurus Raging Bull and the AGL Arms .45LC Python Custom). Size and weight aren't really limitations to me (I'm 6' 2" and weigh 239 pounds, no one would notice a piece in a small-of-back or upper waist holster), but I would prefer a high caliber, nothing less than .40 or 10mm (unless HK gets around to finishing the MP7-PDW and they're authorized for civilian use, then I'll happily revoke that, ditto for the FAL P90). Any ideas?

Gun Happy, Middle of Nowhere

PS - Don't you call your gun Tic-Tac? What make and model is it?

Man, this was like reading some article out of the American Journal of Random Gun Names (not a very good publication — I think I picked up a copy in Lyle's bathroom once). Were you just hitting the keyboard blindly or are all of those numbers actual guns? All I could figure out is that you hate some kind of gun named "Glock." How come? Isn't that the one Bruce Willis uses in *Die Hard*? Is it a pretty bad gun?

Anyhow, Tic Tac is the cutest little gun. She's got a genuine abalone inlay on the handle, and a beautiful silver plating that I keep real polished with a mixture of Wright's, a little Brasso and lavender water. I call her Tic Tac because she is so small and cute. She is a vintage Victorian ladies' pistol, the kind prostitutes would carry to protect themselves.

I think I'm attracted to the wrong type of girl. I usually go for the virginal, pure, "what's sex?" kind of chicks, but as you can imagine I wind up fairly blue-balled. I've tried to date other kinds of girls (I even went out with a stripper!), but I find myself not interested in them as much as the chaste and innocent ones. I just can't help it! Any ideas?
Frustrated in Philly

Dear Philly,

This could be a lot of things, but I'm going to go with my hunch: you're not attracted to the wrong type of girl, you're attracted to the wrong type of sex. Are you trying to relive your first clumsy sexual experience and make up for shooting all over her stuffed animals the second you got out of your pants? Ten bucks says that your subconscious mind is still trying to compensate for a bukakke'd-up Snoopy.

I am not of drinking age, but I have been getting trashed at least fifty-two times a year for perhaps four years now. So far I am perfectly happy with this, except that I think I'm starting to get dumb. I can't remember shit (like my zip code), I don't get jokes, I have trouble finding my shoes a little too often, etc. Basically I am turning into a senile old person, except I am nineteen. What the hell? I used to be such a smart girl.

Is this probably due to my steady regimen of alcohol abuse? I drink a lot of bourbon, if that counts for anything.
Teenage Geezer in Chicago

Dear Teenage Geezer,

There we go again, blaming all our problems on alcohol. What I'm guessing is that you probably do not eat a good diet full of vegetables and lots of seafood. Ideas and molecules bounce off your brain because you aren't feeding it! Also, you do not get enough good sleep, because you always try to mess around with stuff like computers and games late at night even though you have to work early in the morning (my guess). Personally, I shoot for ten to twelve hours of "Beauty Time" and immediately eat lots of calamari as soon as I wake up. I have my maid bring it in as I'm stirring, all crispy as hell, so I can eat it in bed with this rad mango-ancho infusion dip that I bought from Bobby Flay's website. Get that action going, and you'll jump out of bed feeling like a genius!

AN IMPORTANT STATEMENT: Ray reminds his underage readers not to drink booze, and to snuggle down with some crispy calamari and Bobby Flay mango sauce instead.

I like Martinis. I always use Bombay Sapphire gin. What I do is chill my glass in the freezer, get out some dry vermouth, coat the inside of my shaker, put some ice in, add my 50 mL of gin, stir it clockwise, strain it into the waiting glass, twist a lemon zest to get some lemon oil on top and balance the lemon peel on the side. What do you think of this? Some people say olives, other say lemons. Some people have questioned my gin selection. What's your view on the Martini debacle Ray?
C, Kitchener, Ontario

Dear Reader,

If I have to answer one more question about martinis, I'm going to shoot a gun up my own butt.

In about a month it is my lady's birthday. I would like to make part of my gift a tasty and somewhat fancy meal. The problem is that I am not incredibly gifted with kitchen wares, if you get my meaning. However, I have some professional help in this area, and am not too worried about preparation. The real problem is the menu. I'm wanting to make it a fairly exotic meal, because one of the things my lady likes to do is sample foods from all over the world. Do you have any favorite foods that have origins [in] countries other than the United States (Thai is great, but she already cooks Thai and I want this to be different than our regular habits)? I know, this is another boring food question, but I figured I would ask.
Rusty Tin Chef, Denver

Dear Rusty,

There is no such thing as a dumb question about food (except, "WHY IN HELL WE ALL OUTTA FRITOES?!?!", [sic] which is a question I once woke up to find written in shaving gel on my bathroom mirror, apparently by me, in a drunken rage). Anyhow, I love answering food questions. As you know, I actually have some good background in this area, as I like to lie around on my bed and read FoodTV cookbooks while I'm deciding what I want for dinner. Plus, I have dined all over the world and there is perhaps no ethnic cuisine which I find displeasing.

Let's see here...ethnic...I would go with Egg Rolls. You can find some chicken ones at Trader Joe's that you just bake in the oven for like thirty minutes. Their shrimp ones taste kinda nasty, but they are a little cheaper if that is a concern. A little white rice from a Chinese restaurant, some soy sauce...voila! (Actually, I think you could probably just get the egg rolls from the restaurant at the same time! Double whammy! Maybe order some bbq pork fried rice, too, for a midnight snack after she falls asleep!)

Hope you get some trim, chochacho! (fake Mexican word)

My husband and I are best friends. We do most everything together, including hang out with the same group of people. I've always been a kind of tomboy, so I'm practically one of "the guys" and that's all good and well. But one of our friends is getting married soon and they're going to throw him a bachelor party. And suddenly, I feel really really left out. I'm dreading the night of the party. I'm, of course, not invited. So I'm sure I'll just sit somewhere alone while they go out and have a blast. I know I'm being selfish, but it just doesn't seem fair. Any suggestions for something I can do one night to keep my mind off the fun I'm missing out on? Keep in mind that all of my friends will be at the party...so I'm on my own.
-Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

Maybe you can entertain yourself by wearing a diaper, you big whiny crybaby! Boo hoo hoo! Oh, I'm so sad! Man, my heart really goes out to you. What an ordeal! How to survive being alone for seven hours?!

Jesus, you are some kind of clingy-ass broad. No wonder you make your man be your "best friend." The dude probably doesn't even have a peter anymore! Did he give it to you in a box on your wedding day? *Did you eat it during the ceremony?*

PS: Why don't you have any female friends?! That is a sure sign that a chick is messed up. Maybe if you had some female contact in your life you wouldn't think you were a boy.

Are these real questions?

Anonymous, Internet

Dear Anonymous,

Now, wouldn't it be real weird of me to make up all these problems, just to turn around and answer them? What would be the point in that? I have never made up an advice column letter. Some of my responses haven't been so good, but sometimes I'm just not that interested.

Cool.

I've been dating this girl for a while, and she's really great in bed, a great conversationalist, ect. [sic] The only problem is, she's goth, so she always wants me to put on fishnets and go to gothic clubs with her, and anytime I put on music all she wants to listen to is Android Lust or Tori Amos or whatever. I like this girl a lot, but it's really embarrassing having a dinner party with The Cure in the background. What should I do, Ray?

R.M., NY

Dear R.M.,

Yeah, yeah, I've looked into this Goth thing before. I never wore any kind of black tights or painted a fake blood scratch on my cheek, but I did buy this "Bauhaus" CD and talk to some Goth kids down at Starbuck's. Basically, it seems that the Goth phase tends to naturally end in the late teens. This is because Goths get tired of constantly being told that they "look like idiots" and "are annoying" and "can't work the Drive-Thru if they keep dressing like 'Dracula's Knob-wipe.'"

I mean, come on! Does "Goth-ism" really stand for anything, or is it just a way of separating yourself from society by buying into a neatly packaged subculture which ironically purports to be based on higher consciousness?

If that ain't it, I don't know *what* the hell it is. You kids and your stuff you do, I swear.

Any advice on cat vomit? I live with two great cats. One cat vomits every once in a while, about every week or so. The vomit consists of any combination of food, saliva, plants, colored liquid (bile?), hairballs. The vet says she's healthy, and to use the hairball control food. We've used that food for years now, we tried that grass to chew on (she eats it, sometimes throws it up), chicken-flavored hairball-control paste stuff. The other cat never vomits; but he gets way curious and close-up-sniffy when she's heaving. She has to continually move to maintain her personal space, so the vomit ends up all around sometimes. It's sort of funny. I don't mind the vomiting b/c it hardly ever leaves a stain anywhere. I just want this cat to be comfortable. Thanks for your time, Ray.

K in PA

Dear K.,

Yeah, man, that don't sound like too cool of a scene if you ask me. A vomiting cat being chased by kind of a "refluxophile" cat. I'm not gonna do the obvious thing and just go on talkin' about bulimia, 'cause that's a cop out. But seriously, have you checked your liquor cabinet? It's no trouble for a cat to open a bottle, and if your cat is a pretty bad binge drinker then yeah she'll urp pretty often. Especially if she is smokin' weed and stuff. Did you leave your weed out? I don't know that you did, but it is one idea which came to mind.

One of my friends is (a)totally hung up on this chick who sorta sucks and (b) making life harder for himself. The girl is very hot and funny in some situations, but sucks to hang out with. He is acting all jaded and like he doesn't even want to be having fun. So he doesn't. The girl digs him and (as i said before) he her, but she is cold dating another guy. Instead of saying "if you dig me, date me," he is trying to be just friends with the girl while digging her. This adds to his general air of disillusionment and anger at/frustration with his rich, white, suburban life. the point i am trying to make is that he has no reason to be angry which could not be solved by just lightening up. maybe i am wrong. please help.
yours, M.

Dear M.,

Tell you what, M: If you promise not to give a shit about all that lame stuff, then that will make two of us.

=RAY= \$ =RAY= \$ =RAY= \$ =RAY=

Ray, I need some advice regarding homemade alcohol. It all started a while back when some neglected cider fermented in the fridge, leaving me intrigued and inspired. Since then I've been thinking about making my own moonshine. However, I have come to a dilemma, that being whether I should make fermented beverages or try my hand at distilling. I'm more inclined towards liquor, but building a still is a daunting task and I don't know if I'm up for that kind of dedication yet. Any advice or anecdotes would be much appreciated.
Shining on under the harvest moon, The White Hat

Dear White Hat,

Hold on, does your name mean that you like racism? Is this a Klan thing? Man, *get the hell out of my advice column.*

Being a worldly dude having done some travelling around Europe, I was wondering what you made of the place? Which countries are awesome and which are rubbish and quite frankly insane?
JM

Dear JM.,

I thought Germany was pretty cool. The ladies were real beautiful (if you're not careful, your hand will get caught in one of their high-ridin' intentionally exposed thongs) and you can drink beer EVERYWHERE, at all times of the day, and everyone thinks that it's just great if you do that. I swear, I think I saw an elementary school teacher leading a field trip around the Berlin Zoo, and every single kid was holding a cold little can of Krombacher Pils (the teacher was holding a larger can of Krombacher Pils, and her thong rode high). On the news that night, German President Dr. Jurgen Helgemann sipped thoughtfully from a large bottle of Warsteiner as he addressed legislation which would keep German women from wearing their thongs over their shoulders in the manner of suspenders.

Also, you can smoke everywhere, even in like microchip factories and places where they make glass eyes for babies.

Spain was cool. That country is basically just one huge nude beach. I would have had wood pretty much the whole time but when you're there, in that culture, you somehow don't get wood. You're just totally cool with everything, and wood only happens at the right time. Man, I love Europe. (You can also drink and smoke everywhere in Spain, including in a lab where donated blood is being purified, or in a room through which single Stem Cells are being carried on large gurneys atop a single ice cube.) Oh, and get this! Everyone in Spain passes out at noon but then rallies and stays up until dawn! *Even the doctors, I think!*

Confidential to the guy with explosive diarrhea: quit writing to me! I don't care!

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Jul 29, 2003

Advice Column for July 29, 2003

Dear Readers: I did not respond to over nineteen letters this week because their authors did not do me the basic courtesy of capitalizing any of the words. God Dammit, *why do you treat me like such garbage*. I am not your patient e-mail friend. *I am not going to be treated like this*.

NO SUBMISSIONS FROM READERS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE – NEW RULE

H E R E W E G O !

I live with my grandparents, and while this is a rather big house, it still makes me terribly uneasy and guilty about getting my lovin' on while I live here. I just turned eighteen and I'm excited that I may be moving out early in the fall, but my dad says to wait a while longer to move out, so that i'm sure my income is reliable. (I work at a grocery store)

-Guilty Sex in WA

Dear Guilty,

I know what you mean about not wanting to have sex with your grandparents around. Imagine your grandpa slyly peekin' around the corner of the doorway to the sun porch, huge open-mouth grin showing his toothless gums, two big sparkles in his eyes, as you begin to slowly finger-bang the woman of your dreams. *Now that is some fucked-up imagery*.

Anyhow, you're saying that you think you might make enough money at the grocery store so you can rent a place to have sex in. Basically I should warn you that if you work at a grocery store you ain't gonna have enough money to buy a hot meal, let alone outfit some kind of player's pad with anything better than a paper towel to put under your girlfriend's butt. I guess just keep getting it on while your grandparents are watching; it will be weird for a while, but eventually the girl will get sick of it and break up with you.

My lady and I have been seeing each other for a good while now, and we have decided that it is time to live with each other, and perhaps get married sometime in the distant future, since gay marriages are legalized in Canada now.

Her and I, like I have stated before, have, however, one great difference that separates us. She has a pet snake, while I have pet rats. Unfortunately, our pets cannot get along as well as we do.

Would you happen to have advice on what we should do? I know that the pets would stay in their collective habitats, but our debate still continues on. Neither of us wants to be rid of our pets.

Should we seek another type of food, in an attempt to train her snake (Sparky, as she lovingly calls him) into thinking that rats aren't a yummy thing, in the case that he should ever get out, and discover my rat cage?

Rose, (probably Canada)

Dear Rose,

You two have some really disgusting pets. What is with people who keep snakes, rats, tarantulas, cockroaches, etc? Man, that shit ain't for havin' in the house. Get rid of that stuff! Jesus! A Cocker Spaniel is a "pet." A rat is "something that has eternally and for all time been regarded as vermin."

I guess just feed them both cereal and grubs and bones from eaten Buffalo Wings and stuff until they die. Ech. I'm not going to think about this anymore. You are messed up!

Readers: A response from last week's "gun guy!"

[...]

I don't like Glocks simply because most of their construction is plastic. No real reason, in fact they're excellent guns, very well made, very reliable, I've never heard any complaints about them... I just don't like the thought of a plastic gun. As for Die Hard, fuck if I remember what kind of gun he uses. I haven't seen it in a long time.

Gun Happy, Middle of Nowhere

Dear Gun Happy,

Sorry I omitted the first couple pages of your letter, wherein you talked about gun names again. I just can't get into gun names, I'm sorry. I think most of my readers probably do not like to read long lists of gun names, either. (But I may be wrong!)

Anyhow, I think the gun Bruce Willis used in Die Hard was a "Nine Millimeter." I didn't look this up or anything, but it sounds about right. Do you agree? Is that the right kind of gun to use in the situation he was in (tall building, probable terrorist, needed pretty good aim at one point to rescue a female hostage with a knife at her throat)?

Alright, take it easy. Let us know when you start your gun name column.

I have a friend who never went to college, and since I did he's always trying to impress me with something he knows, but he feels an inferiority complex and has lately been trying painfully to make "intellectual"

conversation. Last night he was talking about dinosaurs, and when I couldn't answer his questions (I never took the class on the emergence of dinosaurs) he said that didn't matter, because he was hoping that I could at least acknowledge that he was asking "good questions." This guy has it pretty bad, as you can see, Ray. How can I address his chemically-induced questions without making him cry like a little girl because of his intellectual inadequacy?

"College Educated But Having Problems With People From My Hometown Who Now Assume That I Have All Of The Fucking Answers To All Of Life's Questions"

Dear College Educated,

Yeah, we all have dumb friends and acquaintances. Do you know Todd? He is this squirrel that runs around our neighborhood a lot of the time. He's illiterate, comes from a bad family, cusses really strong even in the presence of my parents, etc. Anyhow, even though he is not stupid *per se*, he will sometimes make conversation which is clearly designed to prove that he has recently grasped a basic concept of physics or sociology. Needless to say, guys who have a little on the ball (i.e. you and me) don't think about physics and sociology all day long, though we probably grasp their underlying principles. It is at times like this when I think to myself, "Todd is trying to impress me by staking a common ground which neither of us actually share."

The last time he did that we ended up agreeing that lead probably melted at 353 degrees (I don't know where that number came from, but we did shake on it).

My boyfriend is the greatest guy in the world. He's really nice to me and I love him and we plan to get married. There is just this one thing about him I can't stand, and that is [his] haircut.

When I first met him, his hair was parted in the middle, and he looked like he was twelve. Then he had this Bill Gates haircut. Now he has this weird cut that almost looks like a bowl cut with these long bangs that cover his eyebrows. When we have sex, I feel like I am doing it with a five year old, which does not really turn me on at all.

He won't listen to me when I tell him he needs a more sexy grown up haircut, and gets all mad and defensive and says it shouldn't matter what his hair looks like. I hate his hair so much. It is sad, because he is a really handsome guy, and the hair just ruins it. I want to shave his head as he sleeps. what should I do?
Running With Scissors in Berkeley, CA

Dear Running With Scissors,

What is with this guy? This obviously isn't an aesthetic thing, because he admits his appearance is not the issue. It's more like a control thing, held over from childhood.

We have all seen a small kid who is stubborn about food and won't eat anything. It's not because he's not hungry. It's because he learned that this is a way he can wield power, and power is an awesome feeling, particularly to someone who is constantly forced to pose for pictures on a green plastic airplane that has a froggy face.

Fast forward twenty years. Your boyfriend just doesn't want to ride the green froggy plane anymore...*unless you make him think it's **his** idea to ride the green froggy plane.* See where I'm going with this?

Just like a kid who is told that he will go to hell and meet the Devil if he eats green vegetables, so will your boyfriend respond to reverse psychology. I guess the main way to get him to want to cut his hair is to tell him that you would HATE if he got his haircut like George Clooney. Tell him that you love his haircut just the way it is, and keep mentioning how stupid George Clooney looks. Check some books which deal with George Clooney out of the library and leave them around the coffee table and in the bathroom. Pretty soon he's gonna be cookin' up a "Perfect Storm" of his own—under your bedsheets, lady!

(I probably don't need to mention this but your relationship has other huge problems.)

A confidential answer to the person who walked in on parents having sex.

Hey, get this: *one time I think I saw my mom doin' my dad*. I was like just a tiny little kid, but there they were in the kitchen, doin' that act! They never found out that I saw, but to this day I always FEEL like they knew. Isn't that crazy? And, just like you, it made me feel weird.

I wonder why we have such a weird response to seein' our parents get their freak on. I think maybe that in a sense we feel insulted, wondering why our parents think they need to get their freak on and make another kid, because we think that we're already the best kid in the world and they don't need another one.

Also, it is weird to see your dad's shaft.

Anyhow, just act like you didn't see anything and they'll forget about it. Did your mom have on big "clumsy lady" lingerie, all with like a feather boa sewn across the front of the halter, and a large area of thick lace on the front to hide her old lady belly? Man, I don't even know why I'm askin' about that. Do me a favor and only read the first sentence of this paragraph. Was her butt pretty long and flat? Was there a long deep line heading down from her bellybutton between some jiggy tummy fat? *Man, why do I keep askin' about this stuff?!*

A short time ago my girlfriend (let's call her Nikki) and I decided that we were going to be "just friends," and that we could date other people. Now, after that happened I took her at her word and have been slowly building up a relationship with a new girl, let's call her Jane. Now, I like Jane; she is smart, funny, beautiful, sexy, and a great dancer. Jane and I are not yet officially dating exclusively, but we are spending an inordinate amount of time in each other's company, and enjoying it immensely. I was more than a little surprised when Nikki started to act jealous—after all, we're supposed to be "just friends" now. Now I hear from one of her friends that Nikki really wants me back (that reminds me of how in Junior High you would have your friend pass a note to the girl that you liked...honestly, can anything be more juvenile?) As if that wasn't complicated enough, about a year ago I was dating yet another girl (call her Susie) until she moved to Washington, DC, when we both mutually decided that we didn't want to try the long-distance thing and so we broke it off.

So what should I do, Ray? I have chemistry with all three of these beautiful women. But I am not a player; I refuse to treat a woman as if she were an object. I am not interested in meaningless sex—I graduated from college a while ago. I want a serious, meaningful relationship. I also don't want to hurt any of these ladies feelings, although I am afraid that may be inevitable. How can I form a serious relationship with one of these three and not hurt the other two? And who should I pick? My recent ex (for whom I had very strong feelings that could be easily rekindled I am sure), the old flame who has returned to the city, or the

new girl?
R.S., Internet

Dear R.S.,

First of all, your old “Nikki” just wants you back out of residual territorialism. Once she sees that you’re attractive to somebody else, she sees you as a viable male again and wants you to give her a baby. Plus she is also attempting to assert her own superiority over the female you are currently going with. That’s how it is with cats, anyway. Probably the same for you.

I guess the real issue here is that you don’t like any of them enough to choose just one. They’re all sorta non-soulmates who kinda shimmy in and outta your apartment as circumstances dictate. I would guess that since you’re showin’ no Stone Pulse for any of these ladies, you shouldn’t get too “Ring Kinky” with any of them. My best advice is just to be bad about returning phone calls for a while until they whip themselves into frenzies of insecurity and break up with you. Cool.

Okay: I have a deep fondness for this very nice shot known variously as 'Flying Monkey' or 'Beam Me Up Scotty.' To make it, you layer one part Kahlua, one part Bailey's Irish Cream and finally one part banana liqueur. You knock it back and feel very happy and monkey-like. But I am shit at layering. I always just get a glass of vaguely brownish-yellow hooch. It tastes equally nice but it's not the full experience. Can you advise me on a really good, easy method of layering these ingredients neatly?
Déesse

Dear Déesse,

Lots of books recommend pouring the liquor to be layered gently over the back of a spoon, but the real pros use a “bar spoon.” This is a twisted metal shaft, about the width of a knitting needle, that looks like it has a quarter welded perpendicularly to the bottom. You put the “quarter” right on the surface of the bottom layer of pre-poured liquor, and pour the next liquor slowly down the shaft. The “quarter” captures and delicately dissipates the flow of liquor from the bottle so that it spreads neatly over the surface of the lower layer.

I'm trying to plan the menu for a dinner party, and I need some help with the main course. One of the people coming is a vegetarian who eats seafood, one is allergic to shellfish, and several don't like fish. I'd like to stay away from pasta, so I was thinking I could grill some chicken and some fish, and serve both with a similar sauce or relish. Other than disinviting the veggie, do you have any suggestions?
SA, Virginia

Dear SA.,

Man, since when are pasta and fish the only foods in the world? Dang, make a Boboli pizza or something, or a big spinach salad all with goat cheese and avocado and stuff. Cook some hash browns, eggs and pancakes. Make Tang. Have peanut butter and jelly sandwiches pre-sliced next to some Oreos and milk. *Did you ever think to roast a bunch of corn in the oven.* Make popcorn and also have an omelette bar. Do up some Mexican food with beans and tortillas and stuff. Pretend that you made “tapas” by using some tapas recipes. What the hell? Why in the hell is it so hard for anyone to cook anything?! *Mix up some macaroni salad and have a piece of fried chicken next to it on a plate.*

Here's some background: I dated this girl for about four months a year ago. Nothing serious, just having fun, you know? And we stopped seeing each other, but kept being friends. No big stress. Then I go back to college and don't hear from her for three months or so. When I come back, I find out she's now seriously involved with her stepfather, to the point where her mother has divorced the guy, and he and my friend are planning to get married. He hates me, by the way: called me a rapist and accused me of dating this girl so I could get at him. It's all pretty creepy, but it's her decision, right? Not really my business.

The thing is, she keeps sending me email about how happy she is with her father/boyfriend and all the plans they're making to move to Arizona and blah blah blah and it's really creeping me out. She knows what I think about the whole situation. Should I just ignore the emails, or out and out tell her I don't want to hear about her cozy little incestuous love nest?

Disgusted

Dear Disgusted,

You're right, it's not your business. Basically your only choice is to completely ignore it and get on with your life. Sure, it will bug you for a while, but what can you do.

As far as the emails go, I often find that the "delete" key can solve many of life's problems (at least, the ones that come in through email).

As a fellow Internet enthusiast with a bit of a paunch, do you have any recommendations for a guy who'd like to fit better into a nicely cut American Apparel t-shirt? I like to walk.

Ralphie, Internet

Dear Ralphie,

I'm glad you wrote. I find that most people are used to Hanes Beefy-T's, which are loose-fitting, general-purpose garments (you know, like you would buy if you were sponsoring some fund-raising event where you knew none of the people, etc). American Apparel shirts are cut a little more sexy, a little more snug, so order one size up from your regular if unsure as to fit. After a few times through the wash you will find that the 100% cotton American Apparel garment fits you like a soft, figure-flattering old friend.

For examples of these fine T's, why not visit the Achewood [shop](#)?

*I've been dating a guy for two years. What's the best way to amicably end a relationship that's that long?
M, Canada*

Dear M,

After two years folks are pretty deep into each other's business, probably having a lot of clothing and music at each other's places, maybe even some friends in common. However, given the stone cold lack of detail in your letter, I suspect your case might be somewhat different. You just want to drop a sucker who apparently

has turned out not to be much of anything to you. How is it that you spent two years going out with someone about whom you speak so mechanically?

Anyhow, there is no “amicable” way to end any relationship. I don’t know what TV show you’ve been watching. I feel weird about all of this, like you’re just staring at this response in a dark room that smells like Electrical Engineering textbooks and a yellowed, oily pillow.

I have two bosses at work and they hate each other. They are both good at their jobs but they are always undermining each other's work so nothing ends up getting done. Aside from the stress caused by being caught in a constant war zone, it also seems like a waste that two grown women can't put aside their petty differences and pretend to be civil for a few hours a day in order to achieve a greater good. As much as I try to stay out of it, the fact of the matter is, they are both my superiors and one of them is much, much easier to work for than the other and also very nice, so I usually find myself agreeing with the nice one, if only to myself. What can I do (short of finding another job -- not an option at the moment) to minimize my workday stress?

-- Office Girl

Dear Office Girl,

Man, just be drinkin’ at lunchtime. Who cares about some full-time hamsterwheel bitchfight. It ain’t your problem. Laugh it off and just do your time until you decide that you really do have the option of finding other jobs in life. I hate to say it, but *have some dignity*.

I am moving. I am currently working stocking shelves at a grocery store. Tomorrow I plan to give a weeks' notice. I was wondering how to go about this. Should I lie and say I have to go or tell the truth and tell them I just want to go. I am leaning towards just telling the truth but, I am dreading making my last week there uncomfortable. What do you think?

No Name Given, Internet

Dear No Name,

Let me clue you in a bit about the grocery store shelf-stockin’ industry. See now, your boss is lucky if his stockers give him *three seconds* notice. This ain’t exactly air traffic control here, brother. It is kind of cute in a way that you are all worried about giving notice at some crankhead flunkie job. Just tell your boss that you need like “August 1” to be your last day because you’re moving. He won’t care, it’s not like he loves you and considers you the son he never had or anything. It’ll take him about ten minutes to find some drooling retard to fill your spot.

Don’t expect a gold watch or anything, dude.

Confidential to the guy with explosive diarrhea: I have contacted your email domain administrator and they are going to cancel your email account if you keep it up.

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Aug 5, 2003

Advice Column for August 5, 2003

Alright, I am absolutely NOT answering any more letters from people who don't capitalize the letter "I" when referring to themselves! I spent like ten minutes cleaning that crap up this week! *Fuck* you people!

Got a question? Want an answer? Ask Ray! (ray /at/ achewood /dot/ com)

Some letters are edited for clarity and grammar.

H E R E W E G O !

I've always found my fellow musicians' claims that psilocybin enhances creativity dubious (frankly, I'm too chicken to try it), but I don't have the experience to say.

I know that you're a successful musician, but maybe that deal you signed doesn't provide for inspiration 24/7 - would you care to comment on the relationship between drugs and creativity?

- In a Rut.

Dear In a Rut,

I looked up "psilocybin" on Google and man, that's what 'shrooms are! I guess I did not know that. Anyhow, what I like to have goin' on when I'm writin' music is a tall chilled one, either a mojito cocktail or something else that strikes my fancy. I also will dabble with red wine, as it is very mellow and allows for several hours at the piano.

But anyhow, your letter reminds me of the one time I did 'shrooms, way back a few years ago. Téodor and Lyle and me went on this camping trip and Lyle cooked them into this Top Ramen we had. We ate it and it tasted like normal old Ramen but kind of "woody" from the dried shrooms. I didn't know what to expect, but I was up for it, you know. We just chilled out for a few minutes after eating, then decided to start taking a walk through this big grassy field which led to a mountain. Wouldn't you know it but pretty soon all the grass was way louder than usual, and it sounded like crispy ocean waves! Man, it was a blast! Then we got to this sort of small river we had to cross and Lyle just took his pants off (he had purple tie-dyed briefs on, can you believe that?!) and went through...I was going *insane* with worry that all kinds of folks would see and disapprove of his pants all bein' off so close to the campground parking lot. I think most of the onlookers were international tourists, though, because they just laughed at him. Anyhow, I eventually hiked through the river in all my boots and jeans and stuff and we got going. At some point a little ways up the mountain I

thought to myself, “man, *now* I understand all those Led Zeppelin album covers with all those hobbit-type guys asleep under trees!” Even though there are no Led Zeppelin album covers with that sort of artwork, it was a powerful feeling about life and timelessness.

I guess I would have made pretty bad music that day, just thinking that anything sounded great and concentrating on one chord for like twenty-five minutes, completely blowing my own mind. I would mostly focus on red wine if you want to write hits.

*My cat Tiny is pregnant, AGAIN. She's not actually my cat. She's a stray, but I feed her. She just had a litter last April and now she's pregnant again. We've been meaning to get her spayed, but as soon as the first litter is out, she is pregnant again. Is it possible to get a cat spayed even while it's pregnant? And how wrong is that? I'm having a moral dilemma.
Morally concerned*

Dear M.C.,

First of all, let me say that it was not me. I haven't gone with anyone named Tiny in a long time, and even then I have always been careful to bag it (I'm kind of a germ-o-phobe).

I will let you in on kind of a dark part in my life. There was this one time, quite a while ago, when I was just a crazy young guy, cold buck-wylin' with a fever for life. I met up with this girl named Vanessa and I don't need to tell you what happened next. Pretty soon I'm gettin' all these phone calls from her, all in tears, sayin' she's pregnant and doesn't know what to do. I told her I'd drive her to the abortion company (“clinic,” she corrected me), ‘cause that was the only thing I could think of to do (I certainly wasn't ready to have 4-6 kids, and neither was she). A couple hours later the deed was done. We split the bill on our MasterCards and I dropped her off at her friend's place so she could collect herself before going home. It was a sad day. After she got out of the car, I didn't even peel out like I usually did at that point in my life. I just put my head down, turned on some mega-pensive Seals & Croft, and rolled home with a tear in my eye.

I guess what I am saying here is that you gotta do the smart thing and it ain't always pretty. Call your doctor and get the lowdown on her options. Damn, this is bringing back some unpleasant memories.

*What kind of music do you like to listen to during your day to day life? Like for when you're folding laundry or cooking or whatever?
Anonymous, Internet*

Dear Anonymous,

Whoah, another question about music! Let's hope I'm not all tapped out.

Right now playing through my house's Bose sound system is that “Muppets” song – you know the one: Rainbow Connection. That is a bitchin' song, in a nostalgic way, but it's not usually playin' at my place—don't get the wrong idea. It just happens to be on the CD player's “random” playlist right now. Usually it's some kind of Keith Sweat or, if I'm in a bad mood, that song from Men in Black where the giant worm promises that he's going to eat the earth.

I have to ask that people try to stick to advice-type questions. This was not advice-seeking, it was probative.

I had a thing for a certain girl (girl A) a while ago. She lives far away and we discussed feelings once and decided to just be friends. Since then I met another lady (girl B) and fancy her lots. I was up the way girl A lives and she said I could come visit so I stayed at her place for a few days. Doing this sparked a whole new feeling for her and I found myself infatuated again. I overrode this feeling logically by looking at the distance and also by meeting her incredibly attractive boyfriend. Still, I find myself having strong feelings for girl A. This would be fine except that girl B now wants to have a relationship. Is it right to just go out with girl B when I know there is a girl out there that I like tons more but have no chance with? My advice to myself was to wait until my feelings for girl A dissipate, then go after girl B, but girl A is still my friend and we talk on a regular basis so I can't see that happening and I'm not going to cut off our friendship. I am too much of a pansy to decide what to do.

TJ, Canada

Dear TJ.,

Oh man are you just a bunch of fried eggs. I tried to Google your email address to find out more about you but Google just said, "he's 13 years old, dude, who cares? Just tell him ain't no one cares."

Since when is Google kind of rude?! Anyhow, don't date either of them for the reasons you already understand.

I'm a loser, Ray, and I don't want to be. I'm fat and I have no job, no friends, no car, no lady-friend, no TV and just one pair of new-looking pants. I've been like this for a while, and I guess I know why too. I just don't want to get up and do anything. Every time I think about doing anything that I need to do my mind automatically starts thinking about something else, and I just want to stay immobile even more. I can't pay my bills on time because when they get here I can't think about paying them. I don't want to get up and take a shower, even though I rather enjoy showers and being clean. Responsibility gives me panic-shakes. I keep wishing I could live like a hermit, but at the same time I'm quite lonely as it is. Got any advice on how to force myself to do the needful?

One Step Up From a Slug, in sunny western Washington

Dear One Step,

It sounds like you got depression pretty bad. You should see a therapist or counselor to get your life back on track. I am not a therapist, or a counselor. I am—you guessed it—*Ray Motherfucking Smuckles*. \$\$ MEOW \$\$

Readers: Even more responses from a different, new gun person!

Bruce Willis used a Berreta M92F 9mm handgun in the Die Hard series, which is the same pistol that the US Army issues.

Also: Ray, we know that you are a bon vivant and a literal party animal. How do the Onstads stack up in comparison?

EPM

Dear EPM,

Man, ain't it weird how I guessed that "9 Millimeter" was the right type of gun? I guess there is something to this whole "subconsciousness" thing. I had not even seen that movie in maybe years, *but there was just something that made me say that particular gun name.* Amazing!

Anyhow: The Onstads. Man, they are all right, you know. They will kind of fade early and head on back to their place, but usually Chris shows up alone a little while later, totally torched up on "smile juice" and just wanting to hit golf balls or whatever or throw Téodor into the pool while laughing. That's when we really get down. Man, last Saturday night that dude got a trowel and threw a bunch of dog shit against the wall of my house! *The dude knows what he wants to do, and he does it.*

Chris also seems to have depression a lot, based on how little he does during the day.

Last night, I had some Smirnoff twisted something-or-other-malt-beverage, that tasted like some type of Jolly Rancher. I was wondering how these are made, if you know. My thought is that they put actual Jolly Ranchers in the brewing/distillery/filtering vats. Other than that question, I know just about everything.
Josh, NH

Dear Josh,

Yeah, it sounds like you had that new *[consults website]* Smirnoff Ice. How they make these is that a bunch of commercial liquids are mixed together in large stainless steel tanks and then they spray in all that stuff from Chewels...I don't know. That ain't my thing. Those types of drinks have more calories than a Mars bar or a burrito, and they totally dry me out. You know all those ads where people have fun drinking that stuff? That is fake.

I'm totally married and totally planning on being so until the big sleep. Divorce: not an option. That being said, my wife like totally used to massage my tube with her uvula (if you know what I mean) a lot more than she does now.

It's not that she won't, but I have to bring it up, like proactively and all, or my guy will never get the suckling that he wants. My success rate is like 20%.

Can you give me some cute, smooth lines that will make her more willing to apply the coat throat?
- Not as blown as I'd like.

Dear NABAIL,

Man, doesn't the acronym of your name totally sound like the sort of drug that you would take to make you want to give bj's again? Anyhow, there is no such drug available through the pharmacy, so let's just stop that thought there and move on.

Okay, so you are a down-home regular solid dude who has noticed a steep decline in bj's since getting married. This is normal. Welcome to the rest of your life! WHOOPS you got married WHOOOOOOPS!

Four of my friends and I are moving into a house at CU-Boulder in a few weeks and earlier this summer we managed to pick up a bar for \$20 or so. Not too shabby, about 10 feet long or so, 'L' shaped, and a little window on the corner to show off the classy liquor. Anyway, that's about all we have. What do you recommend we get to complete the bar other than the essentials (stools, some good liquor, mixers, possibly a soda gun if we're lucky)?

J., CO

Dear J.,

Okay, so now you own some wood. I am picturing pressed brown fiberboard held together with screws. It actually does sound pretty shabby.

Anyhow, I guess I just recommend getting a bunch of booze and xeroxing flyers which tell people to come to your "bar" (some wood).

I graduated from high school in the spring, and the major I signed up for is Electrical Engineering. I have a lot of interests, though, and I'm thinking about changing it to one of those junk majors, like Philosophy or Liberal Arts or Political Science. Do you have any opinion on this? Is a degree a degree?

Sleepless in Boise

Dear Boise,

You should study a subject which you like. You apparently don't like subjects which deal mainly in ideas, so I would stay away from those. Maybe you could also eat out your own ass instead of writing in anymore?

(_ * _) <- eat that [your ass]

I'm taking a cultural anthropology class this summer and we were reading about this tribe in Nepal that herd these Zomo things. They are basically the love children of a cow and a yak that were forced to do the nasty together. Anyway, when these Zomo produce offspring, the offspring are basically worthless because all they can do is eat (they can't produce milk or reproduce). Since the people that herd Zomo are Buddhist they don't believe in killing animals so they make muzzles for the little baby Zomo so they can't eat and starve to death. Would you agree with me that this is probably the saddest thing? I say just kill the damn thing and get it over with.

Leila

Dear Leila,

Hm. A creature which is born only to die? Reminds me of the man I see...when I look in the mirror.

(Sorry, faded, kind of late.)

I first realized my problem when I read your response to MK from the internet who said she was a secret pantywaist. It was when I read the words, "a real 'Fifth-Gear Frances,' someone who can take a bite out of a lead brick and spit out a small die-cast model of a sailing ship" that I finally admitted to myself what I have known for a long time:

I love you, Ray.

That is so sweet to say, but also such a sadness! Why? Because you are a little small cat and I am a human lady of average size. How can I realize my dream of you and me holding hands & looking into each other's eyes while we are lounging on expensive pool floats that have drinks holders? Imagine how that would look, like if somebody flew over the pool in a helicopter. The whole thing would just be ridiculous.

Tearful love from,

Your devoted admirer,

Bella

Dear Bella,

Yeah, after that one dyke sent her picture in I am way more reluctant to lay down the blanket statement that I love all lesbians (and women in general) in a sexual way. I gotta see a photo first now. It's kind of rude but it's also kind of smarter and safer. I cannot say anything sexy about you until I got that ".jpg" goin' on. And it can't be just of the face!

I am sorry to be so reserved given your strong romantic outpouring, but maybe send in a photo (show at least from hips to very top of head). Thanks for the kind words.

ray (at) achewood (dot) com

I never thought I would have to write to you, but this has been bothering me for ages, and you seem like a pro at the incessant alcohol-related questions. One time, at this Japanese restaurant, the waitress poured my beer while STANDING and she didn't even tilt the glass. To my amazement, there was absolutely no head. I have tried to repeat her tactic, but I always end up with a ton of foam. Is this some sort of Japanese magic, or is there a how-to I could consult?

Foaming at the Mouth, Edmonton

Dear FAME,

Man, me and Lyle must have gone through a case and a half trying different angles, different kinds of glasses, different kinds of beers, etc. Basically all we found out is that Lyle can pee way further than me off the deck (I lost five bucks on that one, and nearly got a hernia), and also that it is possible to sleep on the lawn with a snail crawling around on your face and not even wake up until it goes in your mouth.

Basically, my suspicion is that they poured oldish keg beer into a used, chilled "prop" bottle, brought the bottle to the table and poured it into your glass. That way it didn't foam up too bad. Restaurants are full of money saving tricks like that. Did you know that Italian places re-use the bread you don't eat, and that Chinese places take your uneaten rice and make it into fried rice? They ain't gonna waste perfectly good food. They don't make that much money as it is. Hell, I wouldn't be surprised if that beer you got had been collected outta a bunch of other glasses, actually, and kind of run through a sieve to take out large pieces of spit and the odd booger.

Dear Readers: this is a follow-up to last week's question involving a girl who wanted to break up with her boyfriend of two years, but didn't provide any details, so I accused her of liking Electrical Engineering way too much and having an oily, yellowed pillow.

So I'm 18 and just graduated from high school. In three weeks I'm moving to Toronto, six hrs away from my hometown. We've been dating for two years. He's basically still the same guy I started [dating], he hasn't changed a bit, while I've grown up and matured. [We're] going in two completely different directions: I'm away to go to University, he's going back high school then joining the army. But, he's the first guy I ever loved and I lost my virginity to him. We've been through a lot together. What's the best way to tell him that it's over? (Hopefully this [is] better detailed than last week)

Me Again

(by amicable, I mean doesn't try to kill me)

Dear Me Again,

Okay, it sounds like life is doing the breaking-up for you. Have you read any of my earlier responses to people in relationships who go to different parts of the world after college? *It is cold, straight-up, $e=mc^2$* not going to be an issue. You will definitely not see each other any more.

I would like to reemphasize the point that "the first person you ever loved" is sort of the same thing as "the first pancake you ever made," or "the first mouse you ever used to click on a link that bought a CD." It's not really that special, if you look at the details on paper. ("Dear Diary: Jerome was at high school again today. He let me borrow some of those little rubber bands for my braces. He uses the green kind too. Now I truly know what Shakespeare meant by 'star-crossed lovers.'")

[Don't EVEN bug me about usin' an umlaut up there. The New Yorker does it and now I do too.]

I am a musician (guitar/banjo) who is having great difficulty writing songs. I've been playing for over seven years now, so I don't think that it's because I don't know what I'm doing. I've tried to write sad songs, happy songs, drunken songs, stoner songs, country songs, folk songs, metal songs, noise songs, the list keeps going and going. I've tried to write while sober and intoxicated but nothing seems to work for me. Every now and again I stumble onto a good song, but is very rare. I can do pretty good cover songs, so I think I can play, I just can't write any!
Banjo-Geek, Ont.

Dear Banjo Geek,

I guess what you are saying is that you want to write songs but are kind of a "Salieri." You know, the guy who killed Mozart out of jealousy. He was kind of a hacky normal musician who knew how to write correct sheet music and stuff, but he had no junk hangin' down. It's too bad that you're a Salieri, but you probably aren't a Salieri in everything you like to do. There is probably a thing you like to do that you really get good results at. Follow that thing, man. Follow that thing – follow that thing. (Follow that thing.)

I've met a guy that intellectually I know would make a better friend than a boyfriend - hilarious but self-absorbed, beautiful but distracted, etc. The problem is, every time he's around, my heart races and I can't stop grinning. In short, I have a terrible crush on him. Now I know that this is a temporary condition, and once I meet some new people my desperate attraction to this boy will fade. But in the meantime, what I really need is a method - here I'm thinking something like Homer Simpson's "thinkunsexythoughts thinkunsexythoughts," but more effective - to chill out and keep from embarrassing him and myself. We have friends in common and hang out at the same places, so it's not really realistic to avoid him. Any thoughts on this?

Sincerely, X., Internet

Dear X.,

It sounds like two things are going on here: first of all, you are really attracted to this dude. Secondly, you have a huge piece of clay instead of a brain.

Why are you trying to “think” your way around a person you are attracted to? You can’t outsmart yourself, girlie. That would be a *total paradox*. Give the guy a try, live your life. Your subconscious knows what your conscious brain won’t admit: that you’re just afraid of failing with this dude because he seems so perfect for you.

Send me a wedding photo or just some stuff of you swimming or whatever.

Eight months ago, my brother got divorced for the second time. The first marriage was a mistake - he knocked up his college girlfriend and married her thinking it was the right thing to do. After seven years of hell, that finally ended. The second marriage was much better, and why it ended is still a mystery to most of us. "She got bored" is the closest thing to a reason we have for why his second wife left. After that divorce was finalized, my brother got involved with a married woman, fell head over heels in love with her, got dumped by her, fell in love with her best friend, got dumped by her too, joined an S&M club, fell in love with somebody he met during a "bondage and discipline" session there, and just last week proposed to that woman.

So you can see what my dilemma is: my brother is in desperate need of an ass-beating, but if I give him even half the beating he needs, I could cause permanent physical harm and possibly even face criminal charges. Do you know of anything I can do to or for him that might help him get his head out of his ass without seriously risking his health?

Frustrated Brother, Indianapolis

Dear Frustrated,

Most psychology books do not recommend big brotherly beatings as proper therapy, so I am going to have to respectfully disagree with you there. Historically speaking, your brother *likes* beatings, hence he joined an S&M club where he pays to receive them regularly. If you started beating him he would probably try to marry you, too. It is weird that a dude would be attracted to being beaten, so I’m guessing that the troubles with his psychology go way deeper than you or he can solve alone. What I would recommend to do is consult with a psychiatrist, particularly one as good as that guy Dr. Emil Skoda on Law & Order—a real Sherlock Holmes of the brain. Good luck.

My best friend had been going out with this guy for over a year, when he decided that they should "take a break" while they go to college (together). He claims that if they haven't found other people after that, they will get married. This is bullshit because he just wants to fool around with other girls for the next four years, but my friend will not face the facts. To top it all off, they are still having sex. She has low self-esteem and doesn't want to lose him all together, so she won't tell him off. What should she do? How can I help my friend assert herself in this relationship?

Concerned, Austin, TX

Dear Concerned,

Yeah, your friend’s being taken for a long stroll down No Dignity Lane here. (Hold on, I have to change the music on the CD changer, it is that annoying song from Austin Powers).

Okay, sorry about that. Anyhow: have a real heart-to-heart talk with her and tell her how it looks from your perspective. When she hears the facts from your point of view, the absurdity [crud, hold on again. My ear is all itchy from too much ear wax. I'll be right back.]

Whoah, who put...what is this? "Human League?" What in hell is this 80's crap? Who was in here while I was out Q-tippin'?

Oh, I know what it was. I let Téodor bring some date here last night because Lyle broke all the plates over at their place. *Damn is this some sappy music.*

Okay, what? Alright, your friend's birth canal is getting all played out by some dude and you hate that. Fair enough. Unsustainable situations like that sort themselves out. He'll get a new girlfriend soon enough and just plain stop seeing her. Be supportive, it will be a time of growth and maturation for her.

I think as well as using a bartender's spoon, Déesse should also change the order of the ingredients. When you make a layered shot you want the heaviest liquids at the bottom of the glass and the lightest at the top. The heavier liquids are those that are high in sugar, like liqueurs (your Kahlua and banana liqueurs for example). A milk-based drink like Baileys should be on top of these because it contains less sugar. Plain spirits (like Vodka or whatever) have no sugar so they should be last. Deciding whether the Kahlua or banana should be first is tough, unless you have a mass spectrometer or something. My gut feel is that you should go Kahlua, banana, Baileys.

G-Monet from Sydney Australia.

Dear G-Monet,

This is excellent advice. Thank you for bringing it up. I hope Déesse did not waste too much liquor just following my incomplete instructions.

You know what I think would be neat? At the grocery store, near the checkouts, there have always been these bins of "Brachs" chewy nickel candies. My favorite has always been the Neapolitan: a rectangle with a pink, white and brown layer (the white layer is coconut flavor). I wonder how you would make a shooter with those colors? I don't know what would be the pink layer, or how you'd get coconut flavor.

I'm at an impasse as to where should I try my luck; I am currently living in an apartment in Tokyo (my first time living alone, let alone in a different country). However, this apartment's lease goes up in about two months, and so I have that much time to decide whether to: A) stay in Japan (a place I'm still trying to adjust to, but have much enthusiasm for – I've been wanting to live here for a little over ten years) or B) accept an offer to come home (Seattle, Washington). It's not a bad place by any means (I'm definitely more familiar with it), but before leaving I made some half-assed proclamation to the extent of "I'll never set foot here again," (which people actually took seriously) meaning I'd probably sacrifice some dignity by returning.

Both options seem to have their pros and cons to me, and I've gone through many sleepless nights and pads of paper comparing one choice to the other. I guess what I'm asking, in so many words, is: what's the opinion of the coolest cat to ever wear a thong on the situation here?

Split down the middle in Soshigaya

Dear Split,

Don't worry about what you said to some people about what you would or wouldn't do in the future. They don't care at all, that shouldn't be a factor. Keep living abroad while you're young and single—that sounds

fun. There is plenty of time to live in Seattle later, particularly when you want your thighs to go a pure, milky white.

Confidential to the guy with explosive diarrhea: very clever, just getting a new Hotmail account. I have added it to my “spam” blocker, so good luck getting through to me now.

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Aug 12, 2003

Advice Column for August 12, 2003

First of all, thanks to all 587 of you who wrote in with ideas for my Neapolitan Shooter. I'm going to conduct some experiments and then take a picture with this digital camera I got. I'll probably try to run it next week!

Also, I didn't run this one guy's letter because my email program turned all his apostrophes into “^Ò” and I didn't want to change all of them. This sucks, because I had good advice for him. People: please don't send me letters that have “^Ò” in them.

Got a question? Want an answer? Ask Ray! (ray@achewood.com)

Some letters are edited for clarity and grammar.

H E R E W E G O !

What is the correct way to eat a rack of lamb in a restaurant? It looks easy enough to eat when you get it (like a bunch of lamb chops) but there is that hard bone that runs all the way along the bottom. Is it permissible to crack this bone in your hands, because even if they get you a steak knife it seems impossible otherwise?

J., Brisbane, Australia.

Dear J.,

First of all, if you're at a place that's serving rack of lamb with the chine bone intact (this is the long inter-rib spinal bone you speak of), then I wonder what in hell they are thinking. Even the greenest grocery store butcher knows to crack this bone for the customer. Definitely crack it manually if it's been served to you incorrectly.

Chops such as this are definitely meant to be picked up with the fingers—no matter how many forks are to the left of your plate, no matter how many waiters are queued to drape the napkin across your lap when you return from the bathroom. The meat next to the bone is the most flavorful meat on the chop, and any gourmet in attendance will internally applaud your hands-on expertise.

In most cases, chop bones are “Frenched,” meaning a few inches of the rib bone is completely cleared of meat and other tissues prior to cooking. This is done to create not only a lovely presentation but a dry,

grippable handle. Whenever you see a Frenched bone, that's your permission slip to drop the hardware and dig in!

I envy you your future lamb experiences.

*I'm currently taking a class on existentialism, and I have my final paper due on Thursday. The problem is I'm no philosophical genius and I have no freakin' idea what existentialism entails outside of "life is meaningless." Can you enlighten me on what existentialism means to you?
Not a Nietzsche*

Dear NN,

There was a period in my life where I had a copy of The Metamorphosis (Nietzsche) next to the can. It's not very long, and I think it's like pretty much the main book of Existentialism. Even though it's really heavy philosophy, it's actually kind of neat to read! It's about this German dude who wakes up one day and discovers that he's turned into a great big cockroach. His parents, who he lives with, just lock him in his room and eventually he dies. I think the point is to try to be more tolerant of those who are different from you.

*Why does my fucking cat insist on puking on my car? I know cats need to cough up hairballs and the like, but mine insists on vomiting on my car, especially after eating a gopher or rat when the puke contains guts and limbs etc. As a cat, can you please lend some insight into this disgusting habit? My cars are not new, but if I get the new Prius I've had my eye on and she pukes on it, well, that may be the end of her.
Disgusted in San Diego*

Dear Disgusted,

First of all, I am going to count to ten and try to pretend that you did NOT just call a cat a "fucking" cat. Maybe you, as a human, don't understand that a cat is just as complicated and sentient as you? I mean, look at me, *God dammit*. I write on a *God damned computer*. If you think cats are so stupid, *why are you asking one for advice?!*

Phew. Okay, sorry. I was pretty mad there. I know all cats aren't created equal, and maybe you've got one of those "star-touched" ones who end up stockin' at 7-11 or whatever. That's cool, we all need to be more tolerant (see previous letter).

Anyhow, I'm wondering if your cat blows chunks in your car when you're driving, or when it's parked (and you leave the window open). The former would indicate simple car sickness, while the latter would indicate that you need to roll the windows up, because your cat seems to find your car a very private place where it can attend to shameful business. I wouldn't be surprised if your cat also went into your car to read the bra section in the Sears catalog etc.

I have been with my boyfriend for ten months now, and it is time I broaden my sexual horizons. I would like to have sex with another lovely young lady. Also, I would like my main squeeze to participate and juice

up this chick with me. After several discussions on the matter he's up for it (yay!). However, our dilemma is how to approach a respectable, attractive, clean woman and not seem like a couple of sleazy lowlifes just out for some snatch—which is actually what we are out for, except we're not lowlifes. We're just regular upstanding citizens with very healthy sexual desires.

Bi-curious

Dear Bi-Curious,

There is a huge section in most newspapers which has personals just like the one you just wrote. You can submit yours, and will probably also find a woman who's looking for a couple to swing with.

A good way to make sure the woman isn't real gross (like 55, with long frizzy red hair and dream-catcher earrings) is to mandate a photo swap before meeting. This is real easy to do via e-mail. In fact, if you send in a picture I can post it here!

Cool.

Readers – did you spot that this letter was actually written by a man? We'll have more pop quizzes like this throughout the summer and early fall.

So this past Sunday I was at my friend's parish festival, helping out with the bingos. Man! Those little old ladies play some rough bingo. What advice can you give me on how to beat them next year? (They kept winning all the \$5 prizes and Wal-Mart gift certificates - what are they gonna need them for? I'm a poor college kid. I need help buying my shampoo and soap and groceries and stuff.)

G. W.

Dear G.W.,

Well, first of all you ain't gonna play once a year and beat old ladies who play all year long, just like you ain't gonna drop in at Augusta and style on Tiger Woods.

The reason they are so aggressive is because they actually do need the little prizes and gift certificates. Do you know how little money the government pays little old ladies every month? It is not very much, plus they get scammed out of most of it by Hallmark ads that show life's problems being turned around by having 600 Hallmark cards on hand at all times.

Dude, it is basically uncool that you tried to cut in on their money. I'm surprised you didn't get a bunch of Aqua-Net in the eyes when you left for the parking lot.

Readers: this is a follow-up from last week's "Bella." She still did not send in a picture.

I was not thinking really of us getting together in so much of a sexual way. I was thinking more of a spiritual connection mainly, with deep love and a lot of eyegazing but also with the addition of the pool floats and drinks elements so that things would not be too Zen-heavy, because I really hate that shit.

But check this because this is weird: when I read your response to my letter there was the phrase "reluctant to lay down the blanket statement" and there was totally a line break before the word "statement!" Which of course that gave me the clear picture of you "laying down a blanket," and I went into a dream (like in the Beatles song) of us lying side by side on a flowered chenille blanket (just go to Ebay and type in "chenille" and "shabby chic") in a psychedelic green field like on that one Nissan commercial. This time the drinks were in a stylin' thermos (like say the ones Hermes used to sell for \$6,000) and we had upscale picnic cups to drink out of and the whole bit but once again I was startled out of the beautiful vision by the almost comical discrepancy in our sizes/species and the fear that someone might get an aerial view.

It the most annoying mental tic and I need to figure out how to get over it because it is standing in the way of something that could be truly beautiful and classy. I know you can understand because it sounds like the same kind of thing happened to your fantasy life after you got the rude wake up call about the different styles of ladies you can potentially run into out there in the world. (In the form of the scary picture that one dyke sent you.) But, Ray, what is the solution for those of us who fall in love first and then are confronted by a totally unworkable aesthetic situation?
Bella

Dear Bella,

You still forgot to attach a photograph! This was the whole point of my last response to you. I think you can get them to take a simple digital photo of you at Kinko's if you don't have a camera (remember: you must show from knees to top of head).

I'm 27 years old and have been living with my girlfriend for the past four years. It's totally time to take that next step, and the only thing I have to do is buy a ring. I've saved a few thousand dollars for that purpose, but here's my dilemma: My girl loves Tiffany—not the singer, the jeweler. I know she wants a Tiffany ring, but we're just blue collar grade people here and I know that with the chunk of change I have I could either get her a sad little Tiffany ring or a really nice, really high quality ring from Costco.

Now, once the ring is on her finger, that big, over-priced rock from Costco is going to look pretty nice, but I know she is going to secretly regret that, at the moment of truth, I didn't bust out a box in that peculiar shade of blue that makes the heart of any woman in a six-mile radius skip a beat. However, if I get the Tiffany she's going to end up with a flake of glass on her finger that's going to look pretty pathetic. I guess my other option would be to wait a few years until I can save a few more thousand and get a nice looking Tiffany, but by then she's going to have gone all neurotic wondering why I don't want to marry her.

What are your thoughts on the diamond dilemma?
Soon to be Broke in Seattle

Dear Seattle,

When you propose, don't have any sort of ring box present. Just pull the ring out of the inside chest pocket of your coat—this way name brand won't even be an issue and all she'll see is a respectable-sized rock.

If at any time in the remainder of the evening she asks if the ring is a Tiffany, or even asks "where did you get it," take it back off her finger, get your Costco receipt, and go on a long vacation alone while she moves her dumb ass out of your apartment (take your CDs/stereo to a friend's house first).

I hope you don't get burned, but if you do, it ain't nothin that ain't happened ten times worse to somebody else.

For several years my best friend has been trying to help to me get hip to the Aussie rock god Nick Cave. He started by playing me earlier stuff like Birthday party/ boys next door. His assumption, I think, was that seeing as I like punk music (Ramones, Stooges, X) that I would dig on this young n'raw Nick Cave. It never stuck.

His second attempt was to get me really drunk and play tape after tape of his Badseeds MTV videos. I would be seeing double watching this vampire mullet guy crooning and thinking I was going crazy.

The last straw for him was last year (this has been going on for several years) when we had tickets to go see Nick and the Seeds in concert and I arrived so late that I only caught the encore. He said that he was so enraged that I had missed the concert that he was unable to focus on anything but my empty seat.

It is not that I dislike Nick Cave and his music, on the contrary, I like and respect it. Unfortunately that is not enough for my friend. I honestly think he believes that something is wrong with me that I am not able to spend hours talking about, listening to, and watching Nick Cave. Once he got really drunk, kissed a Nick Cave Poster (which is huge by the way) then attacked me for making fun of him. Is my friend insane? Babe, I'm On Fire

Dear On Fire,

Yeah, I accidentally listened to some Nick Cave once. How is music that terrible even being made and distributed? It's like he knows how to make music that is exactly wrong for enjoying—like he has some sort of special combination of keys, time signatures and “anti-hooks” he relies on to make songs which sound so awful that they are completely unappealing to everybody. Frankly, I'd like to hear a person who knows music theory explain exactly why it is that all of Nick Cave's songs are so technically awful. All I know is that all my primal instincts tell me to fight and kill Nick Cave's music.

In the latest issue of "toro" magazine, a classy Canadian men's magazine, I read an article on a beverage called Kir Royale that really inspired me. It's a layering of some kind of blackberry cassis or grenadine, and champagne. It sounds tasty, the kind of thing that would really impress any woman at my abode post-date, but I can't seem to find any of the Cassis de Dijon used to make it. Or does the whole drink sound just too...effeminate for you? What's the best drink to mix up for a lady at your house if you want to impress her with your class and put her just a little more in the mood?
Jordie

Dear Jordie,

“Classy Canadian men's magazine”? What, is there like a picture of a hockey guy wearing a tuxedo but also his skates, and his mullet is all done nice? Is there a picture of a huge truck just driving head-on into a cement wall?

I'm just ribbing you, Canadians. I know you can take it because you're not angry drunks like we get in the South. If you so much as squint the wrong way at a runty little Southern man or woman, suddenly it's a

rattle to the death. You should see their muscles – like string beans under their skin – just ready to go until the glucose from the Budweiser is completely gone from their blood and they are taken to prison for the night.

Well, I will start off with the biggest problem. My e-pron [Readers: this is how hardcore porno addicts refer to Internet porno] addiction. Every time I [use] my computer, I find myself visiting the likes of such sites that include voyeur and celebrity [porn] and I just can't get away. Not only that, but every time I go I masturbate.

This leads me to my next problem. I masturbate a good 2-4 times a day. Sometimes it will be to the e-pron or thinking of my wildest fantasies and other times, sadly, I will light a match and masturbate to the flame. I love fire so much, I will masturbate while looking at it.
J, Vancouver, BC.

Dear J.,

Well, I think the main problem here is the fire thing. I hope you were just including that to be funny, even though it is not a joke in the traditional sense of the word.

Anyhow, my advice is to stop masturbating to fire. You didn't say how old you were, but the J/O frequency itself is not so much of a problem. When Pat was younger, he'd be in his room most of the afternoon and evenings. I don't even think he learned how to ride a bike until this one summer where he had to wear a catheter for a couple weeks and wasn't allowed to get wood.

Dear Readers: another letter from the original Gun Guy! This is based on last week's response where I correctly guessed that in Die Hard, Bruce Willis used a gun called a "Nine Millimeter."

Actually, you correctly guessed the caliber of Bruce Willis' gun, not the gun itself. It's kind of like guessing the engine specs instead of the car. The caliber is the diameter of the gun barrel, and is measured either in millimeters or percentages of an inch (for example, a .50 caliber would be half an inch wide). Rifle ammunition usually is smaller (the M-4, standard armament for the US Army and US Marines, uses 5.56mm) but hits a lot harder both because it has more powder and because the shape of the casing forces even more pressure behind the bullet.

To the guy whining about being a loser: buy a gun. Simply having the knowledge that you can remove a person's head with the twitch of a finger can give you a major boost in confidence. Not doing it, of course, but simply knowing you can.

Gun Happy

Dear Gun Happy,

Dude, when are you going to get your gun column started? You obviously know a lot about the stuff. I too own a gun (sweet little Tic-Tac) and sort of know what you mean about strong feelings of power brought on by weapon ownership. Tic Tac couldn't exactly blow a robber's head off, but she could definitely let him know that I was mad at him.

Some of my friends and family have been trying to tell me I have OCD (I have been joking the past few years that I do have a mild case, but honestly I don't think I have anything that severe in the clinical sense) – for instance, my cousin said I organise things and put them in piles in corners too often when she is still using the items, like my remotes to be on the nightstand a certain way, and am too finicky about having my CDs in alphabetical order at all times to the point that I wouldn't allow her to keep cases out cause I needed them to complete the process! My mom is worried that I count my food in multiples of three and must read magazines from start to finish or not at all.

Honestly, some of them are true, but it isn't a do or die situation! I just would like to know if they are correct in their assumptions or if they're blowing it all out of proportion.

Counting the Minutes

Dear Counting,

Yeah, you sound a little bonkers. It might be good to try to get a handle on this sooner rather than later and see what is going on. I'm sure your mom and cousin will be glad to help.

Tell me, is Riesling just a fancy and/or shmancy word for grapefruit-flavored wine?
H.J., Denver, CO

Dear H.J.,

No, Riesling is a legitimate varietal, just like Cabernet or Chardonnay. They tend to be sweeter and are great when chilled. If you are noticing a grapefruit flavor in some of your whites, then good for you! You are starting to get the hang of the complicated world of wine tasting. Pretty soon you'll be talking about a wine's "shale-like mineral character" and opining that the '93 Opus "unfolds like the Elvira Madigan Concerto."

I was living with this girl for like 3 years, we were engaged and stuff (her idea) and then she dumped my ass. She was going through some changes and blah blah blah, whatever. She broke my heart but I love her. So I stayed friends with her, both because she needed me as a friend and because I am pathetic.

So then a while later she moves in as a roommate with this other girl (I will call her Othergirl) she knows from way back in middle school (and I know from work.) Then she starts dating this guy, who is the ex-boyfriend of Othergirl. Othergirl dated this guy before she figured out for sure she was a lesbian.

So me and Othergirl got to talking about what a damn sorry mess this all was, and then well... so now Othergirl and I are an item (which is weird, having this girlfriend who is a lesbian and me being a guy and all.) So I am an honorary lesbian I guess, and we just moved in together.

But this first girl with whom I do still want to be friends, she seems to be wierded out by this situation. I don't know what to do to save this friendship, or if I even can. But she doesn't talk to me much anymore, she starts a conversation and then all of a sudden she seems to remember something and zap, she leaves the room.

Somewhere in America

Dear Somewhere,

Humorous! What a situation – it's like an old Woody Allen movie, except at one point an unconscious person isn't revived with a block of Blue Cheese.

I guess first of all it is most clear that the original girl still has some kind of feelings for you, which is natural enough. I think it's pretty bogus to say that you two have a "friendship," though, since you don't. You have more of a "weird situation."

"Othergirl" needs a few more credits before she fulfills her Identity Completion Degree Requirements. I wouldn't put a ring on that finger just yet.

Overall, it sounds like you kind of hang out with messed-up immature people. That's your fault. I'm going to an awesome party now and will finish the advice column when I get back.

What's the best thing to do for a bachelor party? My brother is getting married, and it appears to have fallen to me, as the wild man in the family, to plan his last night of single fun. The problem is, aside from the basics (booze, strippers, beer, porn, liquor, hookers) I have no idea what to do. I'm only wild relative to my brother, maybe a 4 versus a 2 on the 1-10 wild-o-meter, but I really want to make it a night to remember. That this thing is in Ohio is another part that sucks, cause Vegas is too dang far away.
Perplexed Bachelor Party Planner

Dear Perplexed,

Man, don't sweat it. The problem is, for most of our early lives all we knew about bachelor parties was based on the Tom Hanks movie "Bachelor Party," which was produced in the early 80s and therefore was naturally way over the top (how could you get a burro into the Beverly Hills Hilton, I ask you).

These days people are more down to earth about bachelor parties. The most important thing is just for dudes to have a good time and for the groom not to have to pay for anything or drive himself anywhere. If you go to a strip club, send photos. Those are always a lot of fun to see.

Will you run for governor of California?
Dave

Dear Dave,

I did think about it, and I even have one of those red, white and blue top hats from this party I went to, but in the end I decided against it. I looked into the actual requirements of the job and basically you have to spend all day deciding which schoolchildren to screw out of school lunch. Not cool, not really where I'm at right now.

So I'm a terribly cute nineteen year old girl with a bit of a problem. See, I met this guy a couple of months back who frequents the gym I work at: [he's] 26, an accountant, and we really hit it off. He gave me a bottle of exquisite wine and a book of sex positions shortly after meeting him, but I just laughed it off as flirtation. Anyway, we both felt the electricity, and soon after, he told me he was seeing another girl, but that it wasn't serious, and that he just wanted to keep things the way they were in that respect—which, by the way, I had no problem with. Anyway, we started spending more and more time together, and one thing led to another, as things tend to do. Then I started to fall for him. Really fall for him. Before I could tell him anything, he said that he and the other girl were starting to take things a lot more seriously. But we continued to see each other, and continued to have sex, until I cut it off out of guilt.

My friends all judged the guy on the spot and said he was using me, but I've been trying to explain to them that he's just this really great guy who fell for a girl at his gym. They don't seem to understand at all. Anyway, a little while ago, things started to heat up yet again, until I once more cut it off...now I feel like I'm sitting here, waiting for something to happen between the two of them so I can have what I want, but everyone seems to think I'm being a huge idiot.

What on earth should I do?
Lonely in PA

Dear Lonely,

You are a huge idiot, your friends are right. This fellow sees you as nothing more than a moist birth canal with pleasurable friction. Some dumb book and a six dollar bottle of Turning Leaf got him a few months of extra “ab” workouts? The smartest thing you can do at this point is to add the extra “personal training” sessions to his gym tab, and use the commission buy a Jetta.

Being a feline yourself, maybe you can help me with my problem: I suspect my man is secretly into chicks wearing cat-suits. He is always bringing up the subject after we've "made love" but then claims to only be joking about it. He's probably hesitant to share his innermost desires with me because I keep making fun of him. I can't help myself.

So, would a guy only be satisfied with a complete cat-suit, or might he be happy with some fuzzy tiger-stripped lingerie? Are a tail and ears a must? I'm just trying to be a good girlfriend here.
Trying her best

Dear Trying,

A dude is his most intimate, vulnerable self right after a session of lovemaking. If he's talking about tapping you in a cat costume, then that's actually what he wants most in his heart. He's not joking. Every time you laugh and make fun of him, he becomes more frustrated and unhappy as a person. How much could it hurt to dress up as a sexy-ass lady cat? It's not like he wants you to get a dumbbell through your clit or anything.

One time I had a girlfriend dress up as a grateful homeless woman. *That was one of the hottest nights of my life.*

I have been dating a loving and wonderful girl for about a year. She is crazy about me and I am likewise enamored of her. [However,] she has the tendency to talk about her ex-girlfriend like she was the greatest thing that happened to her. Her girlfriend got her the best this, made her the most incredible that. She is faultless and fantastic. Now—because I have no significant exes to speak of, whereas my girlfriend has had many long relationships, her comments make me feel young and insecure. My question is: would it be appropriate for me to ask her to refrain from talking about her ex-girlfriend? I don't want to force her to censor her past, but neither do I want to keep swallowing my anxiety and insecurity. It's also a matter of censoring the present, as my girlfriend is still friends with her ex-girlfriend.

With Questionable Concerns

Dear Concerns,

I think what you need to do is show your girlfriend this letter that you just shared with me. It seems like the perfect exposition of your situation—honest, balanced and unselfish. You are truly a patient soul and are enduring a truly ugly emotional “pathology.”

In her defense: your girlfriend’s agitating claims are in all likelihood a way of trying to prove to you that she is a valuable person worth loving, despite several previous relationships having gone south. She tells these stories to convince you that people in the past cared about her, as a way of implying that she is worth your care. It’s really nothing more than a simple call for reassurance.

I don’t usually cry too much, and never when I’m writing this column, but damn. Something about your letter really put the onions in my eyes. I’m sorry, I have to stop here. I got to move on. I hope you make good [can’t see kaybaord aymore bye]

How does one get their special lady friend to, how should I say this, do a bit of gardening in her flower patch?

It's not like it's an Oregon Old Growth Forest down there, but I wish it were maintained like the women in adult films take care of theirs.

How do I tactfully let my girlfriend know that it would be awesome if she shaved her pubic area. Is there a way to bring up the subject without looking like a sexual deviant? Don't women realize how sexy a nicely trimmed private part is?

Is this the kind of thing where one should lead by example?

Likes 'Em Nice and Smooth

Dear Nice and Smooth,

There is a way to get some trim on, but first let’s talk about a couple of other things.

Mainly, the chicks in hardcore movies only do the ultra-bare because that’s the tradition in the genre. It’s a difficult area to maintain. If you ask your girlfriend to completely shave that sucker, you’re going to get more than you bargained for when she starts complaining about ingrown hairs, itchiness and barbed-wire stubble. Plus, she’s going to miss a lot of the hairs around her ass and more difficult folds, and you’re just going to feel extremely icky and embarrassed when face-to-face with it.

Your idea of leading by example might work, if you just buzz yourself (with clippers - don't shave yet) and present it as something you've done and not as something you expect her to do. Just jump on the bed and be all, "Look! Look what I did!" — like it's a lot of fun (maybe have white tube socks on, to make it seem not too serious). Then, just have the clippers in an easy-to-find place in the bathroom in case it develops into anything. Remember: shaving is the **next** step. For now, you are just getting your foot in the door.

Confidential to the guy with explosive diarrhea: How in hell did you get my phone number?! It's unlisted! Anyhow, I'm canceling the phone service to the house and just using my cell phone from now on.

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Aug 19, 2003

Advice Column for August 19, 2003

Dear Readers: Apparently last week I erroneously said that "The Metamorphosis" was written by Friedrich Nietzsche instead of Frank Kafka. My bad! Thanks to the 297 people who put their suicide plans on hold long enough to write in.

Book Corner: Instead of "The Metamorphosis," try picking up one of those "Hitchhiker's Guide To the Galaxy" books! Man, I found a couple of them by the can at Téodor's place one day, and *Jesus are those hilarious*. I hope that guy keeps writing books for as long as I have lungs to laugh with. He really has a great sense of humor.

Got a question? Need an answer? Ask Ray! (ray at achewood dot com)

Some letters are edited for clarity and grammar.

HERE WE GO!

I'm wondering about my cat's trips to our veterinarian. Are there any common misconceptions humans have about what our cats must endure that you could clear up for us? Are there any ways to make my cat feel more comfortable about going to the vet? She isn't as verbose as you are, but she's learned to recognize a few words, and 'Vet' will send her hiding for at least two days. I feel like I'm tricking her every time I spell it out, and I later feel bad about myself even though I know that I'm keep her healthy.
GK, PA

Dear GK.,

I've seen "ER" and other shows about the human medical industry. What happens in a human hospital, even to the lowliest drunken vagrant with a hot temper and no medical insurance, is far better than what happens to a good cat at the best human veterinarian "hospital." Usually what happens at "the vet" is that they immediately stick a thermometer up your Roca-chute without even asking your name, and then they just go "awww ain't he a good boy" as though the ideal feline is always sittin' around smilin' with a glass dipstick up his Boston beanmaker.

My factual guess is that you should just let your cat go to her own doctor, and quit dragging her to a place full of humans who have terrible bedside manners. Think about it: would you, as a human, want some feline

doctor with a Rolex meowing quietly to himself while working a thermometer up into your pucker? I didn't think so.

You seem like a guy who'd enjoy Las Vegas. Assuming you've been there, what casino/hotel do you usually like to stay at? I prefer the Flamingo—not too expensive, great location, great pool, and while it's not the fanciest hotel in town it's a decent enough place. But I'm interested in hearing your thoughts.
C, Alexandria, VA

Dear C.,

A good question! Most humans probably don't know this but billionaire (feline) investor J. Vincent J. Lemoni recently built a massive Underground replica of Vegas (including Fremont Street, for some reason) just a few miles from human Las Vegas. You won't be able to find it, but based on what I've read it's pretty much an exact replica of human Vegas, right down to that one scene in "Mystère" where the big fat baby on the golf cart turns into an explosion of caramel candies which the audience can eat.

Personally, yes, I do like to go down to "Vegas II" for a little of the high life. I'll throw a few bucks down on roulette before a classy dinner at Delmonico (at the Venetian), or get nasty on some Pai Gow Poker at Bellagio before sampling some award-winning Godiva martinis and fine dining at Le Cirque (always stop for a Bellini at the Fontana on the lake first). But hell, I'm no snob. Sometimes I'll just go nurse a couple airplane bottles of fig vodka down at the Stage Door (across from the off-strip entrance to Bally's). They have a pretty good deal on hot dogs there, and you can just zone out on quarter video poker right at your seat.

See, Vegas is all classy these days, but it's also a fun time if you just slum it in the dirtiest old-school way possible. I have had some good times just yelling at people and having them yell back at me before one of us kind of fell over a railing or something, and one time I woke up next to a vomit-caked fat guy in this drainage area behind the Luxor! I don't know what had happened between us the night before, if anything, but when he woke up and started dry-heaving I just crawled off to this other part of the ivy that was kind of hard to find from where he was. Later that day I made it back to the room and just sat in the bathtub with a pillow and a sheet for a real long time.

I really need to know why poor Tasha Yar had to die twice! I know that temporal paradoxes played a significant role in the whole ordeal, but really now, twice!? And to also have her half Romulan daughter try to destroy her old friends aboard the enterprise not too long after her original death.
Hopeless Geek, Alpha Quadrant

Dear HG,

Okay, this is like the fifth time you've written in with some question which seems like it may be about Star Wars or Star Trek. Or Battlestar Galactica? I am not an expert on these shows. I realize that my advice column is available on the Internet but you have to accept the fact that not 100% of Internet users like the same spaceship show that you like.

However, if I were to guess, I'd say that Tasha Yar didn't actually die twice, but rather infinite times. Don't you remember the shot right before she died, where she looked in the mirror, only to see that there was a mirror on the wall opposite that mirror, just at the moment that Jor-ai rebooted the transkinesic Baryalon

Pyramid, thus annihilating her into an endlessly repeating hall of mirrors? *Think for yourself once in a while.*

I am a 21 year old male that has never gotten involved with a lady in any way, never held hands or anything. When I was a teenager, my parents didn't think this was weird but now that I'm older, starting a career, taking responsibilities, etc., they're starting to talk about it.

Each time I go home the subject is hinted at and more and more I feel pressure from them to get involved, and I think it's important to them because I am their only male child and I think they want like-named descendents or something (they are religious). They think I am going through a phase of some sort but I have my reasons for abstaining. How do I end the awkwardness and let them know I have no intention of hooking up or procreating?

Celibate Nihilist in AZ

Dear Celibate Nihilist,

Without knowing your "reasons," I can't really assess your situation. Try giving us a clearer picture of why you are unwilling to participate in your species.

My boyfriend of five years just moved to California to attend college. I have a year and a half of college left here in Colorado, so I stayed to finish my degree. We are currently trying the long distance thing, though it is incredibly hard. Do you believe that our relationship can survive the next year and half until I can move out there? Or am I wasting my time believing it will work?

Miserable in Colorado

Dear Miserable,

It sounds like you really want to make it work. Why don't you finish your degree out where he is? Colorado is not really a very good state, and I am sure California has better colleges. I just pray that when you finally move out there, you don't find him in his bunk bed with some other girl, *completely having sex.*

Ray, in response to the gentleperson who (cough) "likes 'em nice and smooth", I might suggest they offer to help their special lady friend with the shaving activity, assuming that their hands do not shake overly much. In my experience, this can be extremely pleasant for both parties, especially if the activity takes place in a nice warm clean bathtub.

Also, the "Original Gun Guy" is wrong: the US Army uses the M16; the M4 is a shorter version of the same weapon and is issued to special forces units (Navy SEAL teams, for example).

EPM

Dear EPM,

What a knowledgeable fellow you are! You have good insight about bikini-trimming, but also offer a bit of gun trivia. You are kind of like a book-ends of my advice column subject matter.

Perhaps the best idea I had while reading your letter was that of a small pistol, with a small bayonet on the end, and the bayonet blade was actually a Gillette Mach 3, and the gun shot out aloe-infused shave gel instead of bullets.

I am on the horns of a feline-related dilemma. I am married to a wonderful woman, but unfortunately we have a major problem. Our beautiful cat Flossy recently died of natural causes. This was bad enough, but it provoked three days of crying from my wife and me having to dig a backyard grave.

Then a few days later, her mother's cat Puss died. More crying, more digging.

These are the only two cats my wife has ever known, and they both died within a week. But now she wants to find another cat.

*My question is: Do we try again with a new cat, and run the risk of another tragedy that would really break her heart? Or do we just get a dog?
Does Life Go On?, Australia*

Dear Australia,

Man, I got a heavy question for you. What is your wife gonna do when you get stomach cancer and die at 35? What are you gonna do when she gets killed by a drunk driver tomorrow, even though it's 3PM and that sort of thing isn't supposed to happen when you're just going out to buy some pasta noodles?

What about when you conceive a child, but you discover during ultrasound exams that the child's spine looks like a damn firework that went off, and he'll be a quadriplegic "hunchback" for life even though his brain functions are 100% of normal? You are just going to have to cold suck up these little problems in life. I don't care if your cat died. The dead have it easy.

Ray, Ray, Ray...I'm so disappointed in your assumption that I'm a man! Was it my writing style, my excitement for a threesome, or my use of the word 'snatch'? You should know that there are really women out there who aren't afraid to admit that they want a little nookie while simultaneously indulging in a hearty meat stick. I know that you're thinking, "No way, a woman like this is too good to be true. It must be a dude trying to get some attention". Darling, I guess you've never met a woman as daring and open as me.

Bi-curious, San Francisco.

P.S.: I had to beg my boyfriend to let me have my fantasy. But he's not completely convinced. He goes on and on about the possible consequences and how they might end our happy relationship. I need some more advice!

Dear Bi-curious,

Well first of all, thank you for sending in the photo. Although I have no way of knowing it is you, and most of your body is obscured by the bathtub, and you might very well be the dude who is in the tub with you (holding the whiskey), I will just go ahead and believe you because I think I have some advice.

It sounds like you want to have an M-F-F threesome, and your boyfriend does not. You're at an impasse...or are you?

Let's say that I'm Ray the Cat, and I hate jumpin' off my third-floor bedroom balcony into my pool (I'm kind of afraid of heights, which is a mental thing). But one night when we're partyin' and gettin' pretty screwed up Téodor and Lyle start jumping off the balcony into the pool, and then Vlad and even Mr. Bear, and before long I'm the only one left who hasn't done it. Everybody's chanting "Ray! Ray! Ray!" and calling me a chicken and stuff, completely messing with my mind. I was terrified when I finally stood on the railing, facing the pool...I felt like I was going to die the instant I jumped, or hit the patio instead of the water. But do you know what? As soon as I leapt, life kind of went into slow motion, and all this adrenaline pumped into my heart, and as I was falling I felt like a kid again. Then the big, refreshing splashdown, and when I came up everyone was cheering! Man, what a thrill. Now I jump off the balcony into the pool *every single morning* as soon as I wake up! Man, what a way to start the day.

So what I'm saying is, we can't be afraid of new challenges in life. Often times confronting our fears can lead to incredible new experiences, like the sensation of flying, or of being laid by two women at the same time.

Hey Ray...So I have this friend, and he's been in a relationship with his girl for something like four years, but he keeps cheating on her! Everyone (except for her of course), knows that this is going on, and we all feel like shit for her. We want to tell her, but this is definitely a rock and a hard place type of situation. She's not really our friend, but the dude is, and if we tell her he is going to get really bent out of shape. We have tried to get him to fess up or quit his cheating ways, but he just won't. What is your opinion on this situation? Should we up and tell her, or just try our best to ignore these nasty happenings?
Confused in Iowa

Dear Iowa,

Why are you keeping the truth from this girl? If this was a lawsuit, you'd be charged with conspiracy. Seriously, tell the girl immediately and if your asshole unfaithful friend gets bent out of shape, then GOOD. There's more at stake here than the delicate delusional bubble he lives in. Have you considered that he stands a good chance of spreading STDs by having multiple sex partners, and that this innocent girl could get a fatal disease because you didn't have the basic decency to tell her the truth? It's a pretty safe bet that she would want to know. *Have dignity.*

You have alluded to the enjoyment of marijuana, yet you never discuss its delights as you do with alcohol. Do you prefer alcohol to weed?
Curious in California

Dear Curious,

I prefer them both. Why do I gotta choose? We'll burn one a couple times a week, and it's great. The music sounds better, the laughter is deeper and the food is more delicious. The only downside is that the house gets

kind of smelly, but you don't really notice until the next day when you're sitting there trying to figure out whose idea it was to pour all the cereal in the house into the bathtub and fill it with water.

I've just turned twenty this week. I'm no longer a teenager and I'm feeling a bit of anxiety towards the entire process of getting old. Did you go through anything like this? What do I need to do?!

- J

Dear J.,

It mega sucks to age, let me tell you. Twenty's still a pretty good time for a human: not too much weird hairs on your back yet, the girls your age are all still pretty no matter what they look like (big Romanian nose, etc), and all you have to worry about is going swimming and getting a simple little job where your friends can visit you and just chitchat all day. When you get to more like 22-23 in human years you'll start to settle into kind of a routine with a regular job that requires black shoes, and at 25-26 you'll start drinking to ignore the self-parody you've become, and in the late twenties you'll open your eyes and really start to hate yourself. You'll live to about 70 or so, I think that's the lifespan for humans.

I wish I could advise you to just be a cat and come party at my place, but I cannot. We don't really care about "ages" or "time" so much. It's more about some wicked Chow Fun noodles with BBQ Pork, grilled NY Steaks and corn on the cob, a pony keg of Beck's and an all-night pool party with the music cranked way up. That's what we're doing tonight, like most nights, down here in animal town.

I have been a bartender for a few years now and the bar spoon works quite nicely and is rather classy/fancy/smooth, however when efficiency and speed are necessary, grabbing a maraschino cherry (staple in any bar garnish tray) by the stem and dipping the bottom of the cherry into the first layer of liquor and pouring the second layer of liquor on the cherry separates the liquors very well by the same principle as the spoon.

LL, bartender

Hobo's @ 3rd & Couch, Old Towne Portland, OR, USA

Dear V.,

That is a very cool technique! I'm glad you wrote. It's neat little craftsman's tricks like this that make me glad I run this column.

Could you possibly help me with a wine problem? I don't really like white or red wine, but I do enjoy Rosé. I do know that this type of wine is becoming more acceptable in Europe, but I will be having guests from America in the autumn and I would like to know if this is a suitable wine to serve Americans with dinner? We will most likely be serving something traditionally Swedish, i.e. meatballs, pickled herring, potato gratin & various other smörgåsbord delicacies. Could you possibly recommend a good Rosé? Swedes are traditionally vodka drinkers, not wine experts. Thanks!
A girl in Östersund, Sweden.

Dear Östersund,

Whether or not your American guests are down with Rosé wine is anybody's guess. There is not one wine palate shared by all Americans. Some Americans think box wine from a cheap Chinese restaurant is completely fine, some don't drink wine at all because it's not beer and some have weekly groups where they compare and discuss wines (obnoxious). I will say that to the knowledgeable American wine drinker, Rosé wines are kind of suspect, mainly because they get associated with that pink zinfandel stuff. However, if Rosé wines are part of your drinking culture, then by all means serve them. Your guests didn't go to Sweden to eat American food and drink American drinks. When I was in Germany I had a wheat beer with 7-Up mixed in, and it was actually pretty good, but I would never have tried that in America!

Plus, a sweet Rosé will be perfect for rinsing the horrible flavor of pickled herring out of their mouths in a hurry.

I was just wondering if questions you decide not to answer one week are discarded or will be attended to in a future column?

Kevin, Internet

Dear Kevin,

No, I start fresh each week. If a question doesn't get answered it's usually because I get about five times as much e-mail as I can possibly hope to answer. Plus, a lot of the questions are redundant, like over seventy teenagers a week asking me how to get a girlfriend or money, etc.

In the last few days one of my female friends has gotten engaged. She's 21 years of age and the guy who popped the question is a mere 17. They've only been seeing each other for a couple of months and talked of moving in together (although they haven't yet) after the first month of seeing each other. To further complicate matters the girl in question has suffered quite seriously from depression over recent years, although she has seemingly been doing well for many months now but has no job and is yet to have gotten herself on her feet properly since she dropped out of university. The fella is apparently "very mature for his age" but she would say that.

I don't want to tell this couple how to run their lives or anything of the sort and would only give my own opinion and advice if I thought it was wanted; this is not why I write to you. My problem is that said couple is soon to be having an Engagement Party which will be my first meeting with her young suitor and I worry that under the influence of the large volume of alcohol likely to be consumed I am more likely to be inclined to speak my mind - unedited. That is:

- *Although I realise in certain regions of the USA and other foreign lands marriages to people of more foetal persuasions is acceptable, my own personal opinion (coming from the UK) is that this guy is too young to know what he is talking about in terms of life-long commitment to someone,*
- *They haven't known each other long enough to make such an important judgment about one another,*
- *The girl is probably in a vulnerable state (with regard to overcoming her depression, lack of job and qualifications, friends all moving away from home etc.) and more grateful to have someone to cling onto rather than in love,*
- *And the girl, being older and supposedly wiser, is even more silly than the lad for going along with the whole thing.*

That is, the engagement seems rather ridiculous to me. I just don't know how I'm going to get through this party - refusing the invite would be blatantly rude, sobriety would make the whole sickly sweet (and somewhat twisted) affair unbearable, whereas drunkenness followed by a "What do you think of him?/I'm so happy to be getting married" one-on-one conversation/probing for my approval might end messily with my tendency to tell people exactly what I DO think when drunk. What might make such an outburst worse is that a month or two prior to her meeting this fella me and the girl had a brief romantic tryst which ended in a slightly messy fashion where I perhaps wasn't the model of good behaviour. I'm now seeing one of our mutual friends who I'll be accompanying to the party and whom I think this girl (the engaged one) knew I was into even over the brief time I was seeing her. Ugly things could rise to the surface if all goes wrong.

*I don't want to make anyone feel bad or make myself a hated figure among the rest of my friends or girlfriend so any advice about how I can prevent an inappropriate outburst of honesty (or even feeble words of encouragement) would be greatly appreciated. It should be said that I have a difficult enough time keeping my mouth shut or faking approval when sober, a quality that is usually but not always appreciated by those closest to me.
Hethatshouldremainnameless.*

Dear Nameless,

Yeah, you seem to already know that opposition to their union will only strengthen their resolve to carry through with it. It's like if you tell your kid he'll never be a good musician, his rebellious nature will naturally cause him to stay in his room all day and practice like crazy. Except in this case, this ill-advised couple is not going to grow up to be Jimi Hendrix. They'll probably be divorced in a year or so and that much wiser. If it lasts, it lasts. Stranger things have happened.

Get bubbled, and be nice. They're getting married, the party should have a good positive vibe that you can tap into. You may be surprised that you can actually act like a gentleman in social situations even though you have an inward opinion that the whole affair is a sham. How do you think I get through Pat's terrible birthday parties? I'm not glad that Pat was born, but I sure don't say so. I just slice some "organic nut loaf paté," pour a glass of his celery soda/gin punch and go home right after the annual slide show of what he did that year (ran marathon, cultivated hyacinths, went to Taos and bought a turquoise bolo tie ring, etc).

Confidential to the guy with explosive diarrhea: Thank you for the Hickory Farms gift basket, but I really do wish you would stop writing in. I gave the basket to a local homeless shelter, so don't think I owe you anything.

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Aug 26, 2003

Advice Column for August 26, 2003

Editor's Note: Ray is in the year 1882 this week. He did not have the chance to answer many of your letters before he left, and we do not know when he'll be back, but here is the handful of completed replies I found on his Powerbook. —CTO

Book Corner: *Ray's Book Corner is permanently canceled.* —CTO

Got a question? Need an answer? Ask Ray! (ray at achewood dot com)

Some letters are edited for clarity and grammar.

H E R E W E G O !

Dear Readers: This is a response to my advice for Confused in Iowa, who last week wrote in to ask if she should tell a girl that her boyfriend was cheating on her.

Ray, I can't believe I'm saying this, but...you are a player hater. I can understand your advice if she was your friend, but dude, ever hear of "Bro's before Ho's"? So the guy has a few baby dolls on his jock, he's not married right? As long as the guy wraps that rascal, let the player play. You're an Alpha cat that rolls around with shades, chains, wearing a freakin' banana hammock, and you gotta problem with multiple partners?!?! Save it man. Tell me why I'm wrong dude, please..

L, Vail

Dear Ghost of Eazy-E,

It is not okay to cheat on someone with whom you *share the understanding* that you are exclusive sex partners. That was their situation: the girl was led to believe that she was in a monogamous relationship when in fact she was not. If you want to sit around in your hot tub (bath tub) with all your gold chains (macaroni necklace) and stable of ho's (St. Pauli Girl beer coaster), then fine, live that way. It doesn't sound very appealing to me.

I'm one of those people that doesn't really dig on the whole dance club scene. That said, I'm not one of those people who will turn up an opportunity to get sauced and look at pretty little ladies dressed to the nines.

Last time my friends suggested going to one of these places I accepted and wound up on the dance floor with a tank full of gas (booze). It came out that I am a pretty good dancer, a fact that I was already aware of and I wound up dancing with a couple of nice ladies.

Thing is, I was really digging just completely cutting a rug on my own. The whole rubbing genitals together with a girl I don't care about element kind of killed the vibe. Is there any way a guy can John Travolta it on the dance floor and not come off as a queer snob? I really don't want to give anybody the idea that I will be buying them drinks or inviting them back to the alley for a cheap thrill on an ordinary Friday night. Does it defeat the whole go there/get tanked/try to get laid order of things? Is my lack of interest in casual sex going to make my friends want to stop hanging with me?
Guilty Rocker, Ontario, Canada

Dear Guilty,

Heh heh! Man, I am totally [completely] laughing at you. You went to a dance club and danced your pants off, and yet you are all bugged that ladies were interested in you! That's like going to a trout farm and then yelling at the manager when you catch one, or like having a sandwich cart on the street, and being disgusted when people try to buy sandwiches from you, and flipping them off! Dude, do you have no idea what the only purpose of club dancing is? *Club dancing is stone cold mimicry of the sex act.* I thought everybody knew this.

*You're like a librarian
Who won't check out the books
You are like a chef who won't
Give people what he cooks.*

You mention finding books by the toilet at Téodor's place all the time. How long do you consider too long to sit on the toilet and self-educate?

M, Cap City

Dear M.,

This is actually a pretty good question. I tend to work off of the Big Chill line that "the average shit should last about as long as a People Magazine article." Celebrity rags like that are pretty good timers. If you get into something like a New Yorker article, you're definitely going to have one or both legs fall asleep. Then when you try to stand up you'll fall on your side and "pinwheel" around on the floor, kicking painfully, trying to regain circulation. This usually happens to Roast Beef, because he is so intellectual.

Dear Readers: TWO gun guys wrote in this week! They're writing about machine guns this time, instead of pistols.

This is in response to EPM, who said that the US Army uses the M-16 as a standard armament: actually, no, all combat-ready divisions in active war zones are issued M-4s. The M-16 is still used for training and reserve forces, but the odds of them seeing actual combat are pretty slim. Once in a great while, someone will request an M-16 for use in combat, but not very often. The reason we haven't gotten rid of all our old M-16s and replaced them is cause it's just too damn expensive. It would cost a fortune to replace every

weapon, and there's no real reason to because, like I said, not very many of them would see combat anyways. We can equip the best of the best soldiers with the best of the best weapons, no problem, but giving every piece of trailer trash who walks into the recruitment office top of the line weapons and equipment? It's not that simple.

Gun Happy

and

In response to the man who wrote in saying gun guy was wrong and that the U.S. Army uses the M-16. He is wrong, I am in the army, and while some units still have the longer M-16, all infantry units are switching to the M-4 Carbine. Infantrymen are already carrying the M-4, with heavier and less deployed units being updated currently. Not sure where he got his information, but it is definitely dated.

T., Internet

My wife and I have been together for four years now, and we share our dwelling with two felines. One is a rather old fellow of about 15 years, named Tigger. The wife and Tigger have been together since he was a kitten, and are very close. My problem is that no matter what I do, the old man disdains my very presence in the house, gives me dirty looks and howls in my general direction. In addition, he has the habit of turning his posterior in my direction whenever I inject myself into the space he is sharing with the wife.

I am respectful of him and treat him fairly, even offering him his favorite treat, cod liver oil! How can I get the old man to give me a fair shake?

New to the Group, Atlanta

Dear Atlanta,

Yeah, I feel you. It's the same as with people, though: some guys are just assholes. Your wife's cat is an asshole.

He probably laughs at you when you give him his "treat." He knows you're trying to get in his good graces, and to him that looks pitiful and weak. One pretty good trick is to just kick him whenever you feel like it. He'll get the idea that you like to kick him, and he'll cool out on his asshole behavior. Assholes can only grow to respect other assholes.

Good luck.

When spooning with my lady on the beach or at home on the couch, I often find myself sporting an erection. We are physically comfortable with each other, but sex is not yet on the radar screen. I don't think she's quite ready to have me pressing the old bone against her back/butt/thighs. She'd probably be okay with it if it happens once or twice, but the guy down there just can't be controlled; this is a constant thing. When lying down, I can angle the hips away enough so as not to poke her, but when she sits on my lap or lies with her head there...well, let's just say I hope there's a pillow handy. Do you have any suggestions for controlling this or ways to talk to her about it?

"Call Me Woody"

Dear Woody,

It's funny how you say that sex is not yet on the radar screen, when in actuality *my* screen is completely fogged over with my hot horny breath after reading your letter.

Just kidding! I thought it would be funny if I acted like I got all turned on by reading about some kid getting wood. Kind of like a "shock" thing. Anyhow, I have no advice on this subject.

What are your feelings on meeting girls on the internet? I've had some really amazing experiences, some really horrible experiences, and some just plain embarrassing ones, mostly from girls met on www.makeoutclub.com. What do you think? Is it a totally respectable way to meet folks or a little bit pathetic? Any tips? I've seen Téodor and Vlad at it, but they are not quite the role models I consider you to be.

BF in Madison

Dear BF,

Yeah, it's lame. Usually the woman will just choose a photo that really flatters her, and you can't see that she has like a dumb little ankle tattoo of a rose, plus an aluminum cane, the kind with four little feet of its own. Then when you meet there's this awkward mutual feeling that you're both fatter than you said you'd be.

I noticed a few columns back you 'helped' (heh) out a guy with a girlfriend who wanted him to be 'goth' Well, my situation is reversed...I'm a goth with a 'normal' boyfriend. I keep hoping he'll show more interest in the music I like, as I've gone to concerts he enjoys, excruciating as they may be (Limp Bizkit....ugh), but he still refuses to even give it a chance. The one time he agreed to go to a club with me, he ended up saying everyone looked fruity and then wouldn't even dance with me. Ray, I love him so much, but I just don't know if it can work. Any advice would be much appreciated.

Unappreciated Darkling

Dear Darkling,

It does not sound like you two are ready for each other. You are both still growing up and pretending to be vampires and Fred Durst and stuff. When you both settle down more a middleground may develop, such as Insane Clown Posse. Good luck.

What breed of cat are you? We're betting on Scottish Fold, because of your ear shape. I'm looking into cat ownership—excuse me, companionship—in the near future and I want a cat just like you.

Hell's Kitchen

Dear Hell's Kitchen,

Naw baby, I ain't no jackassed Scottish Fold. Folds are [real ugly](#) and they have this retarded accent that's all like, "Hewwo! How awe yew?" You know, like that deaf priest in Princess Bride.

I'm an [American Curl](#). Registered CFA two-time national Grand Champion, at that! American Curls are known for having a generally amiable disposition, but we can really bring sack if the situation calls for it.

This is a response from last week's Celibate Nihilist, a 21 year-old male who shuns human contact.

What I guess it really comes down to is actually kind of simple: I have no reason to participate in my species, as you put it.

I have no great capacity (or time) for intimacy and therefore cannot justify using the resources to engage in something that really doesn't interest me, i.e., a relationship.

The truth is I've never felt comfortable being around anyone but myself and spend my free moments in solitude, circumstances allowing.

As for fuckin', it looks like fun but it's not my thing. By saying that, I mean I could never be naked in the presence of someone (other than my doctor I suppose) with the expectation of getting down. (This is not to say I would get down with my doctor, BTW) Whether this is because of some mental problem or just an aspect of my personality I can't say, but it's nothing that bothers me.

I am perfectly willing to live this way.

I wish I could say the same for my parents, who think I am relatively normal and are becoming increasingly curious as to why I do not do the abovementioned things.

CN in AZ

Dear CN,

Hey, don't fake it if it ain't genuine. But still I have to wonder: since all of earth's animals are primally programmed to "pull up to the bumper," what's up with you? How come you're different?

It could be hormonal, it could be a thing in your past, it could be a lot of things. I hear you saying all these excuses like "I have no time for intimacy" and "I am perfectly willing to live this way," though, which implies in the subtlest way that you are in fact not happy living this way, because it causes problems in your life, and you're writing in to an advice column about it. You don't say things like that, unprovoked, unless you actually feel the exact opposite way. It's a denial thing, made especially clear when you resort to the language of a public utilities budget report ("...therefore cannot justify using the resources to engage in..."). There is no style of language that is further from emotional honesty than the language which is used in government documents.

It is hard for you to establish contact with other humans, as you are naturally quite averse. One day, though, you'll have a brief repartee with another human over a cash register, in line at a concert or at an airline counter that really gets you champing at the bit you wear. It's then that you'll see how two people can be greater than the sum of their parts. I'd be surprised if this hadn't actually happened to you already, and you were both thrilled and terrified at the experience. Next time you feel chemistry, give it a chance.

Dear Readers: I have some terrible news. I recently received word that “the guy with explosive diarrhea” has passed away. Apparently he had been suffering from undiagnosed chronic ulcerative colitis. If only I had taken him seriously, he would still be alive today. I feel absolutely awful about myself right now. Oh my lord, how he must have suffered, just to be shunned and ridiculed by the only one he thought he could count on.

Donations can be sent to the family of Peter L. Tauss, Norwalk, CT. Peter was fifteen years old when he died.

— —**

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Sep 2, 2003

Advice Column for September 2, 2003

Editor's Note: Ray briefly stopped back by the house this weekend to grab some Ketel One, and spent a little time answering a handful of your letters. He expects to be back in full swing next week, but makes no promises. —CTO

Got a question? Need an answer? Ask Ray! (ray at achewood dot com)

Some letters are edited for clarity and grammar and also to remove awful "jokes" where the writer thought he/she was the one who was supposed to be entertaining.

H E R E W E G O !

Last week (08/26/03) you responded to a writer in regards to appropriate reading material for the commode. I have always been a toilet reader and my son has recently reached the age where he has picked up the habit as well. My wife, on the other hand, does not understand the practice at all. Is there a genetic component to women not reading on the pot, or is it a social thing? I only know a very few other women I could ask this type of question of, and the unanimous answer was no to commode literature. Any ideas how come?

A., Orange County, CA

Dear A.,

Yeah, I've noticed that too. Women just don't seem to want to linger on the can. I guess we dudes really get into it because our prostate gland (yes, we cats have them too) gets all massaged while extrudin' #2, and it's kind of a good time, so we like to enhance it with magazines and walkmen and Ruffles and stuff. It's kind of like a little one-man party when a guy takes a shit.

I have a brand new 1988 Honda CR-X Si that I need to slicken up to impress people, but I don't much go in for the spoilers or white transparent decals of my car name but larger. I would like some tips on how to make my ride more rad.

Julie, Internet

Dear Julie,

I think I know what you are saying. You want to trick out your small reasonable car but not in the regular way that the “rice rocket” guys do, all with anodized caps on their Enki rims and clear tail lights which should actually be red. You have a car and you would like to be proud of it, because it is a major possession and shows the outside world what and who you are.

Like a lot of healers will tell you, the most important changes come from within. Upgrade your sound system with some mega-nasty 9” Alpine ovals and 4” door cones – that should be enough response to fill your particular vehicle. After you do that, have the entire interior detailed, and I mean *detailed*. I’m talkin’ about guys Armor-Allin’ even the bottom surfaces of your A/C grates, and Windexing your odometer pane. You’ll be surprised at how good a freshly detailed car can make you feel.

After you have got the interior all kicked and crunked, have the body detailed. One of the greatest details is the tires. Shiny Armor-Alled rubber is one thing, but going the extra mile and removing brake dust from the rims is the whole game. You see, every time you hit the brakes your brake pads release dust, much like a pencil eraser when you erase a mistake which you made. This dust collects on your silver rims and looks hella low-class.

I guess basically I’m just telling you to clean your car and put some speakers in it. Maybe if you wanted to go the extra mile you’d just accentuate it a little bit with a decal of Calvin peeing onto an icon which represents a concept that you do not enjoy. Pat has one of Calvin peeing onto Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza.

My best friend married a woman he met on the Internet about four years ago. I can't say I was as charmed by her as he was, but I kept my reservations to myself. When he asked me to be the best man in his wedding, I sucked it up and did my duty as his friend. These days, I seldom see him, as his wife has become a morbidly obese shut-in. A mutual friend had this couple over to his house back in July, only to learn that this was the first time my best friend's wife had been out of the house since January. I'm not a doctor, but that doesn't sound healthy to me. I had a dream a couple weeks ago about my best friend, and in this dream he told me he was leaving his wife. My dream self nearly jumped for joy, thinking that this friend could now move on and find someone to actually build a life with, instead of just bleeding out his soul one drop at a time. When I woke, I remembered that as his "best man" I had stood up for his union and given it my blessing, and so I feel kind of guilty for thinking he should drop her like baggage and run. So should I keep my silly dreams to myself, or take this as a cue that my friend is in trouble and needs someone with a little more sack to clarify things for him.

Not Really That Desperate At All, in New York

Dear Not Desperate,

By being his best man you did not endorse their marriage, you simply did your duty as a friend, just as you said. And now your duty as a friend is to let them live their own lives, gross as they may be. I guess what we can all take away from this is the point I made last week: Internet romances always involve betrayal and obesity.

My cat likes to pee in her water dish and she plays in her litter box. I've tried switching their places, so she pees in the litter box, but she still pees in her water dish. Any advice?

Yellow Water

Dear Yellow,

Gosh, this is hard. I've never been in this situation before...I guess I knew this day would come, though, what with me bein' in the advice game and all.

Yellow, your cat is mentally retarded. She can live a normal, long life, but she is retarded. Try to keep her away from other cats, so that they don't taunt her and throw mud at her face and then make her eat the mud, all in her pink overalls and white turtleneck. Our species can be quite cruel to the weaker members of the fold—that's just our primal survival instinct. I'm sorry to have to break this to you.

What's up with women in their 30s? Either they want to settle down, like, tomorrow, or they don't really want anything at all. Meanwhile, all the girls in their 20s all want to seem to get down with Grand-dad. Do I really have to wait another 10 years and settle for some girlie young enough to be my daughter? Not too hot, not too cold

Dear Hot/Cold,

This is strange: you are saying that women who are in their twenties like to get it on with old men? I don't know what type of websites you subscribe to, but that is not at all factual. Most of the time on those websites where the young girl gets with like an old accountant or something, she is being paid, much as a prostitute is paid. In reality, girls in their twenties are just looking for a guy who is emotionally the same age as them, and sometimes this means they connect with guys who are a few *chronological* years older, because dudes mature at a more mellowed-out rate.

As far as women in their thirties go, they are being hormonally and socially driven to start families. You could probably have figured that out on your own. If a woman in her thirties doesn't want to settle down with you, it's because you're 21 and you work at a pants store.

I have a Persian cat that spent the better part of his first year in a cage because the damn breeder we got him from had ringworm infestation that was inevitably passed to both the dog, myself, and my fiancé. We finally cured it and he's out. He's very sweet and follows me everywhere, but he has this strange habit. Other than participating regularly in activities that would surely result in his demise (i.e. jumping into the fridge, oven), he will also occasionally fly in to a berserker rage, becoming a whirlwind of claws and teeth aimed at any fingers or toes getting near him. Is this playing, or is he manifesting signs of gradual insanity? He also licks my hand a lot, in a most determined fashion, which is a behavior I have never witnessed in a cat before. Is he okay or did his extended lock-up wreak havoc on his psyche? J in ATL

Dear J.,

Whew, lots of weird cat behavior cropping up this week. I wish I was formally prepared to analyze information like this and deliver helpful, safe answers. What I can tell you, though, is that Persians are always kind of on the brink as it is, and this poor fellow seems to have gone over the edge after a year in Solitary.

You know how if you start with good ingredients, you can make a good dinner? Well, this cat started with bad ingredients and is now a Bad Dinner. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if that was his name.

Dear Readers: another gun letter! This one addresses last week's letters about machine guns.

Okay Ray, I think I've got it figured out. To refresh your memory, here is the basic chronology of events:

August 12, 2003: *Original Gun Guy writes this: "the M-4, standard armament for the US Army and US Marines, uses 5.56mm" in a response to you correctly guessing the correct caliber of Bruce Willis' pistol in Die Hard.*

August 19, 2003: *Responding to the Original Gun Guy's information, EPM writes in this: "Also, the 'Original Gun Guy' is wrong: the US Army uses the M16"*

August 26, 2003: *Both "Gun Happy" and "T., Internet" tell us that EPM is wrong.*

*Now more than one person is wrong here. Original Gun Guy is indeed wrong that the *U.S. Marines* use the M-4, which is what I think EPM was trying to say. However he said *Army* instead of *Marines*, so that's why everyone jumped on his ass. Basically, the Marines use the M-16, and I dunno about the Army, 'cause I wasn't in that one. Hope this clears things up for everyone.*

Drunk Bartender, Vegas

I have a middle-aged cat named Princess. She is jet black, athletic and has wild green eyes. She likes to be chased and spends most of her time drinking water out of a little fountain we have. She has far more energy than she can handle and needs some company, if you know what I mean. I figured that you, being the ladies' cat that you are, might hit it off with her. I'm hoping that a little Ray-style loving will calm her down. If you're interested I can send you a picture.
Guy with a lonely cat, Ontario

Dear Ontario,

Thank you for the offer. I've got to tell you, though, it's a little weird for me to just get offered free pussy like that. I'm not, like, Damon Wayans or anything. Maybe give her my e-mail and we can chat or something, although I really do prefer when a relationship starts out "off-line" (see my previous answers about Internet romances etc).

Dear Ray,

This letter is a big "fuck you" from all the Scottish Folds of the world.
Love, Linnea & Milan

Dear Linnea,

Don't you mean "fwuck wou?" Ha ha! That's the first thing that came to mind. See you bitches later.

About four years ago I met this wonderful girl and fell completely in love. As far as I was concerned she was perfect in every way. We dated for a very short period of time and I ended it because I wasn't happy with who I was. I looked at myself in the mirror and judged that I wasn't good enough for her. I've hated that decision ever since. Now, four years later, she is back in my life. We hang out on the weekends and generally have a good time. In the time we have been apart I've gotten my life on track and finally know where I am going in my life. My problem is that I still maintain the same feelings for her that I had in high school. I've played the part of "the sensitive listening guy" since we started hanging out again and I'm pretty confident that she is still in love with me. We now live an hour apart and she will be going to Australia for six months in the spring. How do I let her know how I feel about her without pressuring her to make a decision about where our relationship stands? Is it unrealistic to tell a woman you love her and not expect it to change things too much?

A., Barstow, Ca

Dear Barstow,

Bring on the strong sack, dude. Tell her how you feel and what you want and see where the chips fall. Your future's up to you, and women like decisive men.

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Sep 9, 2003

Advice Column for September 9, 2003

Editor's Note: This morning Ray once again briefly visited my house in his Time Machine (he wanted to borrow an MP3 player and download some songs). He took a few moments to dictate answers to me as he fiddled with "Kazaa." I have done my best to record his advice in a faithful fashion. —CTO

Got a question? Need an answer? Ask Ray! (ray at achewood dot com)

Some letters are edited for clarity and grammar.

Please make every effort to keep letters as brief as possible. There has been a bad problem with this lately.

H E R E W E G O !

Ray, I have been seeing the same guy for five years, since we were teenagers. Naturally, after so long you witness a lot of changes in each other, and I can honestly say in his case, all those changes have been positive: he's caring, interesting, has a great sense of humor and treats me like a princess. Except for one thing. He has absolutely awful fashion sense. I am not one of those controlling girlfriends and don't want to tell him what to do, but sometimes I am a little embarrassed that such a handsome guy doesn't seem interested in showing himself off to best advantage. Is this something I just have to live with, or is there some polite way to let him know he could use some sprucing up without seeming too domineering?
Starving for Style in New York

Dear Starving,

There are lots of reasons some dudes do not care about fashion. Perhaps he was constantly dressed up as a child, which messed with his sense of free will, and now he subconsciously despises fashion. Clothing is deeply rooted in our identities and is chosen to reflect the way we think of ourselves; changing a person's clothes is in many cases like trying to change a personality.

However, it's different from case to case. Write back with some details about certain terrible outfits of his so I can analyze this dude a little more carefully (make sure to include as much information as possible, e.g. "cowboy boots, denim running shorts, Shakespeare shirt/collar, cowboy hat"). I am pretty good at this and I can help.

We have a problem with stray cats in our neighborhood. They mewl for handouts, relieve themselves all over our yard and some have even bared teeth and threatened us. We've taken to trapping strays and giving them to a local animal shelter where they can be adopted. Obviously, cats that go un-adopted are killed. I feel no remorse, but am sometimes pilloried as a cat killer. As a cat, what can you tell me to do to keep strays out of my hair?

Trapper John

Dear T.J.,

I guess for us cats the strays are kind of like your homeless population. Some are mentally ill, some got screwed by life (identity stolen over Internet) and some screwed life up for themselves (drugs, alcohol, accidentally killed their boss and had to flee).

I guess just do what I do when I see someone I don't like wandering around the neighborhood: call the police. It ain't your problem, you pay taxes to people whose job it is to keep shit straight around town.

In a few weeks I will be moving out of my parents house. Besides my beloved cat, Mr. Bojangles, I will be living alone. Now it should be said that I love Mr. Jangles more than life itself and more than most members of my family. I only want the best for him. So, I am considering buying another cat, once we move into the new apartment. Because a) I will be less lonely and b) when I go to work, I don't want Mr. Jangles to be lonely. BUT Mr. Bojangles isn't exactly a lovey-dovey type of cat, so I'm not sure if he will approve. Should I get another cat and risk my cat hating it, or not get one and risk my cat being terribly lonely? As a cat yourself, I was hoping you could help.

AW

Dear AW,

Yeah, cats ain't that simple. You can't just put us together like Legos, you know. We have personalities and stuff. If this "Bojangles" dude has been a solo cat so far, I'd guess he digs that lifestyle. If you take off for the day and he's all alone, he's probably gonna settle down on the couch with the remote and some Ruffles and stuff. Try to rent movies you think he'd like.

Imagine if some enormous cat chose another human for you to be stuck in a small apartment with for the next decade or so: what if you didn't like the person? Just leave the window open and let "Bojangles" (P.S. give him a new name that has dignity, such as Dave or Matt) go make his own friends. If he brings one home then cool, cook them up some grub and let them do what they want.

Hope this helps.

My parents were never that religious, but when I came to college I started to be super Jewish for some reason. I go to Friday night services every week, keep kosher, and even fast at all the appropriate times. The problem is, I also now only date other Jews. Do you think I'm being closed-minded by restricting myself like this, especially since my parents don't even care if I date Jews or not? Should I give "shikas" a

chance?
Jewey in Philly

Dear Jewey in Philly,

Date who you like, man! Jesus. If you like Jewish ladies because you have a lot in common with them, then that ain't no kind of problem. Pretty much everybody looks for mates within a narrow set of parameters, whether they know it or not. If you want to get down with a nice Jewish girl then more power to you. Everybody knows that Jewish women can cold rock a dude.

A helpful tip: did you know that you can carry jimmy hats in your phylactery? "Pray it Safe!" Heh heh!

I am a man who knows nothing about fashion. I just graduated from college and am now entering the work force, but I need a good looking winter coat. The last time I gave any serious thought to winter wear was when I bought a Starter jacket in middle school, but it seems like as an adult, I have only three choices: sleazy leather jacket, defeated middle-aged man Members Only type jacket, and smarmy full length overcoat. Is this really the limits of modern male fashion, or is it just my warped shopping-mall view of the world?

CC

Dear CC,

Dude, you totally left out the sport coat. I don't know what's wrong with young people these days, but a finely tailored coat is about as classy as it gets for casual gentlemen's wear. These garments are available in a dazzling variety of fabrics and patterns—go try a few different styles on and see what works for you.

My current favorite is a side-vented Brioni low-contrast tattersall. When I'm goin' for broke, I wear it with a crisp white shirt (top button open), some lightly darted Barry Brickens, and my cordovan Bally loafers.

What's the usual margin on single malt at a decent bar? I know wine at a good place runs 2 to 3, and that you do volume instead of margin on bar shots and beer...does it go the same way with, say, Talisker 10-year-old? I'm asking because 5 doubles cost me 70 fucking dollars last night, and that's sittin' about as easy as my stomach is.

T in Regina

Dear T.,

I know that when I used to run Ray's Place (my old neighborhood bar, not this column) we would only do 50% on all top shelf liquor, mainly because none of the dudes in the neighborhood had much money. I recently sold Ray's Place off to Japanese interests, though, so I don't really think about it too much anymore. Sorry about your stomach ache. Try eating a banana.

More [proof](#) that Scottish Folds are a boil on the ass of feline society. (scroll down)

What kind of respectable creature would honestly allow themselves to be photographed wearing this crap?
[rest of letter omitted]
MG, Internet

Dear MG.,

Yeah, thanks for the link. That site definitely ain't helpin' out the SASF (Society for the Advancement of Scottish Folds). Heh...man, look at those little dummies. They're all like "Hewwo! How awwe yew! Wouwd yew wike tew buy a fwoggie hat?"

I was wondering, is it true that Mountain Dew kills your sperm? I figured you, with your endless wealth of knowledge, would know. I have wondered about this since childhood and have never once found a concrete answer. Is it a myth, or scientific fact?
Doin' the Dew, DE

Dear Dew,

I was going to conduct this experiment firsthand by pouring Mountain Dew on some sperms and then using Pat's microscope to look and see if they were dead. I called him up and told him about the idea and he got real mad that I "would even ask such a thing." *You know how Pat is.*

I called Téodor and Roast Beef but they weren't home. Sorry I don't really have more time to answer this this week. Do any readers know if Mountain Dew can kill sperms? (Please, don't write in unless you are a scientist. I don't want a lot of factless conjecture or anecdotes, as I know a lot of people will just take this as an invitation to ramble on and on about their sperms.)

How old is too old to learn [to drive]? I never had a license since I couldn't afford a car; and I lived in a college town where I could walk anywhere, or in a city with nearly outstanding public transpo. I'm back in the college town, and don't really "need" to drive, but now the car that I've always dreamed of is for sale, and with budgeting wisely, I can afford the payments. I want to learn so as to possibly drive the car of my dreams, or something else wonderful, but living where I do, well, college kids aren't the brightest of people, and seeing them drive is rather scary! Not to mention the plethora of rednecks, SUVs, and then people from states that are notorious for crappy driving (Kansas, Texas, Illinois to name a few...). So with all these people and a busy interstate running through, am I doomed to just walking and dreaming, or do I try to get in the "flow" of things and just carry woefully expensive insurance?
Walking Around

Dear Walking,

It sounds like you've been getting along fine without a car. Also, if you have to "budget wisely" just to acquire this thing, then you shouldn't be getting it. It sounds like you just want to buy the car because you're being materialistic. Factor in things like gas, insurance, damage repair, deductibles, stolen stereos, new tires, oil changes, washing, detailing, parking, etc., and you'll find that you can't really afford it after all.

At any rate, you should maintain a valid driver's license at all times so that you are prepared for an emergency where you need to be able to drive (both a manual and an automatic transmission). Not being able to drive a car is like not being able to pee standing up.

I think my house is haunted. What should I do?
Anonymous, Internet

Dear Anonymous,

Haunting is kind of complicated. There are many types of ghost, and they all have different reasons why they are around. Generally speaking, though, most ghosts are eternally connected to the property because an injustice to them was committed there, and that keeps them from resting peacefully. If you can look into town records and police blotters for clippings regarding your house and its previous tenants, you may be able to unravel the mystery and eventually set your ghost free (also try talking with local old-timers). Before the ghost departs it usually thanks you by showing you the way to an incredible hidden treasure within the house, so it works out to be a pretty good deal. Thanks for writing.

Last week I wrote in and asked what to do about my love life. I took your advice and "brought the strong sack." It worked! Thank you so much for telling me what I needed to hear. It was hard for me to do since I've never been particularly suave, but I did what needed to be done and now I couldn't be happier. You might be a cartoon cat, but you're my savior. I mean that in the least blasphemous way possible of course. Thanks again Ray.
Sincerely, A., Barstow, CA

Thank you to the hundreds of women who wrote in claiming that they do enjoy reading while going to the bathroom. You are a very vocal bunch!

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Dec 22, 2003

Advice Column for December 22, 2003

Welcome back! Listen, we had a bad problem with people writing way too long of questions this time. Some of the questions were seriously like over nine pages, which I am obviously never going to read. Try to keep things around one or two paragraphs and also have a distinct question in mind.

Thanks chochachos,

-=Ray=-

Where did you go?

Amber, Internet

Dear Amber,

I was just messin' around. I spent a few weeks in Antibes, and also I went on this tour of different companies.

Hi Ray-

*I'd appreciate a cat's perspective here... I have two female cats, Kelly and Madison (they're both single by the way!). I give them the amount of food that the vet recommended to me for their size, but they're always complaining that I don't feed them enough. I want them to be happy *and* healthy - should I feed them more and let them get fat, or put up with their bitching? (The only exercise they get is digging through my garbage at 3am)*

Thanks, Jen

Dear Jen,

I think my first idea for you is that cats know how much they should eat, and it sounds like you're not feeding them enough. Sure, there are noshes and other non-critical hunger pangs that come up in life, but if they're *always* complaining, then it sounds like they need an adjustment in food quantity/frequency. Also, some cat foods are more highly filling/caloric than others, so that may be a concern. If you're starving these girls to the point where they're eating *garbage* then something is definitely wrong.

Thanks for mentioning that they're single but they really don't sound like my type.

I've heard that cats have such highly developed optic nerves that the presentation rate of TV and cinema is just too slow for them and that all they see is a series of flickering still images...can you still enjoy a night in front of the tube?

SquareEyes, Ireland

Dear SquareEyes,

Yeah, I don't know about that. I've always been able to watch the tube just fine, and movies as well. I think what happened is that some ad agency got some "focus group" of cats together and just like always the focus group came up with some dumb fake information about how they can't watch TV without "discomfort," etc. It is pretty typical that when a focus group gets together they find some way to use the word "discomfort" and complain about something which is not actually a problem, like how quarters are too small, etc. I just watched an hour of Emeril Live (nut episode, extremely interesting) and everything was fine with my eyes. Also, I saw "Kurt & Courtney" recently and it was fine. (Except that now I am completely mad at Courtney Love!)

Take it easy.

I have a problem with my cats, Scrapper and Frankie. Scrapper has been my husband's companion for nearly eight years now, and he's getting a little older and on the sick side. We help him as much as we can, but he's kind of crotchety about things like medication and being old. Frankie is a cat we rescued before we got married - we found him on the side of the road, beat up pretty badly. We took him to the vet, had him cleaned up, and adopted him into our home. He started out happy living the fat life, but recently he's been beating the tar out of poor old Scrapper. Frankie's already made it clear that he's the king of the house - what more does he want? Scrapper's dentures?

JG, Marysville

Dear JG,

Whooh. This is one of those tough ones. You brought the transient cat Frankie into your house and now he's acting like he wants to be left on the side of the road again. He's trying to kill Scrapper (bad name, by the way) and he's unable to show appreciation for all the things you've done for him. This is probably why he got his ass kicked and ditched in the first place.

You know how I often say, "you can't polish a turd"? This is one of those situations. Put the dude back on the side of the road, preferably out in the countryside. Maybe hold him down a bit and let Scrapper give him some payback. Frankie'll find a stream to drink out of, a minnow to nibble on and another luckless couple with a soft heart and a cozy apartment.

Ray Darling I don't know what to do! Basically I am an apprentice with strong sexual feelings for my mentor. I am nervous about letting him know what's going on in my head because I have paid him for his services and expect a job from him in the future. Also we meet in his place of work which is a bit inappropriate for any risky propositions. And he is a bit older than me, about 15 years or so. I'm not sure if he has a girlfriend, wife, or even a boyfriend. I've tried many clever tactics to get it out of him but he seems to display himself as single. The last time I tried this he had mentioned he was going to Hawaii. I asked with whom. He muttered, "a friend." A friend? That's vague. So I don't know what's going on or how I

should go about this. All I do know is I don't want you to tell me to forget about it because I am intrigued with him, just as much as I am with you, Tiger. Meow!
Horny and Confused, Internet

Dear Horny and Confused,

Fun one! This dude is good at being evasive, and he's obviously had interns before, because he's used to dodging your probative personal questions with practiced answers. Basically he's a very private person and is trying to keep his intimate life secret. That's no dis to you.

He's definitely gay, though, based on the Hawaii/friend/secret wedding thing, so you might as well quit tryin' to slip him the old Sex Pocket. That probably bugs him!

There is a female friend of mine, and, for purposes of this letter, she will be referred to as Girl. I've known Girl since I was quite young, there's always been some mad sexual tension between us, even since we first met in 7th grade. We talked through highscool, but it was always at a "friend only" level. Now that we go to the same college, we see each other everyday. We've both talked about how we used to straight wanna bang one another when we were kids.

But see, the thing is, I can't stop thinking about her. Girl and I have both gotten out of semi-serious relationships, and now I think I wanna put the moves on her. What is the best way to put said moves on Girl?
The Man, Without the Plan.

Dear Man Without the Plan,

Let me recap here. You like a girl and she likes you. She wouldn't have told you what she did if she didn't still like you and want to get ratty. I mean, put yourself in her shoes: if you used to find a person attractive, but you no longer found them attractive, you wouldn't tell them flirty stories about how you used to want to "film a pussy and dick fight scene" together. (whoah, WTF?! What am I saying?!?!)

(I'm sorry, I don't even know what that meant!)

So, anyhow, you should attempt to kiss her next time you're out together. As soon as you start kissin', all the past emotions will begin to fuel your fire, and pretty soon your relationship will be at the next level. This could very well be fairly awesome.

My final thoughts for you are this: don't screw this up. It should be pretty easy to get it right. It's kind of a no-brainer. bye

Is there a God, and if so, should I pray to him/her/it?
Buddy, Reseda, CA

Dear Buddy,

This is probably the main question that advice columnists like me get asked. We even have an industry acronym for them: I-TAGs, or, "Is There a God"s. I am dealing with like seven I-TAGs a day right now. They're piled up to the ceiling. I wish I could just come up with one real clear answer for all the I-TAGs I get, but usually I try to make up something new based on each individual circumstance.

Based on your very brief letter I would have to say that hey, if you capitalize "God" then you were obviously raised Christian and are having some doubts. I hate to break it to you, but there is no God and if you have some free pray-time, just pray that Burger King comes up with some Olestra fries to match their awesome new line of Santa Fe nonfat chicken sandwiches. Then it's BK three meals a day for old grand-daddy Ray!

Nice to see you back giving advice to the masses. I have a serious issue to bring to your attention. The ladies love me, but the ladies are all college-aged while I'm a 15 year-old manchild. I finished puberty at 13, and now have a damn nice full beard. I am mistaken for 22 all the time (which is damn good for parties), but all the ladies see me as that age, and not my true age. Should I mack the college ladies and not disclose the truth about my age, tell them it all and see which ones still want me, or simply not deal with university honeys? The ethics of this are mind boggling.
Worried Manchild in PA

Dear Manchild,

First of all, I am legally obliged to advise you that if a male of your age (15) gets his cooker on with a lady, it's legally considered a form of rape, even if the lady is like 45 and totally into it *and even rents a limo, as often happened to me during an early part of my life*. So, we're kind of in tricky waters with the rest of my advice. I guess I would just say that if you are 15 and have a real full beard that you should make sure to use real good grooming products and exfoliate regularly, plus always shave with the grain, not against it. Good luck in the fight against razor burn.

Me and My friend have a mock-techno group called Cold Peter. Some refer to us at "The Pioneers of Gay Techno." Our music is completely inspired by you. Even the name: "Garfield, you COLD have a PETER in your mouth!" We make all of our songs in a program called Fruity Loops. [...]

Dear CP,

Alright, your letter was really long and I had to delete about five hundred lines or something (etc). What you were mainly asking was whether I would be interested in hearing some music that had an aggressively vivid homosexual message.

Of *course* I want to hear cutting edge music. I run a record label, dammit! Just send me some links or whatever—don't couch your pitch in a fake email about needing advice. *Have some dignity*.

I live on a military base, which is a total sausagefest. I'm trying the online dating thing, and having some success which I attribute mainly to my Photoshop zit-removal skills (did you know that turning the contrast up and the brightness down makes ANY photo look better?) and ability to spell a lot of different words correctly. Anyway, I met a girl who I dated and totally loved to bone. It was maximum awesome,

man. Tight as all getout. Yeah, so I thought she might've been messing around on me because she liked to play "touch the inner thigh" with some of my friends at parties. I got a friend to go undercover and take a trip to her house, and report back to me whether or not she made a move on him. She totally kissed him. Mouth going pretty good, hands in all the right places and stuff. So then I busted her like two minutes after I found out about it, totally broke up. Now I miss her, and wonder if maybe I jumped the gun. I think I didn't really give her a chance to be honest and tell me what she'd done, which is all I really wanted, a little honesty about it. Because of all the awesome boning that my life once again lacks, I miss her a lot. After a lot of emails and phone calls, she seems really REALLY honestly sorry about what she did, she said that she wanted to tell me, but 'couldn't get up the guts to do it right away' and said that she wishes we could get back together, probably because she misses the maximum awesome boning too.

Now, Ray, I've made mistakes myself. I've done things like that, and now I know what it is to lose someone special, what it is to lose a special sexy friend. I will never make mistakes like that again, and the consequences of my actions have truly and permanently changed my outlook on fooling around while I'm in a committed relationship. So, like, should I forgive her and be the paranoid, possessive boyfriend, or should I forgive her and take her apology to heart, and relax about it? Or maybe should I just have some dignity and look for a new chick? Do you think most people can really change like that, or is she just trying to scam me and lie some more?

Thanx Ray! You be's my hero, dawg.
~Nico in Nebraska

Dear Nico,

It's emails like this that actually make me start to worry about our national security. I mean, you don't think this girl is going to cheat on you again (she is), yet you are put in charge of defeating enemies? I can hear it now:

YOU: Is that pair of handcuffs too tight, Saddam Hussein?

S.H.: Is little too tight. Yes.

YOU: I will loosen them if you promise to hold my gun so that it doesn't get stolen.

S.H.: Okay. Good.

YOU: You know, I still have feelings for you.

You are a cat of the world – my lady-friend and I are planning on travelling around America, starting in the California area: where can one find a quality cocktail bar to inaugurate our journey and get, as you would, mad ruttty?

Big props, Simon

Dear Simon,

I guess you would probably be landing at San Francisco International airport, so you'll only be about twenty minutes from my preferred bar. Take the sky tram to the Caltrain line, and then take Caltrain south to the California Avenue exit (Palo Alto). Walk down California Avenue for a couple blocks until you see Antonio's Nut House on your left. Use the human entrance (street level - I'm told it exactly mirrors the Underground version). Antonio's Nut House has this mechanical gorilla in a cage and the gorilla has a huge box of peanuts in front of him. You grab the peanuts and the gorilla hella screams because he sees you in his optical sensors. However, you are in no actual danger, as most of the machines in his body have broken down. I haven't been scared of that gorilla for a long time.

Oh, and I don't know what country you're coming from, but in America you can't get ruddy in bars. If you want to get ruddy you have to be in a private place where no one will see. I guess it's a good thing you brought that up!

I have been accepted for two different graduate programmes next year, the Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Secondary) and the Master of Library and Information Studies. My family are not giving me much advice because they don't want to pressure me. Which do you think I should plump for?
E you later, Déesse

Dear Déesse,

It sounds like you want careers that are very similar to being at school. I understand that school is what you are used to, and that you might like school a lot, but you should try to get out into other parts of the world before just taking a seat at the other side of the desk. I mean really, you aren't spreading your wings too much here, are you?

Sorry to insult your dreams.

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Jan 6, 2004

Advice Column for January 6, 2004

Happy New Year! I look forward to twelve more months of offering you the most cutting edge advice available *anywhere*. I don't want you to have problems in 2004, but if you do, come to old Ray first!

Thanks Chochachos!

--Ray--

ray@achewood.com

Dear Ray,

As of late, I've become close friends with a girl I know. Anyway, I found out that she kind of has a little thing for me. When I heard this, I realized how nice and pretty she is, and now I have a thing for her. For weeks it's been just like in a state of limbo, nothing really going on except harmless flirting. I talked it out with her recently, and she says she doesn't want to be with me, despite the fact that she really likes me. She thinks friendship is more important than a relationship, and it's deeper, and lasts longer and everything. I want to be her friend, but I'd rather be her boyfriend. I told her that I probably wouldn't be able to be her friend, because I can't really see her the same way again. As of now, we're just kind of stuck in this rut, and neither knows what to do. What should I do, Ray? What should I do?

Confused

Dear Confused,

I think it is high time that a guy faced with this issue got the straight skinny from a dude who has seen it all many times before. The world needs a definitive explanation of this "she just wants to be friends" thing, once and for all!

Listen. When it comes to men, women use the term "friendship" the way that a boss who is firing you says "best of luck in your career." The boss knows you will never work there again, and actually doesn't care if you have luck. He just wants you gone, but if you're dumb enough to stick around for no pay, maybe you can sit and listen while he babbles about his relationship problems.

Sorry, chochacho. That is the soft dick* on the situation. Peace.

* "The soft dick" = a vantage point of wisdom and sagacity.

I'm living in a house with three friends: two guys and one girl. The girl is a close friend/former girlfriend. When we first moved in she was in a long term, long distance relationship. I had feelings for her then but she was happy with what she had and it looked like she would be in it for a long time so I respected that and left it alone. Now she's single again, and she's miserable but I'm in love with her. She comes to me for support and comfort when she's down, even sleeps in my bed with me sometimes, but once her misery passes we're back to being regular friends, like nothing had happened. She knows about my feelings and I don't want to pressure her because I know she's pretty screwed up right now, but it's getting hard for me to deal with it since I have to see her every goddamn day and act like nothing's bothering me. I know that when she needs me she'll come to me, but when she doesn't it seems that I'm nothing special to her. Should I just abandon this one-way relationship right now or is there a way to resolve this in my favor?

Waiting for answers

Dear Waiting,

What I want you to do is realize that you have a natural inclination toward relationships that you know won't work. Hey, a lot of people seek out relationships which they know won't work—it's not an uncommon problem. Y'all do this because you either (a) are built to think that everything in life has to be difficult, or (b) don't think you have the stones to make a relationship work so you start out with a broken one and limit your liability.

Remember, women and men are like snowflakes: there are about seventeen hundred zillion of them. This one—who happens to be conveniently located ten feet from your bedroom door—is just a blank canvas upon whom you have cast the contents of your psychological bedpan. The picture that the splash makes isn't pretty, and now you know that.

My advice, therefore, is that you don't just go for the lowest-hanging fruit all the time. Try meeting someone who lives in a different apartment.

i've seen you give a lot of career advice lately, maybe you can help me make some decisions here. i will be graduating in late jan with a BS in desktop publishing (graphic design but from a sucky school). i am thinking of going for an MFA at a design school (i live in NY, and would want to choose a school in the area.) do you have any idea which school is best, but yet would still accept me...i don't know if i'm all that great?

also, i think i should probably get a job first, since i am only working part time for the last while and am seriously broke. do you think i should go for the masters degree right away or try paying off some loans first? because if i get the higher degree i might get a better job, but i am sick of being so damn stony broke. also the job market here in graphics is pretty terrible right now, so maybe if i kill some time in school when i get out it will be all better?

am i just burying my head in the sand and need to choose another career?

Broke in Brooklyn

Dear Broke,

Okay, so it's been a while since I told everyone to capitalize letters properly. I'm going to let you slide on this since, well, Christmas was only like a few days ago. But people: please use capital letters at the right places. If you don't use proper grammar and punctuation then I take it as a straight-up personal insult, like you don't

care enough about communicating with me to use the language properly. It's like if you went to the drive-thru at McDonald's and were just all like "HEY YOU JACKASS CRAPSTATUE! TASTE MY SEAMS!" instead of asking for specific meal items.

Anyhow.

Brooklyn, the main thing I can offer is that you don't pay off your student loans right outta the gate if you can't even afford dried beans and salt. Pay that stuff off later. As far as going for a higher degree right away: a bad idea! Get some work experience and you'll see what a joke higher degrees are. College is just a place where they let you pay them to tell you things you should be getting paid to learn on the job. **True.**

Don't take that teat, baby. That is a raw tittie. College is a red raw areola, and instead of milk it releases highly acidic French dressing. *[Note from editor: we originally wanted to cut this paragraph, but Ray really enjoyed the way it sounded.]*

*I just recently started reading Ray's Place and I came across advice that you wrote to M.R. on 06.11.03. You said: "In general, try finding new friends every couple of years - that way you can never tell if anyone's changing for the worse." This doesnt [sic] mean that your [sic] gunna [sic] leave beef [sic] and the gang in a couple years does it? *gasp* Say it aint [sic] so, Orlando, FL*

People, please check your letters for spelling before sending them in. You make yourself look bad, but more importantly, you make me look bad.

Does anyone in Achewood belief [sic] in GOD besides Philippe and Nice Pete? Does anyone embrace multiple religions simultaneously [sic], maybe Vlad? Suhail "Mormon"

Dear Suhail,

Yeah, that's pretty much a touchy subject. We all kind of know relatively where each other stands in terms of religion, but we don't really talk about it. It's the same way with politics: just a thing to argue about without getting anywhere, so might as well leave it alone. I guess religion is kind of like a bad painting that you paid a ton of money for: you're gonna defend it no matter what anyone says, and you'll probably have trouble sleeping at night, at least for a while. Also, perhaps religion is like a watermelon sandwich: no one knows where it came from, or why it was made, but there it is, and you gotta behave, 'cause you don't know *what* the hell is happening.

Okay, I'll see you all next week.

Dear Readers:

This is a sincere question from old Ray, and it is about computer security. Recently I was informed by Roast Beef that my Power Mac G5 probably was runnin' all kinds of "Spy-ware" on it. Spy-ware is, I am told, malicious programs which record your website visits and also can do anything they want to your hard drive, such as delete all your files or email them to people. Spy-ware is distributed from such places as Trinidad, where the Internet has no laws.

I want to ask if you have any advice for me about Spy-ware. I downloaded some programs which said they would cure me of it but even after I downloaded them I noticed some really odd behavior. For example, I would visit one of my favorite Internet movie clip websites, and then the next time I started my browser my default launch page would be this bogus-ass "fastsearch.cc" or something. My computer launch-page had been changed without my permission!

Another time, after I had visited my favorite Internet movie clips website, I closed my browser (Roast Beef had walked into the room and I accidentally closed it, in the confusion). When I re-started the browser after Beef left, the default launch page was just a white background with a pink hyperlink that said this:

LESBIAN TIT BITCHES WANT IMMEDIATE CRAVVINGS [irquhxky mb nxqqky](#)

What was really disturbing is that on my hard drive was a file which contained a poem I wrote called "Immediate Cravings." When I had originally saved the poem, I saved it with the filename "Immediate_Cravvings," including the typo, exactly like was in the SPAM web page that automatically popped up! I was extremely worried that computer programs knew what was on my hard drive and were completely profiling me, as well as stealing all my personal poems/information.

If you are an expert Internet engineer, can you give me some advice on Spy-ware? If not, don't worry. I usually get a different new G5 or whatever every month or so, and give the old one (hopefully not with too much Spy-ware on it) to a local shelter for kids who get punched by their dads.

Confidential to the Ghost of the Guy With Explosive Diarrhea: Peter, I have apologized repeatedly for ignoring your problem. I feel terrible about everything I did and did not do. Please stop wandering around my house, playing that mournful saxophone!

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Jan 23, 2004

Advice Column for January 23, 2004

Thank you to everyone who helped with my Spy-ware question last time! Next week I will summarize my findings in my new "Technology Corner."

Oh, and I got a lot of questions this week. Unfortunately, I was in Antibes most of the time. I will try to take up the slack next week.

Thanks Chochachos!

--Ray--

I enjoy a nice few beers as much as the next lady. The problem is though, that I always get really, really full after only about half of one. This happens with all carbonated beverages with me, but it makes me especially sad when it happens with beer. I was wondering if you had any advice on how I could drink more and not be so full. Thanks a whole bunch.

- Karin

Dear Karin,

Yeah, I know what you're feeling. I love a good night of beers, but they can really fill you up quick if your stomach chemistry isn't handling them properly. Anyhow, I did a little reading around the Internet and consulted Dr. Andretti and came up with a pretty good solution for not getting full off of beers.

First of all, don't be drinking heavy beers like porters, ales and stouts. Stick with light beers and pilsners. They have less sugar content and fewer calories overall.

Secondly, don't pour all those beers down your throat onto ingredients which will react with them in a gaseous manner. In one of my past columns I made an analogy to the vinegar/baking soda volcanoes we used to make as kids, and that analogy holds true to this day. For me, really starchy foods tend to have this volcanic reaction with beer, so I stay away from Mexican and Cuban foods when drinking beers. Try to find a cuisine to avoid that's right for you.

A third idea is to do a highly unusual thing which I don't endorse and don't even like to talk about.

You see, when I was first cuttin' my teeth on the liquor scene, I used to go pull a few back with this old wino named Punch Man. He usually hung out in this junkyard clearing that was behind an old Safeway, and he was a bad-ass dude, just drunk as *hell* all the time. He would stand up and scream as trains rolled by the

yard, the way a dog barks at a stranger, and usually throw a bottle at their wheels. The train engineers didn't care, they knew Punch Man and they knew it was always just glass.

I drank with Punch Man because he was the rawest of the raw, but he was gentle as a lamb if he knew you were on his side. There was nothing Punch Man wouldn't do for you if he knew that you wouldn't arrest him or hit him with a brick while he was sleeping. We spent a lot of afternoons and late nights just taking blasts from whatever rot-gut I showed up with, talking the real stuff of life. The dude could pull down a whole gallon jug of Paisano in thirty seconds, a fifth of Ancient Situation in the time it took you to smoke a cigarette, and—I'm getting to the point here—he could shotgun a half-rack of Rainier Ice in as much time as it took you to unpack them and hand them over.

One time after I'd cracked him a twelver of brew he held his chest and fell down onto his side. Thinking Punch Man's number had finally come, I knelt close to him. With his horrible breath he hissed "get me a liiiime, motherfucker!" I ran as quick as I could into the Safeway and boosted him a lime. When I got back I handed it to him and he shoved it deep down into his throat with a stick, way down into his stomach. Then he took my hand, forced my fist into a clench, and showed me that he wanted me to punch him as hard as I could right in the center of his chest.

I figured he'd die either way, so I hit him for all I was worth. He shit in his pants, puked up the lime, and let out a burp as loud as a thunderclap. Slowly he stood up, brushed himself off and smiled at me. "Old hobo trick," he said, grinning toothlessly in the cold fluorescent light.

The next day I found Punch Man dead next to a pile of empty beer cans. His face was all blue around the mouth and his eyes were all purple – he'd exploded on the inside after going on another beer bender, with no one around to get him a lime. In the pile of cans I found one he hadn't gotten to yet and cracked it. I drank it slowly, thoughtfully, as the sun began to fade and the chill set in. Later on I gave him a traditional Hobo Funeral, like he always said he wanted, in the Safeway dumpster.

Hope this helps. Good luck.

According to common wisdom, a "chode" is a phallus that is wider than it is long. Does such a thing really exist?

Chode skeptic

Dear Chode Skeptic,

The **choad** has come to be known as a lot of different things, largely thanks to the *supercilious* folks over at the O.E.D. and their unwillingness to define this extremely common and highly practical term.

I have never heard it defined as you described in your letter. I came up using it to refer to the **taint**, which is the **perineum** (also known as the **mat**). Other definitions can be found [here](#), most of which are wrong. Hope this helps you know what a choad is. Good luck.

My girlfriend and I are on our third tour of duty in the last five years. We started dating when we were very young and we're separated by three years (I'm 23, she's 20). It's been the classic push-pull

relationship where one of us always wants something different than the other, but it takes months to convey that because we're both "feelers" and don't want to hurt the other person.

Most recently, we split for a solid two months and didn't talk to each other for an extended period of time, which was the first for us. I went on my fair share of dates, got to know many a wonderful girl, but in the end nobody really compared to my ex. So when we started to hang out again, I told her how much I missed her and that I was ready to give our relationship a try again.

She told me that, while she hadn't met anyone "better" than me, either, she wanted to be "110% sure" (if there is such a thing) that I was the one she loved before we got involved again because, as she put it, "if I get back with you it's going to be for good," meaning "marriage."

I am not afraid of commitment. In fact, I prefer it. And I can totally see myself marrying this girl down the road, but I am still not 100% sure. I find myself wondering sometimes what it would be like to be with another girl, and there are girl friends of mine who I've had little romances with in the past who I still am sort of attracted to. I have a lot of time to myself during the week because my girlfriend lives an hour away and we only see each other on weekends. Thus, it's hard for me to get really cranked up and into the groove when we do see each other. It's like I'm single for five days and married for two.

The other issue is that, being 20, she still has a lot to experience. Not that I've been around the world and back yet, either, but a lot changes between 20 and 23. She's a sweet girl, is gorgeous, and would do anything for me, but at times I feel like she wants more than all of me. Does that make sense? She tells me that she doesn't mind if I hang out with my girl friends, but I still find myself not telling her things because it seems to lower her self-esteem and make her mad (even though she says it doesn't). I can read her like a book.

I'm a person who likes to keep his options open. I know I can't live a single guy's life when I'm involved, but I feel like I've been given a marriage "sentence" from her already and I'm not totally ready to grasp that.
-Confused in the Zoo

Dear Confused,

Is this the e-mail of a happy man? No. I state that it isn't.

Anyhow, everyone involved here is too young and unfulfilled to be talking about marriage, particularly when both parties are such head cases. Suck it up and tie this one to a rock! (the relationship, not the girl.) You'll thank me when you reach the incredibly old age of like 25 or 26.

I've been having a long-distance relationship with a man in England for the last six months, mostly through email but with frequent visits too. It was very intense, and I was fully prepared to spend the rest of my life with this guy, and I thought he was very much in love with me too. I was applying to schools in Manchester so that I could be nearer to him. Just as I was about to send in the applications last week, he told me that he didn't want me to come to England, because he would leave me if I was around all the time, and that we could still be friends as long as I didn't write any "sad stuff" about us." As you can imagine, this has dissolved into bitterness on my part and dismissiveness on his. It's time for the final kiss-off email.

My question is, should I write a sweet, fond goodbye, or should I write a long deconstruction of his problems and his issues with women? I feel like I've got a pretty good insight into his psyche, and it would

be so satisfying to make him cry. Should I give into the temptation to hurt him even a fraction of the amount he's hurt me, or play the good girl and wish him well?
Broken Heart in Brooklyn

Dear Broken Heart,

I think you and I both know there's no real use in sending the dude a nasty email. Speaking as a man, I can tell you that no email will ever make a man cry or change the way he is, particularly when it comes from a lady he just dumped. He'll probably just delete it as soon as he sees that the subject line is like "Gary, These Are Your Problems" etc.

Your pride is hurting and that's gonna take some time to heal, is all. Just send me some photos of you in pajamas and stuff and let me make it all right again. Pour yourself some wine before you take the photos. You deserve it, baby. Show me stuff you don't show other men. Show me all that stuff. Show me some of that stuff. I don't care what it looks like, I just want to see it.

I am having a party with a lot of friends here in a few weeks. We all know each other pretty well, and they all know my tastes in music. What I wanted to know from you is if you could recommend some party tunes so that I'm not playing the same songs (albeit cool ones) that the friends are expecting? It can be anything - rock, rap, big band, soul, bluegrass, whatever.
Classy Lady Apprentice

P.S. Is 'Ray' short for Raymond, Rayhugh, Raysean, or some other form of Ray?

Dear Classy Lady,

First of all, thank you for asking about my name. It is Raymond, which in the original French means King of the Air. It is very classy of you to ask me a question about myself – this is a very good conversation technique. Maybe we can get together sometime and talk Carnegie. I bet you are extremely pretty.

As far as party music goes, I do have some advice for you. I used to play it real "close to the changer," you know, just monitoring every single song and constantly sweating it. As soon as Night Fever was over I'd have some Al Green all cued up like under a microscope practically, with Al B. Sure constantly in a backup holding pattern in case of mechanical or media failure.

These days I just pop in a bunch of compilations that Williams-Sonoma made for parties, and the party is basically on auto-pilot from there. I think they have some links to some of my favorites [here](#). They also have mega-punishing gourmet foods, such as a six pound Stilton and heck of awesome Poilâne sourdough from France. Also good is the seventy eight dollar steak they offer. Believe me, every bite tastes like it is worth approximately five dollars if you cook and sauce it properly.

— * —

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Jan 26, 2004

I Have a Blog!

Dear Readers,

I just realized that I can use my column as a “blog”! For those of you who don’t know what a blog is, it’s a website where you can follow up on the events of my day and also vote on what I did. Blogs are kind of a phenomenon on the Internet these days, so I thought I’d be a part of the magic. I started my blog yesterday morning.

Don’t worry, I’m still all about giving advice, so email ray(blip)achewood(blop)com with your questions! I will answer them later in the week.

Thanks Chochachos!

-=Ray=-

January 25, 2004 8:59AM

Some dude was knocking on my door and ringing the bell. I could tell it wasn’t the UPS guy because he never rings the bell. I fell back asleep and then a little while later I remembered that I had promised Pat I’d go hiking with him. Oh well, who cares.

[Comments \(1\)](#) | [Vote!](#)

January 25, 2004 11:26AM

Okay, now I remember why I have a headache. I ran out of wine late last night and was filling my glass with just straight Campari. My reasoning was that since it looked nice and red it was the same as wine. I feel like my brain is made out of horehound.

[Comments \(0\)](#) | [Vote!](#)

January 25, 2004 12:21PM

I can’t decide which kind of tits I like the best.

[Comments \(172\)](#) | [Vote!](#)

January 25, 2004 1:28PM

There is this new pizza place down in the Underground and they make a great pie. I had a great lunch there. It is called Papa Reno’s. Beef said he was thinking about trying it out today but I didn’t see him there.

[Comments \(1\)](#) | [Vote!](#)

January 25, 2004 1:48PM

I spent a little while just now surfing the Internet. I read a news story about a Panda bear who will not mate

no matter how horny the Chinese men try to make him.

Comments (492) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 2:12PM

I should probably do some work on my record label today. I haven't seen most of my artists in a while, except for Little Nephew, but he isn't allowed to make any more records until his mohawk grows back out. Maybe I'll call D'Shawn and see if they've been inspired lately.

Comments (0) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 2:17PM

Well, that didn't exactly go as well as I'd hoped. As of 2:15PM today, The Sexual Homeboys are officially off of Prime Time Records. One thing just led to another...I can't believe I told D'Shawn he was "so dumb that he ate his birth certificate because he thought it was cheese." What does that even mean?! I really lost it.

Comments (0) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 2:18PM

Hey, I should have a party tonight! That'd be fun! I'll call the guys.

Comments (15) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 2:35PM

It looks like we are going to have an awesome party starting at 5 o'clock. I'm just gonna leave the new stainless Viking on all night with big bowls of marinating scampi, scallops, salmons, racks of lamb, etc. next to it. Roast Beef is going to work up just a *sick* amount of his famous creamy bacon potato salad, and I got Dimitri from the beverage distributorship to come by with a few mixed cases. Téodor's baking up his famous crusty sourdough and Lie Bot's downloading hundreds of gigs of MP3s onto himself so he can DJ. Should be a good time unless there is a disaster.

Comments (12) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 2:37PM

NOW I know what's buggin' me! I didn't invite any women to the party. Should this just be a sausage type of thing? ...nah. I need to set Beef up with somebody. I owe it to him.

Comments (7) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 2:55PM

Okay, I went through my little black book. We'll get our first wave of ladies around nine when the mall closes, and there should be another pretty good stable showin' up around eleven after the TréMonisha show gets out. I'll make sure Beef is good and buzzed by then.

Comments (19) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 5:58PM

Party is going well! I just came upstairs to put some Gucci Rush on (I had forgotten). Got to go, it's my shot at 9-ball.

Comments (0) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 8:33PM

Okay, the first wave of ladies is almost here. Beef and I popped some Jägers and pretty soon I had talked him into wearing this smooth Chaps sport coat of mine. He was cool about it, acting all in a comedy manner about being dressed up. He doesn't know this yet but there is a new pack of Dunhills and a Binaca in the left pocket, and a few jimmies in the right. I was going to include a little thing of lube but I thought he'd probably just end up fumbling around with it and squirting it in his eyes, so I left it in my desk next to the

personalized pencils that mom gave me.

Comments (0) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 9:43PM

Brittney and Amber showed up and they were just looking sexy as *hell*. Amber was still wearing her Clinique counter outfit, all black long-leg pants, black high-heel boots and sexy black top with a long flowy black coat, and I could just tell that Beef was way into that. I guess it kind of reminded him of goth girls, which I know he's secretly into. He can find out that Amber is a total baby-havin' hoochie mama later, after the *snap*.

Comments (0) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 10:25PM

I'm not a very political guy but I am definitely amazed at how dumb the President seems. What's up with that?

Comments (22,728) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 10:28PM

Oh man! Beef and Amber are totally all by themselves, talking on the porch swing on the other side of the pool! Her leg is over his and they are just no kinds of noticing the party! I'll keep you posted.

Comments (3) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 10:34PM

They're kissing! I can see it from up in my room where my laptop is! Score, Beef!

Comments (3) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 10:34PM

Damn, Beef! Close your eyes, dude! She might open her eyes and see you staring at her!

Comments (0) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 10:35PM

Oh, *man*. I don't know what it is with women...they can always tell when something's weird with a dude.

Comments (2,296) | Vote!

January 25, 2004 10:36PM

Bye, Amber. Bye, Brittney. Sheesh. Look at how they're sneakin' out the back gate. Probably told Beef they were goin' to fix their makeup. Look at him, all sitting back wistfully in my nice coat. Damn fool.

Comments (0) | Vote!

January 26, 2004 2:49AM

Whew! I finished off most of the scampi and have just been chilling like crazy with my dudes! Lyle tried to do his usual thing where he spells out a dirty word in meats on the grill, but I caught him in the act and made him eat all the meats he was using for the cuss word. A little while later we hit the Lichen and spent just *hours* enjoying music and swimming. Folks kept mostly to themselves, just completely nailing their thoughts. It was a great time. I'm gonna pour me a nasty Stoli with a fat green olive and check the perimeter. Oh, and I'm gonna find a duvet for Beef, who socked himself out on some Chivas and decided the gazebo was bedtime.

Comments (0) | Vote!

Ray's Place

All the Latest Thoughts & Ideas from Ray



Feb 16, 2004

Advice Column for February 16, 2004

Woo HOO! I'm sorry I been away from the game so long, people! I was in Antibes. Anyhow, since there was such a long back-log of email questions from you all, this week's installment is a *Stone Cold Ray Smuckles Double-Nut Beat-Down*. That's right! It's twice as long as usual and is jam-packed with all kinds of cutting edge advice and ideas.

Oh yeah – I had some consultants go over my original “Technology Corner” that I had been working on and they had a few issues with it, so it won't appear for just a little while longer.

Peace to My Chochachos

--Ray--

ray(at)achewood.com

I would like a bumper sticker that says "What would Ray Smuckles do?" Can you talk to Chris about making some up for his store? They would be even cooler if they had a picture of you with a little halo. Patrick, Internet

Dear Patrick,

Yeah, the whole “What Would Jesus Do” spin-offs are kind of tired at this point. I wouldn't want to be thought of as a guy who used old ideas to promote himself. I am looking into developing a tiny microchip that is embedded under your skin and contains a high-quality MP3 of me yelling my name into a microphone. It would be awesome if we could get airport metal detectors to play the MP3 whenever passengers passed through.

Good luck to you. I am happy that you wrote. I will probably start selling these microchips pretty soon.

I'm sure I'm not the first one to point out that Raymond kinda means "king of the world" in French. I can see why you choose to block this out, considering the high cheez factor associated with that phrase. However, I like it better than "Rayair" which sounds too much like "Rygar" to be taken seriously. smooches, m

Dear M,

Hm. I guess I already knew the right information ("King of the World") but accidentally typed incorrect information. I don't feel like the correct definition of my name is "cheezy," though. Why would you tell me that my name is "cheezy"? I guess I just don't understand why I needed to take a bullet here. Why did you insult me? How come? Why did you insult me.

My roommates and I recently decided that we should stock up some kind of basic liquor cabinet for the apartment. Unfortunately, none of us knows much about good alcohol beyond such high-school-house-party fare as beer and screwdrivers. We also happen to be university students who don't have a lot of money to throw around. What would you suggest?

Chris

Dear Chris,

Yeah, you've got kind of a tightrope to walk here. Most important is to distinguish between mixable liquors and top shelf liquors which are to be drunk alone. Basically, you're at the mixer stage here and should be buyin' Most Toasts (that's what I call a handle) of vodka, gin, rum and bourbon. Consider the following simple beginner's list:

Vodka :: Tonic/Juice (plus lime wedge) (lots of ice)

Gin :: Tonic/Juice (plus lime wedge) (lots of ice)

Rum :: Cola (plus lime wedge) (lots of ice)

Bourbon :: Cola (plus lime wedge) (lots of ice)

See! It ain't nothin'. I bet you could shake that action for under sixty bucks. Oh, and, it's good not to go qualitywise below (in order) Gordon's, Gordon's, Bacardi, Ancient Situation. Otherwise you risk damage to the ocular nerve.

Word to the wise: don't make your drinks any stronger than 3:1, otherwise dudes and ladies who come to party at your apartment will be leavin' ramen.

[Editor's note: "Ancient Age" bourbon is marketed as "Ancient Situation" to the Underground market]

Ray, I need help naming a drink. It's very simple; add one shot of vanilla vodka to a pint of Guinness. I'm not a great fan of it (I find it too sweet) but some of my friends enjoy it. [However, they] cannot agree on what to call it. What do you recommend?

On an unrelated note, can you still play the piano, or did you lose your mastery of the keys after your trip through hell?

DH, Las Vegas NV

Dear DH,

Hm. A shot of vanilla vodka in a Guinness. I can see how that could be either kind of interesting or perhaps bad. Flavors are really tricky to match, and they don't seem the same to all people. I guess just call it the Johnny Romper, you know, like a guy who is wearing red long underwear and just jumping around like crazy

in kind of a hilly area. That's what came to mind just now. (In my imagination, this "Johnny Romper" guy also has a tri-corn hat on, and it's like 1772.)

As far as piano playing goes, I can still rib-tickle the baby grand, although I have been branching out into other instruments lately. You may have seen that I just picked up John Lennon's first Rickenbacker at auction (I keep a line to Christie's open most weekends). One thing they didn't show in the strip is that I also recently bought a pretty famous saxophone that one of the really good past saxophone players had owned.

*I was rooting through my old cassette collection the other day and I found an old Jim Nabors album. Well, I popped the sucker in and gave it a listen. I haven't stopped listening to it for 3 days! Is the world really coming to an End?
Concerned in Calgary*

Dear Calgary,

Yeah, I don't know why young people think it is all silly to enjoy Jim Nabors' music just because he played Gomer Pyle on Gomer Pyle. The dude could sing! He could lay it down in a very nice style. Why can't an artist be typecast as an idiot in one medium, yet soar in another? Anyhow, I would have more information in this answer, but the main Jim Nabors website I found on Google started automatically playing some really loud MIDI of one of his songs and it made me kind of angry.

*As an addendum to your response to the 'Chode Skeptic,' I believe the term he has in mind is "chot," which is the term I remember from high school as being used to denote a male generative organ that is wider than it is long. You won't find this definition on the Urban Dictionary, but we all know that the Urban Dictionary is contributed to largely by Scottish Folds anyway.
A Dude On The Internet*

Dear Dude,

First of all, I would not continue citing "high school" as a reference if you want to make much headway in the world. Anyhow, I've never heard of a "chot." The only term I know of is "choad," and if you'll excuse me, I'm going to go powder mine, because it's getting kind of flared up after sitting around reading all this email.

[Just kidding, I'm just going to make another Ketel Kat and probably have a cig]

*I like to think of myself as something of a cook. I especially like to make stirfries, but I usually end up with the same problem. After chopping onions, my hands have a very strong onion odor for often DAYS after. Yes, I wash and bathe as much as the next guy, although I am sure not as much as you cats. Anyways, last time this happened, I chopped green onions for their mild flavor and aroma, and still I have onion hands, two days later. Can you help me out Ray, as a clean cat, and also as a cooking man-diva?
Wondering Wok*

Dear Wondering Wok,

Lots of folks have this problem with garlic and onions. Some say to rub a piece of silverware between your hands (has to be actual silver or silver-plate), some say to mush smashed lemons all around on your hands, some say to wear surgical gloves or Ziploc-style gloves while cutting. Maybe try not touching the onions at all while you're cutting them. Personally, I don't have this problem, so I am not the best guy to ask.

Oh, Pat just called (he wanted to brag about how he had just found water using some mail-order divining rods that I said were a joke) and he recommends immersing your hands in Coca-Cola for at least twenty seconds. Alright, hope this helps. I'm going to take a nap and then go to this party over at Téodor's and then work on the rest of these later.

What made you and Beef decide that you were no longer going to wear shorts and T-shirts like when you were young? (thong doesn't count)

Jr. Bacon, PA

Dear Thump Titties, *(sorry, just a name I came up with for you just now)*

Yeah, it ain't no thing. That's how we dressed when we were kids, and we dug it. Styles change, dogg. I bet you don't have a cut-out portion of an Iron Maiden t-shirt pinned to the back of a sleeveless denim jacket anymore. I bet you also quit sitting on a stepladder and trying to autoerotically asphyxiate with a chloroformed sock in your mouth (in this scenario the sock is secured to a short string which is tied to the ceiling, and you are wearing clear jelly mules).

Just be cool, and realize that people change. I don't wear shorts and T-shirts too much anymore.

How's it going, brah? I'm a long time reader, first time writer and I'm excited to have a question worth asking you. Here goes: I want to get a tattoo, but in about six months of thinking about it, I've yet to come up with any design, or even a concept for a design, that I'd want on my body for the rest of my life. I'm thinking it has to be something personal, something of permanent interest, and yet hopefully something at least somewhat funny too. I'm into working hard, and I like hanging out with dogs and work horses and being in the woods, and I really like pirates although I don't really think they have enough relation to my life to justify getting a pirate tattoo. Do you have any ideas that might get me thinking in the right direction?

Isaac

Yeah, a lot of people seem to want to get tattoos lately. It's kind of a cultural phenomenon, I think, where folks live in a shallow commercial culture that doesn't have a lot of roots or meaning so they try to create meaning and importance through strong statements such as tattoos, piercings and other external signs of permanence and belonging. Nothing says "I'm somebody" like a screaming bobcat head on your calf. (particularly if the bobcat head has a small speech bubble which says "I'm Somebody!")

Anyhow, it sounds like you want a tattoo for its own sake, rather than because you have a reason to get a tattoo. Maybe for now just get a t-shirt which says an opinion that you agree with. When you have a stronger idea to dedicate actual ink to (name of new girlfriend, own initials, bulldog chewing up a skateboard), you'll know it's time.

Ray, why is it that you have nipples like a human person?
Curious in Texas

Dear Curious,

Hold on here: am I getting this straight? Is a dude asking another dude about his nipples?

Hella weird, guy. You are Violating.

--Ray--

Where did you get your sweet spectacles. Mine are okay but yours are hella cool.
D, Internet

Dear D,

Eyeglass companies can make lenses for any size or shape of spectacles! All you have to do is provide the frames and they do the rest. These particular frames belonged to my dad, Ramses Luther Smuckles (CFA Registered name: GC Tinkerbell's Careful He's A Spaniard) and I'm proud to wear them. I didn't know him well, but I like to think they fit me 'cause they fit him. I have an old redded-up Kodak photo of him holdin' me as a baby and he looks just tough as *hell*, just sittin' on our old cement stoop in the Avenues and cradlin' my swaddled ass in his arms, no doubt barely able to sit still for a second, as it was with him. Let me see if I can attach the photo here.

[img src="^^BB^DDfuckFUCK^DD.jay-peg"]

It looks like another election is coming up. I try to stay current, so I read magazines and websites, but I generally can't tell what's really going on with politics. What's the story? Who's good and who's evil? Who should I support in the upcoming elections? Just break on down in that way you do.
Al, Culver City, CA

Dear Al,

Alright, politics is a really tricky issue to deal with when you're running an advice column where all stripes of people need to feel welcome and at home so that they can be honest and discuss their problems. All I will say is that the current President seems to use the White House in the same way that Ricky Schroeder used the mansion on Silver Spoons. I wouldn't be all that surprised if little train tracks ran through the west wing these days.

I'm going to leave this powder keg alone, sorry. I'll be in my bed, listening to my new 2500GB iPod, completely blessed on Bowmore and chubby J's.

*Have you chosen to endorse any of the Democratic candidates for President?
Pseudonymless in Pennsylvania*

Dear Penn.,

Wait a minute, you are assuming that I'm a Democrat. That is rude. Anyhow, I guess there is only one Democratic candidate left at this point (i.e. that John Kerry guy), although earlier in the week that one home-made Drudge Report website reported that the Drudge Report website had announced some kind of potential sex scandal that John Kerry might have been involved in. You know what? So what, I say. Every dude has his background. I used to pay a \$60 cover every Friday night to watch the Fuck Races down at Hanky Panky's, and I'd sure as *hell* be a good President.

*Our little kitty is growing up and is now going through the throes of womanhood. One night she started attacking my foot. Thinking it was a game, I started fighting back. My girlfriend saw it and told me the cat was dry humping my foot. Since it happened we just sort of nod to each other in the hall and avoid contact as much as possible. Things are awkward between us now and sometimes I see that gleam in her eye again. Is this just a cat in heat or is this a female equivalent of an Oedipus complex?
Mike, Ontario*

Dear Mike,

It sounds to me like your girlfriend has jealousy issues. Your little old p-cat was just messin' around with your shoe, just having all kinds of innocent fun, and your girlfriend saw her opportunity to drive a stake through your relationship with the bitty. It sounds like it's time to do some "sexual housekeeping" here: keep the cat and ditch the witch. Any kind of human lady who would stoop to trying to get you to believe that a cat would be romantic on a shoe is definitely going to be trouble later in life.

Advice Column for March 15, 2004

Hey folks! Sorry I was away so long. I was in Antibes. Anyhow, here are the answers to all the questions that have been building up in my Inbox.

Thanks Chochachos!

-=Ray=-

Oh, P.S.: still a lot of problems with my Technology Corner article. I'm hoping to get signoff on that by the end of the week.

Download the [theme to Ray's Place](#) - MP3, 981kb, by [MYCC](#)

You seem like the kind of dude who might have some furniture knowledge for me. I bought some cheap vintage furniture because I really dig the way it looks; nice clean lines and for the most part, hella comfortable. The problem is the fabric is all faded. It's in pretty good shape, just discolored. I've read on the internet that you can dye furniture, which seems like the best option for me since I don't have thousands of dollars to drop on recovering it (or getting new furniture). Do you have any advice for me?
Tiki Tom

Dear Tom,

In order to dye the fabric on your furniture, you'd still have to remove the fabric from the piece in question, and that is a job best left to a skilled reupholsterer. Also, self-dyeing is a dangerous business, as the high temperatures and the chemicals involved can unevenly color, shrink or destroy old fabrics. It's virtually impossible to get right without the correct equipment and experience.

Sorry to get your hopes down, but professional reupholstering is really the only way to go when it comes to putting a new surface on an upholstered item. Furniture is expensive to repair, but think of the decades of service it will give you once finished — more than any car or appliance!

Good luck to you, and thanks for writing in. I hope you have a great week.

Ray, recently I decided drinking crappy beer wasn't gonna do it for me anymore. I can't take drinking those watered down pilsners anymore. I need some advice on some good beers. I know the big three don't really specialize in "good" beer, but its hard to know which microbrews to look into. Also, I am confused between the differences in taste between a pale ale, brown ale, lager, etc. I'm a college student, and money isn't coming out of thin air, [but] I don't want to be wasting my money on a beer with a pretty label and pretty bad taste.

Aspiring Beer Snob, Madison

Dear Aspiring,

I think what is happening here is that you are letting other people tell you what tastes bad or good. I have a simple test for you, and I think you should take it right away.

- 1). Go to the grocery store and buy a bottle of Budweiser.
 - 2). Put that bottle at the bottom of your refrigerator overnight.
 - 3). When you wake up the next day, brush your teeth, put your robe on, rinse several times with plain natural water, and open that beer. Pour it into a glass.
 - a). Start the *Braveheart* DVD.
 - 4). Take a deep breath. Clear your head. Take a nice pull from the chilled Budweiser.
 - 5). Wasn't that nice? Light, crisp, refreshing and full of Goods. If you need Sam Adams blowing a bunch of sugar up your ass, then get some kind of special machine with a little rubber Sam Adams doll at one end.
 - 6). My favorite part in *Braveheart* is how crazy that one Irish guy is. I also like the themes of Honor and Importance.
-

*So I figure that everyone has sipped on a Manhattan at one point or another. It's a good drink and I'm glad someone came up with it. But what about a Brooklyn? How would you mix up a Brooklyn?
Nim, Park Slope, Brooklyn*

Dear Nim,

Interesting! I have never been to Brooklyn, but I am a huge Sopranos fan, so I think I get a little bit about where you are coming from. I guess in my mind I think of Brooklyn as a place where guys say "wicked" a lot and eat a ton of hot dogs. I am also picturing Tony Soprano going Christmas shopping for himself at the golf club store. Anyhow, a recipe for a drink called a "Brooklyn"? You're on!

Drink Recipe: "Da Brooklyn Cocktail"

© 2004 Raymond Smuckles

- 4 oz domestic draft beer, chilled
- 1 olive-size ball of fresh buffalo mozzarella ([bocconcini](#) size)
- Toothpick

Put the mozzarella onto the toothpick. Pour the beer into a martini glass. Put the toothpick into the beer. Welcome to Brooklyn.

*I'm a huge fan of whiskey, particularly single malt scotch. I was wondering if you could give me a couple suggestions for relatively inexpensive but still decent single malts.
Thanks in advance, Cody*

Dear Cody,

Beware of falling into the snob trap with this stuff — I'm a professional "nose" and serve on the boards of several international fragrance companies, but all single malt Scotches pretty much taste the same to me ("Scotch"). Sure, some spokespeople say things about "vanilla" and "sherry casks" and stuff like that, but at

the end of the day it's just another nice way to throw bark chips at the second-floor window of Sweet Lady Oblivion.

im a young english college student who fancies one of his mates girlfreinds, i have no hope of sharing her and he acts like a jerk most of the time to her. im a bit shy getting these things off the ground, and shes not technically allowed to talk to me (he reckons im getting to close to her) luckily she ignores that, but, i would like to take it further w/o him realising till the last moment as it were whats the best plan?
Yours, Stuart H

Dear Stuart,

Do you see how I crossed out your letter? Pretend that I am your English teacher, and that I just gave you an "F."

Have some dignity in your life. F

I have a problem with my roommate in college. He's basically a nice guy, but I swear every damn thing he does is the most irritating thing I've ever experienced. He's the kind of dude who doesn't realize that his roommate needs to do homework and have private time with his lady. I found out that he leaves when I play rap music, but ray I can't play rap music all the time. Stuff's gotta get done. How do I break it to this guy gently that he's ruining my life?
~ticked at temple (the university)

Dear Ticked,

It's easy for two dudes who share a small living space to get mad at each other, particularly when the dudes are paired at random by a college software program. A lot of times colleges say these programs are going to use special variables to match students up with compatible roommates, but in reality the programs can be hard to use and often lead to the opposite purpose of which they were intended. For instance, after high school I did a quarter up at San Pablo Valley Community College, and it was weird because my roommate was this very political dude named Russell Snipes (Russell Snipes is very close to my own name, Ray Smuckles, and I was pretty much not political at that time). Anyhow, Snipes went all crazy during the Gulf War and went out onto the football field one night and blew himself up with an aquarium full of flash powder (don't worry, the aquarium was his, not mine).

Unfortunately, it turns out you only get straight A's when your roommate dies on accident, not as the result of suicide. That quarter I got two C's and an Incomplete (all three in Golf).

I was reading your advice column and in particular the one letter about naming a drink. The drink was one shot of vanilla vodka in one pint of Guinness. This reminded me immediately of a drink found in my home town of St. John's in a bar called The Republic. The drink is called a Carbomb and it's a glass of Guinness and one of those mini-guinness-glasses(I think they're two or three shots) of Bailey's Irish Cream. The thing is, the Bailey's kind of curdles in the Guinness so you don't pour it in and mix it. Instead you drop the little glass into the big one and chug 'em down! It's good if you're not too slow but horrible if you

hesitate.
Cheers, Jeff, Newfoundland

Dear Jeff,

Yeah, that drink is about as obscure as a gin and tonic. I don't know why you think you are the only guy who knows about that drink. It's a standard button on most Squirrel™-brand beverage service order entry systems (#CRBM).

Hey man, regarding the last letter in your most recent column, the complex that douchebag and his retarded douchebag girlfriend is referring to ("a female equivalent of an Oedipus complex") is called an Electra complex[.]

I know this is a stupid thing to write a letter about, but I don't get a whole lot of opportunities to show people that I know what the female equivalent of an Oedipus complex is, so I didn't want to let this slip away
Anonymous, Internet

thank you

Like many other people in the first world, I write lots of email, but am now getting confused on how to sign off -- it really happened when I moved overseas to Holland, where I'm running into all these English, Australian, and of course, Dutch people. In the states, I ended email with "Take care," or "See ya," or just my name, if I was short on time.

The English use "Cheers," a lot (what's up...do they have a pint of beer next to their computers?). And the Dutch, when they're writing in English, use "greetz" or "greetz" which is a literal translation of "de Groeten," or figuratively "Salutations." "Take care" which was a real favorite of mine, is too touchy-feely for these northern, more reserved cultures. To top it off, I've recently noticed that people are starting to use "Best" as well, on both sides of the ocean, which I hadn't run into ever before. Any advice on signing off?
Yo yo yo, Marco

Dear Marco,

As you know, I prefer when people are classy and use good grammar. What's wrong with a little old-fashioned proper culture, in this day of someone named "Jay-Z" jumping over a movie title called like 2Fast2Burn in every television ad I see? What's wrong with a little old-fashioned manners, in this day of "C U L8R" and more styles of emoticons than there are letters in the English language?

Sure, you may get regarded as "uptight" or "snooty" if you sign off with a classic such as "Best Regards," "Sincerely," "Cordially," or even "Respectfully Yours." But you know what? Be the *new* cool. Be the coat and tie in the sea of exposed thongs and boxer shorts.

All My Love,
Ray.

There is this guy I like, but he's so bashful. He never says hi or anything to me. He knows I like him. How do I get him to talk to me or like me?
confused

Dear Confused,

This letter is so weird. You know how you can go camping at the beach and make simple figurines out of marshmallows and sticks, using the marshmallows as joints? It seems like your letter was written by one of those figurines. It's kind of like there is this other figurine about ten feet away from you and stop-motion photography is being used to show you two moving around relative to each other. The soundtrack is really simple and is mainly played on a medium-quality keyboard.

That's just the thought I'm having in my head.

Dear Readers: This response is from “m,” who last time said that my name was “cheezy.”

Oh dear. I did not mean to insinuate your name was cheezy. I was thinking of the connections that could be made with the movie 'Titanic,' but a quick Google of "King of the World" reveals Bob Marley, a book about Muhammad Ali, Sir Edmund Hillary, and Steely Dan as being the top associations with the phrase, so obviously my initial assessment was incorrect. My abject apologies, Ray.

I do have a question, though: Is it difficult to stuff your tail through the tail-hole in your thong every time you have to put it back on? I would imagine unless there is some sort of prehensile skill there, that would be challenging...
smooches, m

Dear M,

Thank you, apology accepted. (Readers: it is good form to always accept an apology, unless it is like a real serious ethical offense or there is a blood feud).

As far as your question about my Grill goes, cats do have a pretty simple time directing our tails to do various things. Our tails are kind of like hands: they are easy to control and we have muscles which allow us to make practical use of them.

Is achewood another word for blue balls?
-Milyn from California

Dear Milyn,

Not as far as I know — it's mainly the name of our town (definition [here](#)). The only terms I know of for “blue balls” are:

- Drumskins
- Ronnies
- Unsexed Dick Nuts

Hope this helps.

I went out with a girl for a year and a half, and it was a really great, loving relationship. After that year and a half of intense feelings, though, we decided mutually to split up. I came to hate that decision, though, and didn't quite get over her until a short while ago. My problem is this: I've lost my game. I can't feel comfortable around women who are in my league; in fact, I've had to go down the chain a fair bit just to feel comfortable around a girl. My question is this: how can I regain my lost confidence and get back in the saddle?

J. in Little Rock

Dear J.,

I think the first half of your letter is what you really wanted to write about. That's why you put it at the front of your email. You want to get back with this main girl. That is the thing you would like to do. If it is not feasible for you to get back with the main girl then yeah, you are going to spend a lot of time measuring all your other dating prospects against your memory of her.

Listen, dude, ex-girlfriends are never as awesome as you remember them. They all had bad breath in the morning, were not magical, and definitely farted at least once when you were around to notice. You probably also remember the slight hint of wispy dark upper-lip hair, around the creases of the mouth, that most dudes see in the early morning light. I don't know, I'm just saying.

Okay Ray, here's my problem - I got debt. Real bad, too - four different credit cards, electric, gas, water, Verizon and that BMG music club. (I always forget to mail back those reply cards). Plus, I've got rent due and am behind on my car payments. On top of all this, I recently lost my job doing tech support for the cable company because I was rude to the customers and kept giving them the wrong information about all their problems. I was using my Discover card to pay all my other bills, but I maxed that one out - like all the others. In short, I'm screwed and none of this ever would have happened if those credit card companies made such convincing offers to me. So I want to sue them. Also, the collection companies are probably going to come by pretty soon and take away my stereo, my car and my DVD player. I'm probably gonna be evicted too, since I'm not going to be able to pay my rent. So I'm going to sue the collections agencies and my landlord, plus Verizon and the gas and electric companies and everybody else I owe money to as well. My only problem is finding a lawyer to work pro bono for me. Do you know any such lawyers, Ray? All these people and companies screwed me over and now I want to make them pay!

-Way in Debt in New Mexico

Dear Way In Debt,

Debt consolidation is the name of the game. Coordinate your monthly payments and finance rates under one financier. Also, try to stop being such a jackhole and blaming everyone for your problems (which you created through greed!). Step Up And Act Like A Dad (S.A.L.A.D.).

Alright, so I know you don't want to be discussing too much politics, and that is something I respect. But I just gotta ask you -- without you endorsing any one candidate -- is a vote for Philippe "making a

statement" if he doesn't win, or is just a wasted vote?
Dude in Denver

Dear Denver,

Philippe hasn't won any primaries yet, but he has been able to remain below the radar of both the Bush and Kerry campaigns. I think Nader is the third-party candidate who is going to take the bulk of their firepower, so that should leave Philippe relatively unscathed come November.

I'm sorry Ray, at first i thought it was a quirk of yours and tried to shrug it off, but i can't, i must tell you.

CHOCHACHOS is not a word in any language.
-Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

"Chochacho" is a word. See? I just said it. It came out of my mouth. It's a word. How come you feel like you have to tell everyone in the world when you think a certain word is not an actual word? Word definition is largely a matter of opinion, and you definitely have a lame opinion. Sorry.

I was reading your blog the other day. [...] You mentioned Beef working up a SICK amount of his famous creamy bacon potato salad. Any chance on getting him to divulge the recipe for this and posting it on your column? His method for home fries as published in the cookbook yields amazing results, and I'm curious to see how a potato salad a la Beef would taste. Also, I'd like to say thanks for your drink recipe contributions. Many a lady has succumbed to my wily charm after a few Drinks Of Tomorrow. Your biggest fan in Detroit, Antal

Dear Antal,

Good news! The Achewood Cookbook is due to be revised with a mad amount of new material, including like over fifteen new recipes and updates to the recipes which are in there. Roast Beef's Bacon Crunch Whisper Salad is definitely one of the new recipes. And don't worry— the word "Whisper" in the recipe name does not mean that the food sucks. It mainly means that a nice binder exists between the primary starch and the supporting ingredients.

I'm having quite the dilemma with the lady types. Seeing as you're pretty much a guru in everything, I figured you could help me out. I've never really had problems with the ladies, which is odd because I'm not the most attractive guy. I've always just been a "sweet guy," you know, the kind of dude where ladies are like "Well, he may not be a looker but damn is he sweet. He's also a good cook too."

That's worked most of my life, but now that I'm a swingin' bachelor, it seems that I can't get back into the game. Everyone sees me as the nice guy, or, in some cases, they think I'm gay. Girls don't think twice about changing in front of me, or telling me in exhausting detail about their sex lives. They think nothing about it, because they don't see me as a boyfriend type. I want to shed this pansy image, but I don't want to be a

*testosterone-y meat head dick (who is bad). Can you help a brother out?
-A dude who is actually not gay.*

Dear Actually Not Gay,

Yeah, if women are changing clothes in front of you while not even breaking a stride in their sentences about their sex lives, you are definitely seen as a gay person. You are definitely not seen as a straight man. Do you sit back on the bed while they change and talk, stroking your nice little Min-Pin, while wearing an excellent A|X shirt with a high-peaked open collar? Do you have devastating sideburns? Examine some of this information and try to look at it in a new light.

*Ray, help a fellow golfer out - why do you plumb-bob your putts? I know several golfers out at the club who do this, and not a single one can explain the practice. Does it help you read the break (or grain, if you have Bermuda out there in California)? Also, what kind of putter are you using these days?
Anonymous, Internet*

Dear Anonymous,

The plumb-bob (the act of standing back from your ball, so that you can see it on a line with the cup relative to the slant of the green, using your putter as a point of true vertical orientation) is just a crude eyeballer. You can have a hunch about the break, but the bob will give your eye more hunchin' material, if you follow me.

You know how when you run up to kick a soccer ball, at first your feet kind of take these weird tiny steps before you break into your full stride? That is your *subconscious brain* completely calculating things out for you. You could never mentally calculate how long each stride in the pattern of strides should be, but your brain can turn this information into chemical juices which never pass through your main cerebellum, and so the soccer ball meets its correct target. It's the same with golf, only since things happen much more slowly we have the time to gather more environmental information.

Advice Column for April 26, 2004

I'm back! I guess I didn't feel like writing advice for a while (I was also traveling). Anyhow, here is a big fat beat-down for all you all "hep nerdz" to bury your honkers in. PS: No word from the consultants yet on when my Technology Corner is gonna run. I guess there were more problems with it than they originally thought.

*Thanks chochachos,
--Ray--*

Download the [theme to Ray's Place](#) - MP3, 981kb, by [MYCC](#)

Ray, I've been a smoker for about 3 years now, and I'm considering moving up to a classier brand. I've been loyal to the Camel Turkish Golds for a while now, but having tried the Izmir Stinger exotic blends, I realized that there are better things out there cigarette-wise. As it happens, there's a pipe shop in my town

which I've entered from time to time, and most recently I noticed that they have Nat Shermans! I remember that you are a fan of this cigarette, and can [you] give any recommendations as to whether they're good, and what kind of Nats I should start off with.
Thanks much, Jon, Urbana, Illinois

Dear Jon,

Look, I'm a smoker. I'm not going to make a bunch of bones about that or act like I am some amazing guy who has amazing rights because he smokes a cigarette. But really, I feel bad about endorsing tobacco products to anyone. I like what I like, but I also casually disallow myself to realize the voluntary risk I'm taking when I light up, know what I'm saying? I won't ask another person to indulge in this casual disallowance. That is *meta-rude*.

Where can I get a good bottle of sake here in the US? My local liquor store doesn't stock it. Do I need to find a Japanese supermarket or something?

Also, what's a good brand of sake and how much should I expect to pay? What about Tamanohikari--they have sake.com, but I don't see their name on anyone's "best of" lists.
John, Massachusetts

Hi John,

Yeah, I got to admit I ain't too much of a Sake guy. Sure, I get either a warm or a cold Sake when I'm goin' out to a real nice Sushi dinner (not just a regular Sushi dinner, in which case I always get a chilled-up Heineken), but usually the house Sake is fine enough for me. I forget whether warm or cold ones are supposed to be better. Anyhow, last night we actually went out for some Sushi and I got a pretty good Tempura dinner but it came with those crummy little beef ribs that Japanese people think are okay. Man, those ribs suck! Japanese people make crappy ribs. I'm sorry to be racist here, but damn, people! All crappy and chewy with a huge slice of bone? I'm not usually racist, but when it comes to Sushi ribs, I have got to draw the line. *I am racist*.

In response to a question in your recent column: A fellow named Marco who was living in Holland was confused as to why a lot of British people sign off Emails with "Cheers," he postulated that we are keeping beer next to our computers. While this is not entirely untrue, the fact is that in Britain we use "Cheers" in a variety of situations that have little or nothing to do with booze.

The most common usage is as a substitute for "Thanks," and is normally followed almost automatically by the word "Mate." It is common to say Cheers to the driver as you exit a bus, In Emails this is taken to mean "Thank you for listening to my ravings. I did not intend to upset or bore you."
Cheers - An Englishman.

Dear Englishman,

Ah, I see. "Cheers" is just kind of a general acknowledgement. Cool.

You know how in the grocery store these days they often times got a lotta those self-checkout stations, where you scan each item and bag it yourself? I think it would be cool if, in the future, each time you scanned an

item the computer said “cheers!” in a happy British accent. You know, acknowledging that you scanned the item. Man, that would really cook my dog.

*I was just reading your column, where you were talking to Marco about the new cool, how it's all about giving proper respect to people by ending your letters formally, with "Regards," or "Respectfully Yours," and I agree, you have put your finger on it. However, if you want to go all the way, how about ending the way old-timey letters did, by including the farewell message as part of a whole sentence. You will see what I am trying to describe once you get to the end of my message. It is proper, but is it so formal that it goes beyond the new cool, into the "new pretentious"? As you read this, I hope you will give honest consideration to,
Your loyal reader,
Adam from Seattle.*

Dear Adam,

Damn. I rarely rediscover a piece of etiquette that is hugely poised to make a comeback, but this is definitely one of them. It is completely classy and deserves a lot of attention. My hat is off to you for this bit of classic style. I hope you will also consider, this list that I have made,

OTHER CLASSY THINGS WHICH ARE POISED TO MAKE A COMEBACK

- Handwriting, D’Nealian Method
- Sun Perch, Angling For and Modest Preparation Of
- "On The Invigouration of Exercise—A Primer on Morning Exercices of the Spyne and Many Bones" Hon. J.P. Skillings (1827)

—A Loyal Ray.

*I was recently browsing through the Achewood t-shirts and all of a sudden realized how mercilessly hot that girl is who models the women's t-shirts. I'm assuming she's a friend of yours or Chris's, so I have to ask: Does everyone have good-looking female friends like that? Why are my friends not particularly attractive, and why?
Sincerely, S*

Dear S.,

Those photographs are supplied by the company that makes the garment blanks that are used by the Achewood [shop](#). Coincidentally, though, the women in the photos are some of Chris’s oldest, dearest friends. He was particularly surprised to discover this fact one day when alternately cropping the heads off of the photos and flipping through the pages of his high school yearbook. It warmed his heart and he later travelled to Los Angeles to be with the models and rekindle past friendships. These days he keeps in touch with them through e-mail, and on special occasions he videoconferences with them in a special room at Kinko’s.

It’s really kind of a nice story, one of the best ones of our time. Thanks for asking.

Ray, I was seeing a guy for 5+ years before it ended in a not-so-nice way. I've given myself a little time to recuperate since the breakup, and now I think I'm ready to jump back in the pool. Unfortunately, my playing skills are way rusty after such a long hiatus, and so far things are not going well. I go out to bars and coffeeshops to meet guys, and it never seems to work. Either I go up and try to start a conversation, which leads to my getting shot down or just making a friend for the evening, or I wait for them to come to me, which leads to absolutely nothing. I'm not hideous (though not a knockout either; on a scale of one to ten I'd put myself at an even 5), so I don't know what the problem is. While I'd appreciate any general advice you have on this subject, I do have a more specific question. You're the sort of cool cat I'd like to get to know better; when you go out on the make, what sorts of things does a lady do to get you to consider her?

Really Bad Flirt in New York

Dear Bad Flirt,

r_beef@achewood.com

I am thinking of buying an inflatable sofa or a giant beanbag for my main TV-watching location (I cannot afford a proper sofa) - any advice on which to choose?

Cheers, Dave

Dude, I don't have any advice on buying a damn sofa. Come on.

Why are women such lying cheating whores?

/Jaded

Dear Jaded,

Depends on the woman. Some women, such as my mom, are nothing like that. In fact, my mom is a pretty wonderful lady and she only has kindness in her heart.

Anyhow, I am interested in this word "whore." It's like, it can only be applied to a woman, but it describes behavior that is common to both sexes. If I had a little more free time I would devote it to a campaign promoting the calling of men Whores and Sluts, and women Assholes and Jerks! How come no one ever describes a woman as an "asshole"? It's totally hilarious if you do! Try it, people. Share the language. Come on now. Share share.

I'm in the midst of reading a book by Mikhail Bulgakov called "The Master and Margarita." It's translated from Russian and was given to me by a Russian co-worker after I commented that I'd read a lot of Russian literature and no one ever takes a bath, showers, brushes their teeth, changes their clothes, etc. Apparently, someone bathes in the book, but with only 100 pages left, I still haven't come to that part yet.

[However], I was struck by this passage: "sprawled in a relaxed pose on the pouffe that had once belonged to the jeweller's wife was a third creature, namely, a black cat of horrific proportions with a glass of vodka in one paw and in the other a fork on which he had speared a pickled mushroom." It turns out that his name translates to Behemoth, that he can slice off a person's head and deftly reattach it, and he plays

chess. He also hangs out with the devil, apparently, who does not seem to be such a bad guy after all.
Best Regards, Pete

Dear Pete,

Palagraszje Grnatchko, the cat you excerpt here, is a big figure in feline literature. He's as well known as your Sherlock Holmes, but just wanders into and out of stories, usually holding a drink and some sort of vinegary, pickled garnish. Cat literature is a lot different from human literature in that the convention of a character who wanders leisurely between all books is universally shared by our authors. I'll try to recommend some titles for you to check out next week.

Hey Ray, since you seem to be the patron saint of college alcoholism, I was wondering if you'd enlighten me a bit. I recently splurged a bit and got myself some respectable booze for once. I went and got some Irish Cream (love the stuff), Kahlúa, Amaretto and Gin. I plan on getting some whiskey/bourbon, but haven't yet. Can you think of anything else I might wanna get that would go well or round out my selection a bit?

Also, if I'm disposing of a human body, do you think it would be better to like dissolve it in the tub with acid or something from chem lab, or chop it up tiny like and feed it to the pigs in the Ag department?
Thanks Ray, you're there for me, Mr. Fancy Pants, SLO

Dear SLO,

Why did you buy Irish Cream? That's kind of weird. What do you even do with Irish Cream, anyway? I guess now you're the advice columnist and I'm just some confused guy who needs information. What **is** Irish Cream, anyways? You're setting up a pretty weird bar with all the sugary frou-frou drinks. Are you a murder...oh, I get it. You're one of those weird dudes who has a little murder-bar, full of high-fructose liquors that mask all the strong drugs you spike the drinks with. Well, I for one am not going to help you fill out your murder-bar. Get lost, creep.
Ray.

You really dropped the ball this time. First, Budweiser?!?! Have you lost the will to live? [Extra question marks omitted here]

Second, Park Slope Brooklyn. About as Italian as Santa Barbara, CA. Here's a few clues, son. Wiseguys in Brooklyn live in Bensonhurst and Sheepshead bay. They don't eat hot dogs, nor does anyone else in Brooklyn except russian mafia types down at Coney Island trying to live the American dream (You'll know them as bald sloped forehead types with black leather jackets, a few missing teeth, and girlfriends with pink go-go boots and a coin slot over their pussies). Here, we all eat pizza, which is called a "slice." Best in the western world. And perhaps more importantly, we say fuck. A lot. It's the universal modifier, ya fuckin' pin head. See how that works? Use it excessively or be confused for a tourist.

All that said, the drink idea sounds appropriate for the nabe's I mentioned. For Park Slope, think a shot of kahlúa in yer latte and you're closer to home...
Heterosexually yours, K.

Dear K.,

Man, I really feel like I got a blast of Atlantic spray with that one! I totally want to talk like you now, all with a big like Phillies or Lobstah' Sox jersey on. Here, let me try it: "Hey, ya fuckin' pin head! We ain't got no team called Lobstah' Sox, ya pin head! Lobstah's a fuckin' wicked dinna'!"

Man, that was *fun!* I love how you guys talk! Sometimes I wish I had an accent or anything characteristic about the way I speak, but here I am, boring old California Ray. Sometimes I think I'll never really know what it's like to have a strong cultural identity...*ya fuckin' pin head!*

Ha ha! Haaaaaaaaaaaaa [*Ray is just smiling and spinning around in lazy circles on his chair now—Ed.*]

I just had a hard breakup with the girl I was dating for four years. I have been feeling really low ever since, and I was wondering if you had any advice to help me get over it. Thank you.
Your pal, Shawn

Hey Shawn

Yes it can be very bad to break up with a girl who you were dating

I am sorry that this happened to you.

But you know champ any girl who turns you down is turning down a winning prize

Alright champ now I need you to get back to homeroom 186,

You guys are supposed to make pizzas today.

(it is important that while you read that, you pretend that you are in my office at school, and I have a big white football helmet on that says GUIDANCE COUNSELOR on the side)

My Advice Column for April 30, 2004

Man, I found out that those consultant guys are totally dissing on my Technology Corner rough draft. Roast Beef took some webcam footage of them just laughing and jumping up and down on the printouts I gave them, their shirts kind of untucked and their ties all loosened, giving each other high fives. One of the guys drew a picture of my head on his dry-erase board, except the top of my head was open, and a hand was pouring margaritas and toilet paper into the opening. I'm feelin' pretty insulted right now. Anyway, here is advice.

ray

Oh PS I guess also it is the one-year anniversary of my advice column. This anniversary came at kind of a bad time. Maybe I'll celebrate later, with a shot of...*nothing*.

Download the [theme to Ray's Place](#) - MP3, 981kb, by [MYCC](#)

*Do you happen to have stats on the percent of single women that practice fellatio and that indulge in anal sex? Also, what is the best lube for anal sex? Are silicone lubes like Eros safe?
Have a great day! - Ralph*

Dear Ralph,

You sound kind of selfish. Anyhow, if you're going to write in to my column to discuss highly graphic sexual activity, please do not use the straightforward "shocking" words, but replace them with slang, so that people can read at work. For instance, read the following, which is your sentence but with the shocking words replaced:

*Do you happen to have stats on the percent of single women that **use Microsoft Excel** and that **Please back up the database at midnight, Ronnie**.*

There. See how much less offensive that was? Just make up words; I'll know what you mean. I only get about three basic types of question in this column.

Dear Reader:

Guess what! Téodor and Beef just popped in with some egg rolls and chilly Johannesburg Riesling! They remembered that it is the anniversary of my column! Man, sometimes it is good to have a friend in this world.

Okay, we're done with the vino and snacks and now I'm feelin' like a dog barkin' up a shit tree! Thanks for saving this column, fellas! Excellent.

Hello Ray. Hope to find you well. I have a small problem, and hopefully you have some answers. I am a student and painter at a college that has an active and close-knit art community. However, too many

people are obsessed with the idea that "serious" art is the only worthwhile way to go. I like cartoons and comics; I find a great deal of them to be not only smart and often funny, but very well drawn. At the risk of being never taken seriously again, I'd like to show them how cool it can be to make art for fun and read comics; and hopefully remove the bugs from a few rear ends at the same time. Should I perhaps invite everyone to create a book of stories together, or a comic book mural project or something ? What's a good way to get shakin' on this idea ?

Thanks very much, Lisa

Dear Lisa,

Eh, don't get too hung up on spreadin' the word about comics. I don't really think there are any good ones—at least, none that are better than watching a medium-quality TV show like Scrubs, Johnny and the Monster, or Power Night. Sure, I read like The Snodgrasses or whatever in my local paper every morning, but I usually can't tell you what the Snodgrasses did because it was usually just to choke on an Oreo because the phone rang at a surprising time. It ain't even that well drawn. In fact, I just looked in the paper and The Snodgrasses ain't even there anymore. Huh. Did I hear something about the cartoonist committing suicide? I forget. Maybe it was natural causes.

Anyhow, I would advise you against having much to do with comics if you want a good life.

Hi there Ray. I'm a bartender, and I love coming up with new drinks. Problem is, I have trouble thinking of catchy names. I was wondering if you could help me out with this one:

- *1 1/2 oz. Vodka*
- *1/2 oz. Triple Sec*
- *splash of Rose's Lime*
- *top with pineapple juice and orange soda*
- *garnish with a cherry*

Serve on ice in a tall collins glass, or serve it up in a chilled martini glass if you feel like (just add the orange soda after if you do this).

Definitely a drink that should be served with umbrellas and all that nonsense. Personally I'm more of a bourbon drinker, but this one's a hit with the ladies and I need a name for it. Any help would be appreciated.

Andrew, Long Beach

Dear Andrew,

A drink such as you describe would be named Papa Andy's Baja Party Urine.

In the strip where Pat and Nice Pete bust outta prison thanks to lockpicks in the smokes given to Pat by you, Nice Pete mentions a movie, "The Devils of Monte Carlo." I was wondering, is this a real movie? I imagine that it must be pretty cool, what with busting people outta prison with lockpicks hidden inside of cigarettes, and would very much like to see it, if it does in fact exist.

thanks, ivan.

Hi Ivan,

If you re-read [those strips](#) you'll notice that I actually have no idea about that movie. Just for kicks I went to look it up on the [Internet Movie Database](#) but I got sidetracked comparing Bosom Buddies co-stars Tom Hanks and Peter Scolari:

Tom Hanks	Peter Scolari
Hanks' film salaries to date top \$240,000,000	Peter is an accomplished juggler and is skilled in circus arts.

I, like all of us love downing a couple of bottles of vino [on] a friday evening and going out to partake in the night's festivities. However lately amidst my fun and good will I have found a few feelings of deep remorse upon waking the next morning. Even the odd shattered memory of being really rude to someone creeps in occasionally.

*Ray, are my days with the bottle numbered?
Sincerely, Stevo*

Dear Stevo,

Wow, two songs (sometimes I call a bottle a song) before even gettin' outta the house? Yeah, that's a problem. You're like Lyle. You know, Lyle wouldn't be such a bitter customer if he wasn't on a bender all these long years. One time we went camping and he broke all his fig vodka bottles after falling off a rock, and we had all gotten lost really bad about six seconds before that, so he didn't have a drink for like three days. At first he was pretty tough to be around, just sticking his finger right into our ribs while looking us straight in the eye, but then he laid down in a creek for about four hours and when he got up he was pretty introspective and helpful. It was weird to see the "baseline" Lyle, you know. It turns out he has parents and a sister and that when he was a kid he liked baseball. We actually had a pretty good conversation about maybe goin' clean for a while if we ever got found. Kind of a rootsy thing.

Long story short, we eventually wandered out onto a major road and came across a 7-11, where we all went buck-nuts and Lyle and I sheepishly met each other at the cash register with six-packs of Colt 45. Pretty soon he was back to bein' the Lyle who picks fights with guys who happen to be walking in front of him going the same direction.

I'm a senior in high school and have trouble making any relationship with a girl last longer than, say, a month. I know right now is not the best time for anything remotely long, I'm young and gotta live. Yet, it's baffling when girls who seem to be attracted by me suddenly start acting weird or stop calling. Although I try to be persistent, I usually give up. Last month my tremendously gay cousin (male) came down so we could go clubbing in Tijuana. He brought his best friend (hot, hot female), who happens to be straight. They're 22 and I just turned 18. I knew her before I hit puberty, and I didn't see her again until their trip here. We went to Porky's and danced the night away to sounds of 80s music and some indie rock. She took some xanax, and I drank many dos equis. We ended up doing it, but I was rather disappointed because she's such a cool girl and I enjoyed her company a lot, more than anyone I've met before, and she left the next morning. She came down again two weeks later and we did it again, although this time it was more intimate. In the morning we spoke more, albeit sober and we found each other to be really interesting. She

was really confident which can be intimidating, due to the age difference. My cousin and her often remarked about their sexual experiences, it was my third time, so I just sat there and listened. I felt uneasy, her promiscuity was easy for her to talk about, and hard for me to handle. I don't judge her by it but I like her. To top it all off, she gave me the nickname "little one," due to my age, and often writes to me. She's pretty tender, and horny. Is it all right to be intimidated? Should I try to date her if I am? I'm utterly confused, as you can probably see by the e-mail. Maybe you can help me clear my mind up. Should I persist with this one, even though she's infinitely more promiscuous? Or should I just forget about her. Maybe I should play catchup, wait a few years and begin dating her when I'm more experienced. What do you think is my best route?

Dear Anonymous,

It is never right to be intimidated by a horny lady. Try imagining that you are David Bowie when you're dealing with her, acting all like a polished gentleman but a very busy one, always dealing with limo rentals and getting fancy suits back from a trusted dry-cleaner (use your normal voice if any of this happens on the telephone, not David's voice). Make it up to you, not her. You've given the person you desire the upper hand, and the Thin White Duke would never do that. He would fly to France.

I have recently gotten a second job on weekends that requires me to be clean-shaven, or at least pretty close as part of the dress code, however I feel more confident with a little stubble and I find that the ladies prefer it (at least on me). I also find that if I go TOO long without shaving, I never develop a healthy beard but instead get unattractive stiff hairs like those of a tarantula (my father had the same problem). Can you recommend a product or process that will allow me to keep just a dusting of stubble without losing my job, letting down girls, and looking like Jeff Goldblum half-way through "The Fly?"
—Sincerely, Scruffy in Chicago

Dear Scruffy,

Back in the 80s I had this electric shaver called the "Miami DeVice" which left a perfectly even layer of stubble on your face, just like Don Johnson had. Man, remember how cool that guy was in that show? White canvas shoes with a rattan sole, loose white trousers, pale peach blazer, shooting his Lamborghini Countach through a movie screen-size plate glass window as Phil Collins ducked under a white leather sofa. Early INXS tunes (Listen Like Thieves era) would be playing on the stereo system, until Jan Hammer's intense music broke in over it all and the dudes had a shooting and kicking fight (which Don always won). Damn. God *dammit*.

Subject: sake tips (for John), attn: Ray's Place

I too live in MA, and sake's not that well-stocked here. If you can get near Boston, there are a few places; check the Reliable Market in Union Square. NY Chinatown has places too--just walk around. (I buy a bottle whenever I go to New York.)

For basic, fairly cheap brands, I recommend Momokawa (brewed in Seattle); it can be found for \$9-13/750ml. Try their Pearl sake with a nice plate of curry. I'm also partial to Tenzan ("Heaven's Mountain"); it comes from western Japan, and has a thick, almost meaty flavor. I usually see it selling for \$14-16/300ml. (These are all sakes that should be drunk cold.)
--George

John, also try just getting a chilled-up Heineken when you find yourself at sushi places. You usually get a little chilled mug.

Ray

I have two cats that are sisters, littermates actually. They have always been together and have very different personalities. Neko is very needy and snuggly. Mao is a little more distant. Not aloof like the cat stereotype, but just more comfortable not having to be all up in your grill all the time. Sometimes when they are getting very comfortable and snuggling up to each other, Neko will bite Mao on the neck and knead her back with her claws. Neko really gets into it and gets pretty rough. Mao sometimes doesn't seem to mind, but just seems a little annoyed. Is this some weird lesbian incest thing I should discourage? Mostly I'm just concerned that Mao isn't sticking up for herself and is letting Neko act out her fantasies because there are no other cats around. Mao is more than a little reserved as I mentioned above. She is actually slightly retarded and slow. Should I stand up for Mao since she obviously can't or won't or should I just leave them alone and let them work it out themselves?

Thank you for your time - Micah, Los Angeles

Dear Micah,

You know how when a human film production company is filming a "nature" video, they always let the crocodile eat the unsuspecting golfer or chicken or whatever? You shouldn't interrupt in nature's cycles. Eventually Neko will kill Mao and that is what is best for the gene pool.

My Advice Column for May 11, 2004

Hey people! Who wants to come to a party at my place? 11 Via Verde, Achewood Estates CA, 94526. 10pm, just come around the back. Don't worry about bringin' anything unless you think I won't have what you're really cravin', then I won't be insulted. I got a pallet of tri-tip and cold dry-marinated that funk with all kinds of onion powder and garlic powder and salt earlier today. Got like 230 baked potatoes all wrapped and ready, and some rad Bobby Flay mail order yam tamales. DJ Mephistopheles Nate will be spinning it 'til 3am, or whenever I catch him doin' coke off my nice glass picnic table, at which point I will hit him on the head with a shovel.

Come on, chochichachas!

--RAY--

Download the [theme to Ray's Place](#) - MP3, 981kb, by [MYCC](#)

I love my lady, but her family hates that she is dating a polar bear instead of another walrus. It gets her hella bummed out that they disapprove, and I don't know what to do. What would Ray Smuckles do? Did you ever get the hots for a lady dog or lady squirrel or something like that?
Nik, Alaska.

Dear Nik,

No, I have never wanted to get all animal kink on a dog. You got to understand, a dog is like a Neanderthal compared to regular animals. Dogs only have a very rudimentary "yelling" language and their only economy is loosely based on pooping and eating poop. It would be like if you, as a human, wanted to get romantic on, well, a dog. Dogs are that far down.

Anyhow, I don't think it's cute that you're pretending to be a polar bear. I've seen this "furry" community stuff before and I think you're all a bunch of creeps.

Hello Ray. You probably don't remember me, but I was the first person you ever gave advice to. I want to congratulate you on your recent anniversary of Ray's place as well as thank you for opening my eyes to the wonders of Ketel One. Without it, life would be much more difficult at times.

I send you this electronical letter not just for kudos, but also to ask a question. I have a number of friends who are, shall we say, less than enlightened. A few of them are downright racist. Is there any way to get them to see that they are being bigots without having them all gang up on me? Failing that, is it even possible to get them to see the problem in the first place?
Jack Rabbit

Dear Jack,

God, does racism bother me. Unfortunately it's kind of a "deep down" quality, whereby you can't really change a person from it in any easy way. What I would do would be to gradually disassociate yourself from your openly racist friends before they chase you down in their '57 Chevy Apache pickups and blow your brains out.

As of late, I've taken up smoking (Djarum Black Cloves to be precise). The problem is, me and all my family have been ragging on my mother to stop smoking. So am I being a straight-up hypocritical bastard? Or is it okay since everyone knows that 18 year olds live forever anyways?

Sincerely, Maybe A Bastard

Dear Maybe,

Man, does this tobacco debate ever come at a good time. There are some really strong ads on TV now kind of confronting everyone's sensibilities about smoking, basically straight-up showing a picture of a kid in front of a mural of his dad who died from smoking, etc. These kinds of ads are merciless and I usually find myself with a salty pearl or two collectin' in the corner of my eye afterwards.

You know what? I'm gonna quit smokin' today. Not too long ago I had kind of a cancer scare – lump in the throat, at the back – and I was sure I'd done myself in with my careless ways. Fortunately Dr. Andretti took a look at it and determined that I was just mildly allergic to some of the chemicals that they use in Altoids (I'm always poppin' the dang things). But anyway, before I saw the Doc I trolled long and deep through my heart of darkness. Picturin' Pat tyin' his tie as he was gettin' ready for my funeral. Thinkin' what it would be like to never walk on a sidewalk again, never indicate to a person what kind of sandwich I wanted again, just the most basic things we take for granted. I pictured this one busy street in our town, cars constantly flowing down it for decades after I died, never stopping, nothing changing. I had hella weary moments.

Damn. Thank you for writing in, brochicho. I'm gonna flush this pack of Marlboro Lights down the stinker, one by one, one flush for each cancer cock. I think you saved my life today. It's gonna be like a miniature Navy funeral. Maybe I'll go get a cap gun and fire one shot every time I flush another cig. Just fucking *meaningful* style.

Typically when I go out, I like to have a few drinks to loosen up before I hit the dance floor / chat up the ladies / what have you. Anyhow, I ended up getting a little bit of a heart problem and the doctor has asked me to lay off of the sauce for a while. I went out last Saturday for the first time since my new found sobriety, and I must say that I felt quite a bit out of my element. I did end up getting some pity sex, but I doubt I can work that angle for much longer. Any advice on how I can come up with some liquid courage without the liquid part?

Thanks, F-ing Sober

Dear Sober,

Man, I been in that boat before. A couple years back I had kind of a cancer scare (I was offerin' black logs, but fortunately Dr. Andretti was eventually able to determine that it was only due to eatin' too much Orange Flavor Chicken down at Emperor Ting's) so I voluntarily laid off the booze for a while. I'd go out to Radium, a kind of hot local dance club (stainless steel door with their name welded on, etc) and just observe the scene. I saw all kinds of people going through some kind of fake ceremony, creating their emotions based on the music and the drinks, and basically falling into some kind of MTV-sponsored booger trance (I don't know what that means). It felt pretty lame, so I went on over to Thick Burger and just ate a rad old hamburger with fries. It was so much more awesome than wiggling around near a chick and trying to create a situation based on her emotions. That is what I would advise to do (hamburgers).

*What's the deal with Todd? Has anybody tried to get him off the spank?
Cheers, Cory*

Dear Cory,

Todd had a pretty bad cancer scare a while back and he went off all the junk for a while. I think he ended up getting pretty aware that he was just a boring guy with nothing to show for his life and when Dr. Andretti cleared him, he started messing around with various drugs again pretty quick.

I can usually be pretty frank about Todd 'cause I know he can't read.

*Have you put a few inches into the waistline recently or is Roast Beef slimming down a little (does he possibly have an eating disorder?) or is it a bit of both or just my feeble imagination getting away on me?
Charlotte*

Dear Charlotte,

First of all, you should learn in life that you do not ask a person questions about their "increasing" weight. I guess this is pretty basic advice. Anyhow, I been gettin' rendered from some pretty bad angles lately. I been meanin' to talk to Chris about this. I look best straight on and like exactly from the side. I also have this really slammin' stretch-fit Calvin clubbin' shirt that he never draws me in. It has kind of those cap sleeves and silver stripes down the sides. Chris, you know the one I mean. The one I wanted to wear on [11/25/03](#).

Roast Beef probably is slimming...Jesus Christ, this ain't even an advice question! What I weigh is not "advice!" Man, fuck off, lady.

*In the strip where you guys leave Europe, you use Vidal Sassoon [sic] shampoo on your head; do cats use shampoo solely on their head, or do they use it all over their bodies since they have hair all over? If they do use it only for their head, is there a special kind of head-shampoo for only cats?
Thanks, Adam*

Dear Adam,

Cat hair is a pretty damn complicated subject, bein' as how you noted that we have it pretty much everywhere but our noses and eyes. Large areas of the coat are different from one another in terms of dryness, oiliness, dander, etc., so I personally use a regimen of six different Vidal Sassoon shampoo products, paired with six specially-matched conditioners that Loaneesha down at LaMonde day spa helped me figure out. All in all I figure I spend a good ninety five minutes in the shower each morning (what I like to call the "95"), but my coat is in way better shape than, say, Pat's or Roast Beef's. Pat just uses some crappy-drawers Pantene Pro V system that he thinks smells nice (actually it reminds him of some old girlfriend he is still hung up on), and Beef for god sakes just lathers his whole coat up with damn Ivory soap like he was in prison. I tried to get him a nice little Tresemmé starter system for Christmas one year but he took it back and exchanged it for like six pairs of nail clippers. Dude's weird.

The comic you mention did not show me shampooin' other parts of my body 'cause that ain't in my contract.

My Advice Column for May 18, 2004

Hey, people! Just a quick one before West Wing starts. Most of your questions were annoying this week so I cut it short.

Brochichabrohochos,

--RAY--

Download the [theme to Ray's Place](#) - MP3, 981kb, by [MYCC](#)

I'm 26 and married. We live in a small apartment that gets little light...it's cramped and dull. I work two jobs, and at night I like to get out. I feel claustrophobic in that tiny place, so I end up going to friends' houses and occasionally to a bar to hang with friends; of course I always invite my wife. She doesn't like going out as much, and gets annoyed with me. So I'm wondering if there's any magic answer to the going out issue...any cool one-on-one activities (besides the obvious ones) that will make the place more interesting, thus dispelling my wanderlust?

J in Atlanta

Dear J,

The problem sounds more complicated than what you state here. Your wife would like to go out if there were folks or activities she was interested in, but there ain't so she stays at home and cooks up a single serving of Law and Order with a dessert of Masturbate Pie. A lot of women stay at home at night in order to masturbate to Ice T, this ain't no kind of weird thing. Just let her stay at home and masturbate to fantasies of Ice T knocking on your apartment door all alone, just wearing his boxers and holding a bottle of Bacardi. Have a good time with your friends, let your woman masturbate to thoughts of Ice T. It's nature's way.

PS: Ice T's character on the show is named Odafein Tutuola, if you want to work that into your pillow talk.

Aight, out, *triple fingershaker*.

I need a bit of entertainment advice. When I'm on the air I'm going for this quirky, yet sexy angle. It seems to work except I'm getting a handful of stalkers who want to take me out for pizza (along [with] pet names used such as cutie pie and honey bear). Don't these guys know how to treat a lady like a lady? What do you suggest I do? Thanks Ray, and remember, I got your back.

Sultry Radio Vixen, San Francisco.

Dear Sultry Vixen,

OK, I got to explain to my readers that I cut out the first long area of your letter where you describe how you are a DJ for Live 105 in San Francisco and how you and me got to spend more afternoons in the sack together. It is some hot heavy that you got a gig at Live 105...for those of you who don't know, Live 105 plays alternative hits from the 70s, 80s and 90s, but they also spin the latest generation of alternative, you know, where a bunch of haircuts who are 20 play in a band that has the levels mixed essentially correctly and the lyrics are:

I'M A KID AND I'M KID KID YELLIN'
I'M KID KID YELLIN'
I'M A KID AND I'M KID KID YELLIN'
KID KID YELLIN' AT *YOU*

So sometimes when Live 105 does "flashback lunch" or whatever, I can get meaty bones on old Iggy or also on an old Blondie track. But when they play Kid Kid Yellin', I just feel like I have a big shit in my pants, and that Live 105 put the shit there with that type of tri-nozzle machine that fills up Twinkies. Do you feel me, Sultry Vixen?

Anyhow, on to your advice. As you get used to fame, you will learn not to communicate with your stalkers and never to acknowledge that you received their communications in the first place. That is the main thing. Also very important is that you send me current photos of yourself so that I can have my friends at Google remove similar photos from Google>Images. Wear something sexy in the photo so that we can remove particularly identifiable sexy photos of you. Furthermore, a lot of Internet stalkers are ass men, so make sure to show some ass so that we can eliminate the particular algorithms of your ass curves from the image database.

If there are any other photos you think we should have, please send them over and we'll try to find time to take them into evidence. You literally *can not* be too careful at this stage in the game.

Maybe you can help me understand a couple of things about Todd: First of all, is he still in Hell? And secondly, why is it that he was able to read the Friendly's menu down there?
Thank you, Jeff, Connecticut

Dear Jeff,

No, Todd ain't in hell anymore. He got out of there.

As to your second question: in hell, you can read. The Devil is in control there and he can just cause whatever abilities he wants.

Thanks for writing. Maybe you might want to start out with more of an easy comic such as *Friend Land* or *Friend!* next time.

Hey Ray, how come your friend Roast Beef always has that expressionless look on his face? Just curious!
Your pal, Tom

Dear Tom,

He doesn't, you damn idiot! Did you get fucked in the eyes? Jesus did I get a lot of stupid questions this week. Maybe I got to put spackle all over my monitor to keep you retards out of my face all the time. JESUS the internet was not supposed to be this way

My Advice Column for June 15, 2004

I been changin' over to mesquite coals lately, over from my usual propane...Dang, this action gives my grill a whole huge new flavor! It's kind of more of a hassle, you know, since mesquite is like dusty black burned-up wood that you have to deal with and light and stuff, but the flavor payoff is huge. I want to ask all the people who cook on grills this summer to fill their starter chimneys with mesquite charcoal instead of those crappy-drawers briquettes or propane. You'll thank me, and you'll send me an email.

Oh, and stop asking me questions about things that happen in the Achewood cartoon strip. That is not advice. That has nothing to do with the service I am trying to offer here. And no more suicide/relationship stuff! (I mean it this time!)

Mlextochichtlan,
--RAY--
ray@achewood.com

Download the [theme to Ray's Place](#) - MP3, 981kb, by [MYCC](#)

I like the wheels on your Escalade (pictured 11/4/2003). What did you consider when choosing your wheels? I'm looking at some Lorinsers for my car but I'm having a pretty hard time justifying \$1,500 per corner when the OEM wheels look sick anyway. Would you spend \$6k on wheels for a new car with perfectly good wheels, or would you put the money into other upgrades?
-Your Friendly Neighborhood Speed Demon

Dear Demon,

Thank you, that is a very good question. On my Escalade I got some hellas slimy Tanichi Kaiji-Series alloys, and I got a special in-dash console which I can use to control whether or not the rims keep spinning after I roll to a stop. The switch on the little control pad is made outta this slick red anodized aluminum, which is bored to reduce weight.

Anyhow, as far as your question goes, I had Lorinser trick out this fine black CL I kept last year. None of those Toys-R-Us roof wings or anything, but a lot of internal stuff and, yes, some mother-of-tasty wheels. If you ask a lot of guys they will tell you not to spend loot on wheels, but it's kind of like having a diamond stud through the side of your glans: you know it's there, and that it's awesome. If you're also in a CL then I'd advise you to drop for the RS-6 models, but if you're more in the SL scene then take that bitch to Maximum Prom a la the LM-6 style. If we're just talkin' SLK here, then I'll see you at the Hello Kitty outlet with your five year-old girlfriend, except I won't be there. *Nasty Tymezz*

My husband keeps buying salmon (steaks and fillets) and every time we make them, they always suck. I usually grill them and have tried many combinations of seasonings. I would like to give up, but I like to please my man in this area. Can you help with a good recipe?
Crazy about Ray, Minneapolis

Dear Crazy,

Man, the problem probably ain't with the recipe, it's probably with the fish. My research shows that 99% of the salmon folks buy and feed me is crappy and old, and is from a bad store like Safeway or Albertson's. Some people would buy salmon at the gas station if you let them. Jesus.

Anyhow, you are in Minneapolis, which is very far from all of the oceans (for instance, it is over 500 miles from the Pacific alone). It will be harder for you to get good salmon, but since it is a big city I bet you have some of those fancy gourmet stores, like where they have an olive bar and \$8 bottles of Belgian beer, etc. That's where you got to go for fish. Do not buy salmon at places that have it already wrapped up in plastic in a little foam tray because that means it is already terrible. It should have a little orange sticker on it that says TERRIBLE! with a big check mark next to it.

Anyhow, for good salmon recipes, here is my recipe: grill it, salt it and pepper it! That is all good salmon needs. I mean, maybe marinate it in a rosemary/garlic infused olive oil and serve it over fresh fava bean risotto, but definitely not anything more than that. That is all it should need. Maybe a sprinkling of fresh chives. That's it. That is all. Truffle oil. That about wraps it up. Glass of wine. Tie this one to the hood, it's done. Put it on the roof. Hi.

It's pretty clear from the recipes to be found at achewood.com that you and the rest of the boys appreciate good food, and especially good meat. So how much are you guys into meat alternatives? If you need some good ways to cook tofu I can point you to some excellent recipes.

-C, Internet

Dear C,

Why would we want meat alternatives if there is already meat? Seriously, I've tried this tofu business a hundred different ways from Sunday and it's always just soft and with no flavor except for whatever you wipe on it. If food ain't no good, then don't eat it! Don't like it just because it ain't animal! If you want to eat non-meat protein hunks then eat those fried mozzarella sticks, those are awesome. I really don't get this tofu thing. Have you had Emperor Flavor Pork? You would not want to eat plant poop if you had tried Emperor Flavor Pork.

Is there a preferred method of quitting [smoking] that you endorse?

-Gaijin

Dear Gaijin,

The method I used—that of flushing each cigarette one-by-one down the toilet, and shooting a pistol off each time—has worked pretty well. By creating a ceremony out of it I made it kind of a “life event,” and gunfire makes it seem extremely official. Every time I get a little hankerin’ for a smoke these days I just reach into my pocket and shoot my pistol straight into the air. I also think about the future.

One thing I thought of afterward was to put the pack of cigarettes under a tiny US flag. You can use the flag of your nation if you like this idea.

Ray, do you have a recipe for a really good coconut cream pie? I've never been able to find one; in fact, it's almost impossible to find a place that even makes it anymore. The only places that had good coconut cream pie were the little diners run by old Chinese couples, and since most of those diners have closed, it's like the recipe vanished with them. Is the coconut cream pie some sort of Chinese Diner trade secret, or something?

Tomas, Saskatchewan

Dear Tomas,

If you try to make a pie at home, you get disgusted by how much fat is in pie recipes and you end up making some janky old pie with less butter and cream than it said to use, and the end result is that your pie is janky (I mentioned this). Usually I will finish a meal with a citrus sorbet and a crisp shot of pussy-flavored vodka from Japan (oh man, have you *tried* this stuff? It is INSANE!!!).

Okay, I figure myself to be a pretty fine lady and I'm dealing with a pretty fine problem to match (you dig that?) I'm a junior in college and all year I've been super-close in the friend spectrum with a senior-guy. We're both drama majors, and we always wound up playing opposite each other in the romances - however, nothing flew as far as all that goes in the quote unquote real world.

Now he's headed off for bigger and better things (read: New York), and I'm stuck back at school. We're keeping in touch and all that good jazz, but here's my query - do I let him know how I feel or take the fact that we've been close for so long with no action as a sign that he doesn't feel the same way? Pleasantly Puzzled, in a small state.

Dear Puzzled,

I feel like I have answered this same letter a thousand times. Basically, when I go over all the answers I have given to similar letters, all I can say is that you should just do what you want and not ask a cat. If you like this guy then do something about it, don't send email to a cat. What the hell kind of solution is it to send email to a cat? What if George Bush had to make a huge decision about welfare, and he emailed me instead? I'd be all, "dude, you got to take care of some people in this world, don't be a bad man!" but then he wouldn't listen to me. He'd probably have the CIA put a poisoned tomato slice in my Boudin's sandwich. Believe me, I've talked with Lyle about a lot of stuff the government does, covert operations and such, and it ain't at ALL what the framers had in mind.

The advice in your columns is almost always very informative and/or amusing. I'm 24 and I'm graduating from college this June. I don't have any specific questions for you, but I was wondering if you could offer any general life advice for someone at the place I'm at in life.

*Take care, and I hope you get some decent questions this week,
T, Santa Cruz, CA*

Dear Travis,

Try not to drive too fast, man. Life is precious and should not be ruined with a driving accident.

My dog is a licker. He likes to get right up in my face and lay a couple cold ones on me. I appreciate his affection, but the other day I looked out the window and caught him eating his own poo. Now I can't help but feel I'm getting a dose of fecal fellatio every time he puckers up. What is a loving dog owner to do?
Bad Taste In Mouth, CA

Dear BTIM,

A little while back I talked about this idea a bit (dogs constantly eating 'dooks) and a lot of people have asked me advice about dogs constantly eating their own 'dooks ('dukes? hard to say). Anyhow, I did some science on this one and it turns out that after a dog eats some po-po matter, only a tiny residual amount remains in his mouth. The residue is similar to the amount of fly feces you would touch on basically any surface in the world, so you're not losing out on this deal. I guess a dog's mouth is just basically like a surface.

I have a problem with one of my two cats that I need your help with. Here's the story: We have two boy cats named Smokey and Hobbes. They've been happy cats for the five years we've had them. Recently, we got a new puppy (a Westie) and Hobbes stone-cold hates him (tail all-bushed out, all hissing and stuff). The weird thing is that we used to have a beagle (who passed away a year ago) that Hobbes loved - they would sleep together in a big pile and clean each other. Smokey likes the new puppy but Hobbes tries to kill him any time he comes near. Any tips on how to get Hobbes over this pissy behavior and back to his dog-loving (or at least dog tolerating) self?

Jason in MN

Dear Jason,

This situation is kind of like the middle east. One of the players is motherboard-designed to hate one of the other players, and that ain't gonna change at all ever, so you got to get rid of one of the dudes or just live with the strife. I know this is like pickin' a booger out of your nose that fortune-cookie says "HEY JASON! LIFE WILL BE HARD! HAHAAH AHHHAHA HAHAAH IT'S TRUE" but such is life. Your animals are incompatible.

Confidential to Rosie: I am not a good person to ask about that kind of stuff.

My Advice Column for August 2, 2004

Prorichas,

Man, has my life been improved by havin' Waterbury around! That dude has got my rhythm down and is always headin' me off at the pass with like a pork tenderloin sandwich or some golf lessons. That is the reason that I finally have the good peace of mind and clear noggin to finally answer all the questions you've been pilin' up in my inbox. I may run two of these this week, to get caught up.

Phorochochichixhltlan,
--RAY--

Download the [theme to Ray's Place](#) - MP3, 981kb, by [MYCC](#)

I'm having a veritable crisis of nomenclature and would be most delighted by your assistance. My friends call me 'Joe' because my name is Joseph (this sounds too biblical). My middle name is Abraham. Do you think I would be better served by something less "normal" or "average" than 'Joe'? Eg, nobody is really called Abe any more, I think that would be a cool thing to call myself. But, 'Ham might not be so cool. What do you say? Do you have a middle name?
Thanks bro, Joe

Dear Joe,

I would like to hear you called Dodighracha. I have been way into the indigenous names of the Aztec/Chicalpuohuatl people lately and I suggest that name based on your email. If you want to learn more about the Aztec/Chicalpuohuatl people then you can read Bill Bryson's latest book where he visits South America and talks about how much beer he drank there because his wife wasn't around. He's a pretty fun writer, we're talkin' about doing a book about the Andes together.

You totally left me hanging with the last Ray's place. Pussy-flavored vodka? Come ON! Where can I get some? Is there anyone in the US that is importing/distributing? Know of any good online distributors in Japan?

Anonymous, Internet

Oh, sorry dogg. My mistake. It was "69"-flavored vodka, not pussy-flavored. I don't know how I botched that one, as I completely knew what I was talking about, because the Sony dudes have sent me like six cases of **Kunnichi muzukasii "69"** over the last couple years. It tastes pretty much just like your basic 69-flavored vodka.

For a couple of years now, I have been noticing that my cat will never pass up an opportunity to lick a plastic bag when one is near her. She will on occasion sit for hours next to a bag slobbering all over it. Is this a normal thing for cats to do? Should I discourage said behavior?

-n cairns

Dear Cairns,

No, that is not normal. If you think about it, for someone to sit and slobber on a bag for a couple hours is definitely a bad sign. Imagine if you knew a person, and they were in a room with you, and they slobbered on a plastic bag for a few hours, like with their eyes wide open. How can you think that is normal. Please help your cat to get better.

*I'm 21 years old and relatively inexperienced when it comes to sex (I was raised in a religious, as in sex is bad type of religious, household). Lately I've been having trouble getting it up. And when I do, it sometimes goes soft without warning. It seems to be a new thing, and it appears to be a problem only when I'm trying to please my lady. And I'm very eager to do so, as she's very attractive. She's patient, as I'm willing to please in other ways, but man, it's getting me down! I'm not in the best of shape, but getting there with better diet and exercise, and I'm not on my meds (anti-depressants, which sometimes could screw with my drive) anymore. What could it be? Please help me out, Ray. Gratefully and anxiously awaiting your wise words,
C in LA*

Dear C.,

Yeah, I can see where you're coming from with the whole idea that Christian guilt is the reason your peter is suckin', but that might not be the only reason. Have you had a physical lately? You should get a physical. You might have prostate cancer. Most medical plans cover an annual physical. I get one once a month, just to play it safe. The doctor will put his finger into you, into your place, but it is kind of like a right of passage, like owning a Rolex or getting your first BMW. Lots of times us guys who get full physicals can share a good laugh about that part of the physical, usually after a round of golf, over drinks and steak.

Just wanted to point out that Salmon is a fresh water fish. It does not live in the oceans. It lives in fresh water streams about the US. Good advice regardless on telling the lady to get her fish at a quality store though.

Dear Anonymous,

I don't know that this is true. Maybe someone from the zoo could write in? I am pretty sure I have seen some educational videos where the salmon go from the ocean up into little creeks where they were born. Anyhow, readers, please stay tuned on whether salmon is from fresh or salt water.

*Being a cat who has also imbibed in several human drugs, I was wondering if you could tell me what catnip is like? Is it comparable to anything we humans can enjoy?
Andy, Denton, TX*

Dear Andy,

What do you mean, "human drugs"? Felines had invented booze and J's way before you and your ape-people even figured out that it hurt to hit a rock on your own head. My people have been high since the Mesozoic, dogg, and you'd be wise to admit that to yourself.

Catnip is sort of like Whip-Its, if you really must know.

I'm sure you have had many a lovers and from that experience have a stockpile of vocabulary to describe their body parts, being the sexy wordsmith you are. That's why I could not think of a single better person to ask this question to.

My friend and I where thinking of synonyms for vagina. P---y and c--t are too crude to say to your lover and vagina is too formal. I am looking for a word that could be screamed out during sex but will never offend any lady. Something classy that could be said over a glass of wine but also something arousing.

Sincerely, Thomas from Florida

Dear Thomas,

Yes, I know of which you speak. There is basically no word in the English lexicon which a man can say to a lady to describe her *toilet taco* in a casual, non-inflammatory manner. Isn't that odd? I believe it is because that particular region is so wholly misunderstood by the population at large. A man has his -ing -ong, and his -ock and his m-king stick, and that is all fine and good, but a lady is a between a barrel of pickles and a blind andouille when it comes time to refer to her Judas's Fatback in polite company. No one in the history of time has ever come up with a smooth way of referring to a lady's nethers, and I think there may be a very good reason for that. The reason is that ladies would rather you talked about other, less obvious things. Don't bark like a dog, dogg.

My Advice Column for August 23, 2004

Internet Friends,

Daaaaaamn, you Canadians are serious about your salmon! After last time's letter where we debated whether salmon are fresh- or saltwater fish, *over 65 Canadians* wrote in, explaining the whole thing, with identical facts. Basically, salmon are born in fresh water, migrate to salt water, then return to fresh water to spawn and bite the dust. They are what's known as *androtomous*. That means they ain't either fresh or salt water fish, but both!

Thank you to everyone who wrote in. It seems this case is closed. Salmon got the dual citizenship, all.

--RAY--

PS still catching up on old advice. Check me later.

Download the [theme to Ray's Place](#) - MP3, 981kb, by [MYCC](#)

I'm a pretty young guy (21) interested in meeting girls about the same age. My problem is that most of the girls I see around are pretty uninteresting in personality, intellect, or both. I'm kind of an intellectual guy, I read a lot and like to have actual discussions about topics, but I'm not really much for small talk. I know girls my age that are kind of the same way have to exist somewhere, but I really don't know where to find them. I've considered going to bars, clubs, coffeeshops, etc to try and meet people, but I'm also figuring it doesn't make a lot of sense for me to go looking for somebody like me in a place I wouldn't normally go. Any ideas?

-Too old for my age, Portland, OR

Dear Portland,

I want you to know that I studied your problem, and I wrote a poem about it. I hope you find it helpful, and also I hope that it rhymes.

To Portland.

*You are a guy
You are a secret key that cannot find a lock
Most locks have not read Hesse.*

*A lot of ladies have not read Siddhartha
Because they are sluts.
You have read Siddhartha.*

*You have read Siddhartha,
And you want ladies to know this.
They spread their mental legs as you name the books you have read.*

-RS

I was wondering if you could help me figure out the name for my radio show next semester. It is just two hours long once a week, but it is also Very Important. The demographic is quite small and primarily female, as we broadcast ten watts in the vertical and horizontal planes out of Wellesley College.
J.S., Internet

Dear J.S.,

Hm. If you have a tiny little radio show that just broadcasts to a small group of women then I would recommend calling the radio show Little Women. That is a book that I once almost read, from the school library. It was kind of green and brick shaped. Maybe this helps? Tiny little props, ladies.

I remember reading one of your strips from a long time ago where you were discussing the pain of your hemorrhoids and how it compared to the feeling of a bee stinging you on your gentleness. I showed it to my man and he thought it was so great that he even changed that to his computer wallpaper. This made me realize how hard it must be to endure such irritation so i told him to start soaking in epsom salt baths. I even read to him while he sat in there sometimes and we sipped on drinks quite often. I tried to turn it into an enjoyable time. I know this might not sound like the most romantic of experiences but his area did clear up rather quickly.

Maybe you already know the epsom salt trick but i want you to know that I am always here for you and would be more than willing to tend to your ailments at anytime. I think you are one sexy cat.
Lomie.

Dear Lomie,

Look, I don't have hemorrhoids, I just *acted* like I had hemorrhoids because that is what Chris said to do. Actors ain't the same people off-camera as they are on-camera, you know. Jeremy Irons is really funny and stupid, Meg Ryan is a Wiccan, and David Schwimmer is actually in a wheelchair. Has been since that car crash scene at the end of Breast Men went wrong in '96. He acts on Friends via the help of wires, computer imagery, and special jeans.

I'm in the process of starting a rock and roll band, and i want a real killer name. Something that will strike fear in the hearts of mere mortals, but won't scare off the girls. Any suggestions?
Anonymous, Internet

Dear Anonymous,

How about **The Trouble People?** (© 2001-2004 Ray Smuckles, not to be used without permission)

Hint letter to "Rosie": please try to keep it under seven pages when describing your problem. My readers don't have all decade. Have you heard of the single paragraph?

In a previous edition of your Advice Column, you mentioned that cheap booze risks damaging one's optic nerves. Is this true? I am an ex-college student with a meager income, and I don't want to damage my eyesight with cheap vodka.

Concerned Jersey Girl

Dear Jersey Girl,

Oh, I got to tell you. Yes, for sure it does. A few times back I mentioned this old wino [Punch Man](#) who I drank with in my early days. Dude would drink Listerine, would drink vinegar, would drink Antifreeze, just whatever. Pour it down the throat and let God decide, you know. Scary. I ran with him about a year and I could tell his vision was always gettin' worse by the way he stopped saying "gimme me one 'a them Pabst Ice" and instead would say things like "gimme me one 'a them...that...yeah, that looks good." It was sad, you know. Towards the end I would call out his name so he could recognize my voice and not start throwing bricks and bottles toward the sound of my footsteps. I hope this does not happen to you.

I would like to respond to your last column portion about names for a lady's genitalia. I'm sorry if you take offense to this, Ray, but I find that calling it a 'kitty' in sexual company and 'my center of gravity' in polite company works just fine.

I think 'kitty' works quite well on a private level, because it can imply naughtiness, sexiness, and cuteness at the same time - while also implying a small size at the same time (no lady I know likes to be told she has a gaping vaginal area, even if it's the truth). It's a polite word, it's a fun word, it's good for all.

Thanks, Classy Lady Apprentice

Dear CLA,

Thanks for writing in, I think "kitty" is a good suggestion. I take your point about ladies not wanting to feel like their junk is really huge, I hear that a lot in my line of business.

So, fellows! See how "kitty" works for you in your next situation when you're called upon to refer to the old pressure-bell. It sounds good to me, and I think it'll be really appreciated. Big Ups, CLA!

My Advice Column for September 2, 2004

Hey Chochachos!

I got me this fancy Jura espresso/coffee [machine](#), and I've been making some sweet coffee drinks lately! You just put fresh roasted beans in the top, press a button, and it grinds, packs, percolates, and cleans itself. It has dual frothers, a world time clock, a Bang & Olufsen chime, 24 karat gold plating, and its own URL so I can log into it from my room and get it started brewing. Sweet!

I Am Java Man,
--RAY--

Download the [theme to Ray's Place](#) - MP3, 981kb, by [MYCC](#)

Several years ago I was in a serious accident and had to have my left leg amputated right above the knee. The prosthetic device I've been using has served me well since then, but it's getting to be a bit long in the tooth. I'm also a bit more flush with cash than is normal for me, so I'm in not just in the market for a new leg, but for a new leg that says I got style.
Lord Nelson

Dear Lord Nelson,

Buy one that can hold an upside-down bottle of Jäger inside, with a little spigot that protrudes through the fake rubber skin above the ankle. No cop in the world is going to bug you for drinking out of your own leg.

Hope that helps.

I need some advice. I spend WAY too much time on the Internet., and it is interfering with how I live my life. There's a lot of stuff I want to get done, but I end up not doing any of it. Typically, I'll get home with plans to log on to check my email and then get going on other stuff. Once I'm online, I check the news, and some other sites I like, and then I start chatting with someone online. Before I know it, I've been emailing and chatting and surfing for hours, it's time to go to bed, and I haven't done anything else I wanted to do. How do I break this habit?
Thanks, "Can't Log Off in Northeast USA"

Dear CLONE-USA,

Heh, I can't spend too *little* time on the Internet! I know some people in IBM ads say that the Globalization of Friendship is the real deal, where like a small school child in Kansas can picture-chat with a small school child in Guongding Province, and the music is by John Williams, but I'm here to tell you that's all just dunkus. If you want to talk to your friend, ask him to come to your house! Give him a beer and shoot the breeze. If your friend can't come to your house, then ask him to plan a visit. Don't act like

ROTF LMFAO TTYL TTYL2 :) :P
is getting either of you anywhere.

Here's what you should do: use self-discipline. Set an egg timer for ten minutes or whatever. *Have some dignity.*

My mother has a terrible habit. Whenever there is a food in the house that can be easily divided in half (bagels, graham crackers, etc.) she will take only half of one, leaving the other half in the bag, often times never even eating the other half of the bagel. I have told her many times that this bugs me and have asked her many times to please only have half of an item if she plans on eating the other half soon after. Is this habit indicative of a larger problem? Does she continue eating only half of things out of spite for me? Is there any way for me to get her to stop?

Ivan, DE

Dear Ivan,

Why don't you eat the other half? That's all she's doing, is saving food for her offspring. Every animal in nature does that, it's a sign of love and care.

PS: Dude, don't rag on your mom. That is what a piece of shit does.

I know you're into cooking. How do you feel about people seasoning or otherwise altering food you've made for them? I just made some nice Vietnamese shrimp salad for the family, and for some reason my sister decided to go ahead and put tomatoes in it. I was actually kind of offended by this, as tomatoes are totally inappropriate to the cuisine, and if I thought they would have tasted good in there I would have put them in myself. Was I wrong to be upset?

No Tomatoes in Boston

Dear No Tomatoes,

Sometimes when you go to a fancy restaurant they do not have salt and pepper on the table, and you have to ask for it. It implies that they think their food is perfect, and "who are you to judge." When I see that I always call bullshit. I walk back into the kitchen, snatch the cook's little tub of salt, and give him the stink-eye. Sometimes I sucker-push him real hard on the shoulder so he has to regain his balance.

The fact of the matter is, all our mouths taste things slightly differently. If it made your sister happy to add tomatoes, then that's what serving people food is all about. Whenever we grill filets mignon at my place, Beef pours ketchup and A-1 all over his and barely chews, but I don't say anything, because I want the dude to be *happy*. Even if that means ruining an eighty dollar mail-order Kobe steak that I was on a two year waiting list for. He didn't even stay for Braveheart, because that made him *happy*.

Is there a polite way to tell someone they stink? I have a friend who stinks.

Casey, BC

P.S. My wife and I are expecting a child (a baby, actually) around New Years, and if it's a boy, we're going to name him after you! No joke! (If it is a girl, we will name her after Beef's girl, Molly.)

Dear Casey,

Yeah, stinkin' is a tough one. It's like, some guys actually think they're supposed to stink, to show that they just did a hard job or whatever. They kind of lord it over you, like it makes them "alpha" or something. Some guys don't care that they stink, they just stink because they're slobs and they eat cheese noodles all day. Either way, don't bother. They know, and they like it or don't care.

PS: Congrats on the kid. My full name is Raymond Quentin Smuckles, so just tack your family name on after that.

I would like some ideas on gifts that a gentleman such as yourself would dig. My boyfriend's birthday is coming up and I'd like to pick out something snazzy for him.
Kelli G.

Dear Kelli,

How very thoughtful of you! Depending on your price range, I suggest the following:

- New Gillette Mach 3 razor
- "The Champagne Room Comes To You." This is where you dress up as a dancer and you set up a little padded booth in the corner of his living room, complete with a little round table and tablecloth and a candle and some champagne in a bucket of ice. Then you sit and ask him questions about what he does for a living and touch his shirt and thigh a lot. Charge him \$150 for the champagne. This will drive him wild.

*** A Gentle Reminder ("Disclaimer"): This is advice from a cartoon cat, and should not be taken seriously. We are not responsible for anything you do based on what Ray says, or otherwise. Do not commit suicide or otherwise interrupt the lives of others. Continue on with your life as though you had never read this column. Erase your browser history. *Not for readers under 18 years of age.***

