

# Sexual Etiquette

*Public answers to private questions* BY WENDY DENNIS

## for the '90s



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BARRY BLITT

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**SEVERAL MONTHS AGO**

I set out to talk to a number of men and women on a theme that had been nagging at me. I sensed, partly from my own experience and partly from listening to those of others, that there was considerable confusion about the state of sexual relationships circa the end of a strange decade. So many people I knew, people in their 30s, 40s and beyond, were bewildered attempting to negotiate a terrain that had become almost lunar in its unfamiliarity. One thing was remarkably clear, however. If the sixties and seventies had been a *ménage à trois*, the eighties had turned out to be a *ménage à moi*. A lot of people, far too many it seemed, were lonely. Women complained there were no men and that the few around were scarred beyond redemption. Men complained the women

were embittered or desperate, and who knew what they wanted? What's more, dining out seemed to have replaced sex as everyone's favorite leisure activity.

If once it had been as simple as You're a man, I'm a woman, let's make love, it was no longer so. Feminism, for all its achievements, had left some detritus in its wake. There were no useful rules, and we'd long since abandoned the parents or priests who might have taught us new ones. It had been our dream that out of the anarchy instinctive rules would arise. What we got instead was the plague.

It was with all this in mind, then, that I went looking for some people to talk to. I found many individuals who were not only willing to talk, but eager to. There was, they told me, a crisis going on out there. Ours was a culture tired of loneli-

ness, yet inept at meeting; frightened of promiscuity, yet wary of commitment; strapped by conventions, yet longing for connection. Amid all the uncertainty, however, in their voices I heard something else, something that sounded like hope. It was not the innocent hope of another time, but a tentative one tempered by age and experience, by wisdom and irony and humor. The consensus was that we needed some new rules, for we were saddled with ones that no longer worked. What emerged from our discussions is what follows: a sexual etiquette for tenuous times.

**How do you bring up the condom issue or the fact that you have something catching?**

According to statistical analysts A. C. Nielsen of Canada Ltd., condom sales

jumped by six per cent in Canada during 1988. However, while the prospect of becoming infected with a nasty pox or an evil virus has spooked people generally, and more are buying condoms, with some exceptions there is still a fairly casual attitude toward using them.

Women are usually the ones to bring up the "C" word, just as they are usually the ones to worry about birth control. Since, statistically, it is easier for a woman to contract AIDS from a man than vice versa, it's not surprising that women are

ing the condom. In fact, they're still taking a risk. According to Mark Whitehead, a co-ordinator of the Talking Sex project run by the AIDS Committee of Toronto, if individuals decide to take risks, they should at least be informed. Whitehead explains that since the incubation period for AIDS can be a decade, every time you have sex with a new partner, you're not only having sex with that person but with all his or her lovers for the past ten years. So involvement in a monogamous relationship now is by no means sufficient

reason to assume there's no risk. Also, since having sex with a hundred uninfected partners is less chancy than having sex a hundred times with only one who's *infected*, the degree to which your partner has been promiscuous is not necessarily a reliable barometer of risk. We're talking Russian roulette here. As well, even an AIDS test can fail to pick up certain strains of the virus, and is only as good as the day it was taken.

On a cheerier note, however, after many discussions at a national AIDS sym-



taking the whole issue a little more seriously. If asked, however, men seem willing to go along with using one, although they sometimes kvetch. Some still think it's silly to use a condom, some are grossly misinformed ("But I'm not Haitian or an intravenous drug user"), while the true Neanderthals think their sexuality is being called into question. Approaches to raising the issue vary. There's the pose-questions-at-bedside method: "Have you ever slept with a hooker or bisexual?" If the answer is "Not to the best of my knowledge," the inquisitors proceed. Some use a humorous strategy and lead with, "Well, John, so tell me, have you slept with thousands of women in the past five years?" Others just hand the condom over. If the guy whines, he's history.

People seem to feel, however, that once they get to know their partners better and are fairly sure they haven't been overly promiscuous, they can dispense with us-

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posium last year, the AIDS Committee of Toronto decided to downgrade oral sex from a high-risk to a low-risk activity. Apparently, there has not been a single documented case in Canada (although France and the U.S. have each reported one case) in which oral sex can be accused of being the culprit responsible for transmission of the virus. So, let us all raise our glasses in a toast to the AIDS Committee of Toronto and to AIDS researchers in general for that lovely bit of news.

On the subject of who should carry the condoms, there is mixed opinion. "I always think the guy should bring the condom," says one man whose sense of chivalry is clearly not dead. "Girls brought the diaphragm and the pill, didn't they? So guys bring the condom. It just seems to make sense. Protect your own organ." But some women fear that if they've stockpiled condoms, their partners will think they've been presumptuous about expect-

ing to have sex. "Sure it's presumptuous," he goes on, "but presumption in sexuality is flattering, don't you think? I mean, she brought one, it's just so nice. I feel targeted." However, be advised that timing is all. One woman on a first date at Fenton's Garden chose the moment when the brandies were being brought to reach across the table and press two condoms into her date's hand. Not only did he find this gesture outrageously forward on a first meeting, the fact that she handed over *two* immediately inspired performance anxiety.



To alleviate the pressure of raising this delicate subject, one man wryly suggests that everybody should keep condoms around all the time. That way he could say, "Oh my God, darling, I've dropped my condom. Do you have yours? No? Well maybe we could stretch your diaphragm then."

Despite the big media scare a few years ago that predicted we'd all be having sex using rubber dams and sterile gloves, there's no evidence to suggest this prediction has come true. One perhaps overly cautious gentleman resorted to two condoms and a Band-Aid when his herpes was acting up, but that was an isolated event. Telling a prospective partner you have something yucky down there is unquestionably the best policy, but this can lead to some hilarious and dreadful situations, so it's best to approach the moment of truth with a sense of humor. One woman who hadn't had sex in months reports

she was poised for a first roll in the hay with a guy she found exceedingly sexy, when he declared he'd like to fool around but there was something he had to tell her. Since his tone was ominous, she feared he'd had his parts shot off in a war. Please God, she prayed, let him have a dick. As it turned out, it was just herpes. Then, just to make sure it was currently inactive, he got up and began inspecting his equipment from every conceivable angle under the hall light. "I don't know how we ever managed to get it on after that," she giggles, "but we did."

#### Should a man say he'll call if he doesn't intend to?

No No No, say women en masse, voices raised in exasperated chorus. A thousand times no. Here we have one of the last archaic rituals of our time. What for men is a flip remark tossed off casually at evening's end is for women a fiend from hell. Let's kill the beast, they cry. Wring its neck. It drives us crazy. . . . Not to mention it wreaks havoc in our lives. We know we're supposed to be above this sort of thing by now, but we're not. We wait by the phone, jump every time it rings, rearrange our days in expectation of The Call. We stare at the phone, take it off the hook when we take a shower, wonder if there's trouble on the line, hear the taunting, insolent dial tone, then smash the receiver down lest Himself is, at that very instant, hitting the final digit. Rrrring. We must stay calm, now. Rrrring. Let it ring at least twice. Rrrring. Answer nonchalantly. But it is only a girlfriend wanting to know, "Has he called?" We know when you say you'll call you could be lying, and we know when you say, "I'll talk to you," you're lying for sure. But trust us, it would be easier if you just said, "Thanks, had a lovely evening." That lie we can take. No need to rush in to fill the dead air at the end of a date with those two malevolent words. All we want to know is if you're on the list or off. And, since we're on the subject, where do you get off assuming that we always want you to call? Ha! That's a rich one. Some of you we wouldn't date again if our lives depended on it. In that case you could at least have the good grace to call, since you threatened to, so we can turn you down.

#### What should a woman do if a man has equipment failure?

This debilitating little problem is a lot more prevalent than most men think, to which any woman can attest. Perhaps it's best to begin with what a woman should never do. Laughing and pointing are ill-advised, as is sobbing or getting angry and shouting at it. Making reassuring noises and telling your partner there's more to

sex than penetration, like cuddling for instance, is probably the best tactic, and since it also happens to be the truth, it's doubly advisable. No man, of course, will believe you. "You're probably so self-absorbed at that point," says one who'd been there (as all the men had, at one time or another), "that even reassuring noises won't make you feel all right, but it's the best a woman can do in a touchy situation." Some guys even say they'd appreciate being drawn into a discussion about it, while others prefer that a woman just say, "Listen, it's no big deal," and change the subject. For the most sensible advice on handling the situation, we must turn to Cynthia Heimel and her *Sex Tips for Girls*:

. . . Impotence is one hell of a note. But one must keep one's sense of humor. One mustn't get rattled or impatient. What one must not do, no matter what, is to keep kneading the penis as if one were preparing dinner rolls. . . . This is an excruciating moment for a man. . . . Maybe he'll eventually get it up, maybe he won't. First night impotence is a widespread phenomenon, and nothing much to worry about.

#### It's sheer folly, isn't it, to be honest with the opposite sex?

I know this is going to sound bizarre, but if you actually like someone, it's probably a good idea to say so, and if you'd prefer to take a hike, it's probably a good idea to say why. Tell the truth? I hear you ask. My, what a novel idea! Perhaps so, but guessing games are taxing and nervous-making, and God knows we all have enough on our plates. You know the scenario: she's staring at an empty datebook but pretends she's madly busy, and he's playing it cool or she'll get the wrong idea. "We're all too self-conscious about this whole dance," says one gentleman in his 30s who is smart, successful, sought-after and single. "We think we can manufacture something better than the truth, but that's a strange assumption. The more boundaries we can break down around dating, I think, the happier we'll be."

#### Is it OK to go all the way on the first date?

Well, here we have a radical change from the way things used to be. Though you may want to partake on the first date, chances are if you do (both men and women take note here), you probably won't be respected in the morning. People seem to savor that delicious period of mystery, flirtation and pursuit more these days, the period our parents called courtship and romance. Opinion varied on exactly how long that state should last (I heard suggestions of anywhere from half-a-dozen

dates to three months). Girls were quick to heap scorn on guys who figure they're entitled to it, if not by the first date, then most certainly by the second. But they were equally contemptuous of women who expect a man to come across right away. Men were also taking things more slowly than they once had, having left behind their urgency to bed the whole female race. I heard "It's better to wait and get to know the person first" enough times to conclude that sex within the context of intimacy is making a strong comeback.

A corollary to this question is the issue of whether the one-night stand has become a thing of the past. Not exactly, but I must report that this once venerable institution is no longer de rigueur. For many people approaching middle age, the interest of sleeping with someone they're never going to see again seems to have vanished. Perhaps it's because they're old enough now to mentally fast-forward the event to its conclusion and know that it is less likely to be cathartic or thrilling than merely empty. One man felt that, as long as one took the necessary precautions, promiscuity was "a charming act and quite novel, full of insights one rarely perceives any other way," but his view was atypical.

#### What do women hate in bed?

Numero Uno on the list is the guy who finishes, rolls over and falls asleep, although the guy who gives two perfunctory kisses and then penetrates runs an exceedingly close second. This approach is not to be confused with up-against-the-wall sex, for which a fair number of women have a distinct fondness. Sometimes the occasion simply demands dispensing with the preliminaries. What's objectionable to women is the man whose repertoire never includes foreplay, thus leaving her with the distasteful feeling that he's merely masturbating inside her.

Second runner-up is the fellow who clocks his partner's climax, grilling her every few minutes about whether she's come yet, as if he's her coach for the Orgasm Olympics, and she's going for Gold. And runner-up Number Three—we girls can set our watches by this type—is the one who gazes dreamily into our eyes and asks, "Am I the best?" (Invariably the one who has to ask, isn't.)

Every woman knows it is a truism that there are two things a man can do under any circumstances: one is watch the news, and the other is fall asleep after sex. "Is there some biological reason why men fall asleep right after sex? Is there some scientific explanation that would make me feel better?" one woman asked. Sorry guys, I know you're hoping to read this next section aloud to your wives but I must report there appears to be no physiological rea-

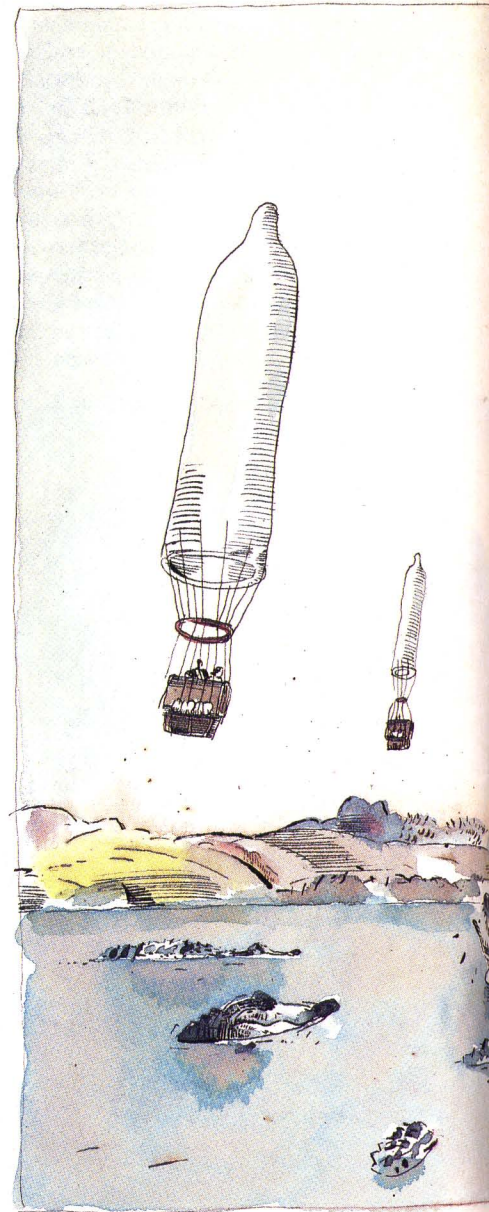
son why a man should be more tired after having sex than a woman. It's just ill-mannered, acquired behavior—satisfy yourself and then head for La La Land. Once, long ago, there was the vitalist physiology theory, which held that sperm nourished the brain, and when a man had an orgasm he was losing his vital fluid and brain power. However, this insidious little piece of work (that is, if you masturbate continually, you will not only go blind and get warts, you will also become retarded) has been completely unsubstantiated by medical evidence. So, too, is the myth that a male orgasm triggers the release of a sleep-inducing hormone. Since I talked to a lot of men and women who seemed remarkably intelligent and articulate, and who admitted to doing a fair bit of wanking, and to being perky as all get-out afterward, I'd have to concur that this theory holds no water at all. Several sex educators and medical experts polled agreed that while orgasms should be conducive to sleep, they should be equally so for both partners. Women, demanding harriidans that they are, like to climax too; chances are if a woman is lying there owl-like after sex, she hasn't (even if she screamed and woke the neighbors).

The sexual brontosaurus is rare but not, alas, extinct. This is the guy who every women's studies course issued warnings against. Usually, these men inspire reactions ranging from silent contempt to open vilification, and you can be sure his name goes out on the female tom-toms almost as soon as he's zipped himself up. The brontosaurus's idea of lovemaking is to rip his partner's clothes off, hop on, do his business, grunt several times, then hop off. He rarely knows how to kiss, undress, fondle a woman, or find her relevant parts. It's unlikely he'll perform oral sex, although he appears to have no objection to receiving it. Despite the fact he is probably the lousiest lay the woman has ever encountered, he thinks of himself as a real swordsman simply because he can get it up and keep it up. If a woman meets this man she owes it to him and to womankind in general to show him gently and tactfully what he might do to reform, to give him a chance to, and then, if he shows no willingness, to throw him unceremoniously out of her bed.

One final rule of thumb: If you are male, don't, under any circumstances, talk about your penis in the third person. One man tenderly cupped his flaccid organ after a first sexual encounter and explained to his partner, "He's tired now." She thought he was deranged.

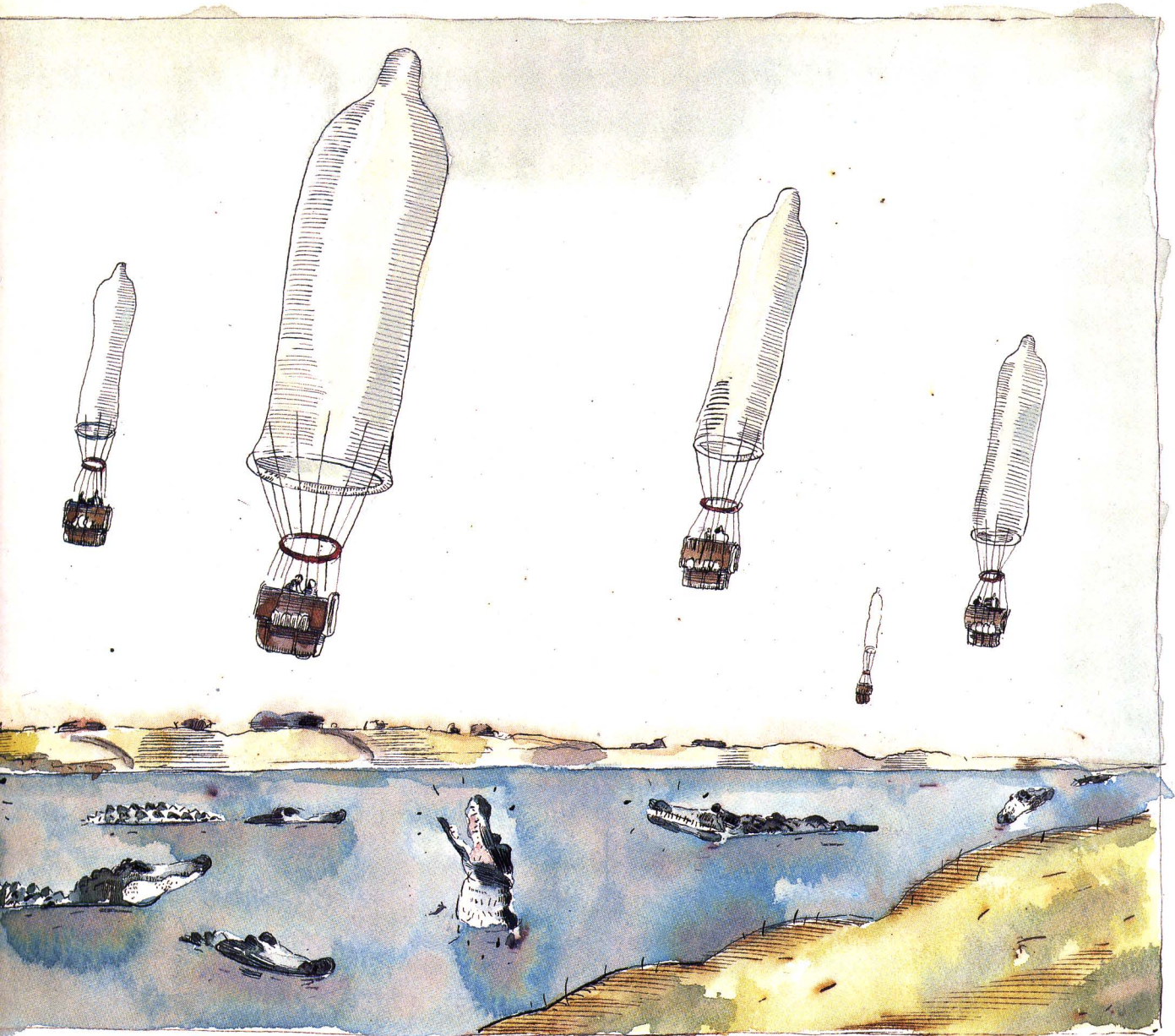
#### What do men hate in bed?

Men are either far less picky than women about what's unacceptable in the sack, or



they've been, on the whole, luckier. In any event, the men I interviewed, at least, were not nearly as vocal in their complaints. There were several recurrent themes, however, so here's a list of the Top Ten most annoying things a woman can do in bed:

- 1) Ask if it's in yet.
- 2) Expect a man to stay poised on his elbows indefinitely after he's made love.
- 3) Run to the washroom to make up before he wakes up in the morning.
- 4) Run to the washroom to clean up right afterward.
- 5) Rattle off a list of ordained rules like a drill sergeant.
- 6) Fake an orgasm.
- 7) Say, "I'm not sure what's wrong, I always got off with my last lover."
- 8) Lie there as if there's a flag over your head.
- 9) Insist that sex be performed in a bed, at the same appointed hour of the day, or af-



ter the last dish has been put away.  
10) Refuse to swallow.

**What are the conventions of the extramarital affair?**

The etiquette of the extramarital affair is byzantine at best. Almost everybody—men and women—admitted to having had a fling with a married person at one time or another. Women don't generally object to the married man who's up-front about his sleazoid intentions. They are contemptuous, however, of the cowards who pretend they're not married, then show up at the door with the baby seat in the car or sheepishly confess, "To tell you the truth, sex isn't that great at home." One of the worst offenders in this area, and the one for whom women reserve the endearment "scumbag," is the bon vivant who invites them merrily to lunch, neglecting to mention that he happens to have a wife. This tactic is common enough

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these days to have become a cliché, but it so incenses some women that they're prompted to return the volley. If deep background work reveals their suitor to have been less than forthcoming about his marital status, they simply call him at home and leave a message with his mate. "Tell him I'd love to lunch," they chirp gaily, "but I don't do mistress."

Many women think it's a real knee-slapper for a woman to delude herself that she'll be able to keep an affair in perspective. (On the whole, men seemed more able to compartmentalize their illicit relationships than women over the long haul.) While no one admitted to the impulse to boil a rabbit à la Glenn Close in *Fatal Attraction*, the sentiments of this woman were common: "It's all very exciting at first, but sooner or later the whole thing gets complicated and slimy."

Some single men who'd had affairs with married/*Continued on page 48*

women found them eternally grateful, the women's husbands having lost interest in them sexually aeons ago. (Yes, gentlemen, your wives are doing it too. In fact, my research led me to suspect that the shellacking Shere Hite took a year ago for declaring in her book *Women and Love* that seventy per cent of the women she interviewed who had been married five years or more were having extramarital affairs, and seventy-six per cent of those felt not a whit of guilt about their infidelity, was entirely unfair.)

Not all single men were fans of *The Affair*, however: "There's enough lying in the weeds out there to come out and ruin your day already," said one man. About the only people who seemed to profit from the experience over time were married men, who had somehow managed, through an amazing leap of self-deception, to rationalize their lying, situational morality, cowardice and lack of honor toward two women.

#### **Should a woman ask a man out?**

Let me share with you the words of a straight-shooting litigation lawyer who spends her days in gladiatorial combat, but who would clearly rather face the Supreme Court than ask a man out: "We already walk around like vulnerable creatures thinking our legs aren't long enough, our thighs are too big," she says. "To have to put ourselves on the line and admit we find someone attractive is horrifying. I know men do it all the time, but they must get used to rejection, don't they?" Ah well dear, since you ask, no, actually they don't. Ladies, start your engines. Every single man I interviewed admitted to getting very nervous calling a girl up to ask for a date, even today, and all said they would not only be delighted if a woman asked them out, they'd be flattered and relieved. And, while a call from a woman, especially if it's the wrong one, might catch them a little off guard, and they are less schooled than women at knowing how to say no gracefully, they'd respect her, at the very least, for trying. What rattles them is the girl who can't take a hint that they're just not interested, and tries to nail down a date in 1992. Here we girls have been thinking boys just stand around while female creatures tumble out of the trees at them, when, in fact, they claim they get shot down a lot of the time, and, surprise, surprise, rejection isn't any easier to take at 40 than it was at 15. This is what happens: they meet us at a party, and they want to call, have every intention of calling, but they get scared. Then they get confused. Then they start second-guessing themselves. What if we

didn't like them? What if they misinterpreted our interest? What if, horror of horrors, we say no? Then, good old-fashioned inertia takes over and they watch Letterman instead. Apparently some women out there have resorted to mailing or faxing letters of intent. This approach is gentler since it gives the man a chance to reflect on how he wants to respond.

#### **What's the best strategy for getting through a blind date?**

Until two years ago, my 32-year-old sister was the consummate single woman of the eighties. She had a glamorous career, a room at the best hotels, an enviable expense account, a drawerful of shoulder pads and an erratic history of blind dates with psychopaths. Then my mother fixed her up on a blind date with the man of her dreams, whereupon she promptly fell madly in love and got married. (My mother, if anyone's interested, is in the book.)

One happy ending notwithstanding, there are several scarred veterans of the blind date, both male and female, who suggest several rules with which to proceed on one, the better to avoid those excruciating moments with a horrible mismatch, moments one man describes as akin to "picking nettles with your bare hands."

- 1) Just because someone is your friend, never assume that person has the ability to set you up with the right person. "It's frightening, and sometimes downright insulting," one guy told me, "to see what someone else's choice for you is." This means never release your number without a high recommendation from at least two sources.
- 2) Always arrive with your own transportation or the means to purchase it in an emergency.
- 3) Apply sound principles of time management to the blind date whenever possible. Meet for a drink in a bar near a theatre where a movie is playing you're dying to see. That way, if two coolies are required to carry the conversation, you can casually suggest catching a flick so the night is not a total write-off. One particularly practical type even got one of her blind dates to accompany her to the dry cleaner's and *The Kitchen Table*, so she at least managed to salvage a dreadful evening by getting a few chores done. (Advise this *modus operandi* only under the most gruesome circumstances.)
- 5) Go out only as a couple. Why subject yourself to the microscopic and prurient interest of others who will elbow you every five minutes to find out how it's going?
- 6) Do not, repeat do not, agree to meet for dinner. Why risk suffering the indignity

of several hours in the company of a person who may turn out to be a spectacularly repulsive excuse for a human being?

### What is the protocol of the postcoital cigarette?

Since pleasures of the flesh have taken a hefty beating this decade, it hardly seems fair that one of the last truly satisfying experiences—the postcoital cigarette—should be ruined too, but there it is. Apparently smoking has become just as much of a no-no in bed as it has become out of bed. So, before you reach for the pack of smokes and take that first delicious postcoital drag, you'd better check it out with your partner, who may think you're such a social leper that you're unlikely to get lucky again. Some have resorted to puffing away in the john, but a clandestine cigarette just isn't the same; if there's no mouthwash handy, it could be the death knell of the relationship. One man said he was disgusted when a charming woman to whom he had made passionate love the night before lit up a cigarette first thing in the morning, even before brushing her teeth. On the other hand, it's entirely possible that your partner is dying for a smoke too, but is too embarrassed to raise the issue, since smoking is now considered so passé.

### What's the decorum of applying/inserting birth control devices?

Anything goes here, it really just depends on your personal style. Some women prefer to excuse themselves to the washroom; men, being somewhat less self-conscious about their private parts, usually just go ahead and whip the condom on in front of whoever happens to be there. If you're a free enough spirit to do the deed in front of your partner, however, be prepared for the worst. The condom may get surly about going on, and diaphragms slathered with spermicidal jelly have been known, in one case at least, to pop out of slippery hands, sail like a Frisbee across the room and stick to the ceiling.

### How do you get your partner interested in sex again?

A common lament among dual-career couples these days is that they have to put "have sex" in their Day-Timers, or they're too wrecked to remember to do it. Only REAL women, it seems, have time to wait at the door in Saran Wrap. The best way to inject a thrill into married sex is to treat the encounter as an affair. Here's my favorite success story: he had always dreamed of a nooner; for his 40th birthday, she told his secretary to clear his afternoon and picked him up at the office at

12. Then she drove to the Seahorse Motel, on the Lake Shore, where she unpacked a little "whore's kit" of bubble bath, a couple of joints, various jellies, unguents and motorized devices. After an extended bubble bath à deux, they switched on the water bed and prepared to indulge, at which point he turned to her with a leering look and murmured, "OK, honey, let's put whitecaps on this sucker!" A good time was had by all.

### Is it advisable to tell a new partner you're nervous because you haven't done it for an age?

Celibacy for long periods, for men and women, has become a way of life, and not necessarily because of AIDS, but rather because people are finding it so difficult to meet one another. Consequently, Toronto is a city of wankers. One delightfully candid 32-year-old admits that, for a while, he considered beating off as regular a routine as brushing his teeth. However, he says he doesn't do it so much any more. "It got to the point," he says, "where I was getting so goddamned self-sufficient, I thought if I keep doing this for myself too, I'll never have to go out!" Alas, too true. Celibate periods ranged anywhere from a few months to two years, and we're talking about extremely handsome men and women here, not unattractive by anyone's standards. All this abstention has inspired dread and fear in both sexes about the next time they actually do manage to make love. Will I still know how? they wonder. Will I come too fast? And so on. Those who have been there and have lived to tell the tale claim that sex is a lot like riding a bike, and the knack comes back as soon as you hop on. If you're nervous, it's probably a good idea to tell your partner why, because chances are your partner hasn't done it for an age either.

### Should a woman make the first sexual move?

Women seem to be taking more of the sexual lead these days, mainly because if they're lucky enough to encounter a man at all, they're encountering ones who are reluctant to hop in the sack. And not because of AIDS. Many are nervous about giving the woman the wrong idea, as in, She'll go and fall in love with me and then I'll really have a problem on my hands. What these men fail to understand is that the woman may simply be horny and want to do it just because, well, you know, it's fun. One woman became so exasperated trying to talk her date into bed she finally just said, "Look, put out or get out." This approach is not likely to put the man in a highly erotic mood, however. Another woman tried this approach: "Listen, Jake, I'm tired, I'm drunk and I'm

horny." He eventually came across.

If the man is satisfied that the woman is in it for reasons as base as his own, and if he finds her attractive, then he usually cheers up immensely. The only time most men say they're uncomfortable with a sexually aggressive woman is when they're not aroused by her. One woman did report on a lover who'd tell her testily, whenever she was forward, that he liked to be in the driver's seat. However, she says, he was no Mario Andretti.

### How do you let your partner know what you want in bed?

These days many individuals are simply asking, tactfully and gradually, for what they want. Save the kinky stuff until you get to know your partner better, as announcing, "I love bestiality. Wanna have a go?" is a little scary right off the top. There are a fair number of women, apparently, who aren't altogether clear about what they want, with the result that there are a fair number of confused men. One gentleman summed up the issue nicely: "If someone is willing to invite you to her bed, there's a tremendous compliment there for a man. It takes a long time to get to know someone sexually, so for me, love is a process, a series of stages. If her attitude is playful and adventurous, it works better. If you try to be a sexual superstar, it won't work. Whatever the needs, for either partner, I'd recommend communicating about them."

### When is it OK to say "I love you"?

When that's how you feel.

### What's cricket on a date?

Let's get this straight right now. There is not anyone who actually likes dating. And why should they? Dating is torture. Dating is the modern-day equivalent of being stretched on the rack or having your fingernails pulled out. After discussing the misery of dating with several victims who had actually managed to go out on one, I've come to the conclusion that our generation suffers from dating ennui. The next time you're on a date, I recommend reaching across the table and asking your consort whether you can both forgo the stupid small talk and say something real. You'll probably win his or her undying admiration and respect. ■

ALL YOU NEED  
IS A LITTLE PULL

Pull out and save  
the *Cars* supplement,  
opposite

