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- ▶ Meet Your Match
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- ▶ Getting Personal
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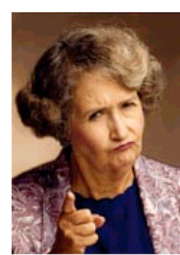


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**Agony Auntie**  
**Liz and Larry and Auntie Ag and Toddie**  
 page 1 of 1



Dear Auntie Ag,

I never thought I'd find myself in this situation but I'm 34 and I've got this young guy, and I mean 15 years younger than me, who's determined to progress our relationship. I've known him for about 3 months through a group of friends. We get on really well and we've flirted a lot whenever we were together but I never thought we'd ever take it this far.

We've slept together several times and now he's dead keen to do the full on relationship thing. I'm confused and my friends are cracking the cradle snatcher jokes. I'm trying to be objective about this and work through it but no matter how I look at it, I keep seeing myself through everyone else's eyes instead of my own. To them, I think we're more Liz Taylor and Larry Fortensky, than Heather Graham and Heath Ledger. I never dreamed I'd be interested in a guy 15 years' my junior but he's more stimulating, intelligent, and compassionate than most men I've met my age.

I'm not sure I can go through with it knowing how people feel. It's all very well to say forget other people's opinions, do your own thing blah blah, but my friends and family are so important to me. I'm exhausted Auntie, give me your best, or worst. Whatever. I'm ready for it.

**Signed, Liz and Larry, VIC.**

**My Dear Tiz,**

(Because you are in a Tiz aren't you) you're struggling with the morals of a woman who spans two generations; you spent childhood adopting the pre-war morals of your parents and your adolescence telling them to stuff it as a Gen Xer. You've sipped the New Age nectar my dear but not enough to get pissed and abandon yourself.

I've been canoodling with a fabulous lug of loin for some months now named Todd. Todd is 20 years younger than I and I'm sharing this with you dear because it strikes a chord with me in regions I usually address after dark. Oh yes, after theLounge has gone to bed, your Auntie Ag turns into a high priestess of prey. Make no mistake Tiz, if you're fortunate enough to attract the attentions of an adoring young man when your prime options are sniled divorcees with children, wilted hearts or



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twisted expectations of a woman's role in their lives, don't question it. He is most certainly your Heathcliff, just so long as he's not my Toddie.

Tell me something, when your parents told you not to sleep with a man until you were married, did you listen? When your friends told you to ignore that deliriously drunk Italian stallion in the body shirt at that party when you'd straddled nothing more exciting than your bicycle in under a year, did you take heed? And does the notion of waiting for Mr Right hold the same appeal for you at 34 as it did at 24? Hmm? (Todd, stop. Auntie's not finished with Tizzie yet. Put the whip down.) Sorry dear. He can be a beast but Auntie doesn't mind an animal. Rarr.

I'm sure your family and gal pals are the center of your life but let me tell you, if you're 34 now, they won't be around *that* much longer to haunt you. Besides, the gal pals are jealous. They're puking with envy. The lovely ladies at theLounge are puking with envy. If I show up with so much as a hickey in progress on my cleavage their lustful longings are barely disguised with their: "Gross Agnus. Just gross!". I suppose I should leave Todd at home when I come into the office. (Now now my sweet squished grape, Auntie knows you want your supper and she's nearly finished her column so just (crack!) get (crack!) back (crack!) in your leather play pen. Here's the whip. Good boy.)



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[Overboard](#) •
- [Fairy Godfather Required](#) •

## Fairy Godfather Required

Dear Auntie Ag,

My boyfriend and I were going out for dinner with some friends to a fabulous new café and he meets us there looking like he's just come from a garage sale. You know the look, dirty white runners (from the era before runners became sneakers with street cred), baggy blue jeans, and a crumpled t-shirt under one of his 'nice' shirts. It probably was 'nice' 10 years ago. *No one*, not even Billy Joel, wears tab collars any more. He's such a honey, I usually overlook his appalling dress sense. But this time I said to myself, 'Oh For Pete's Sake', because his name is Pete, why don't I just demand he spend some money on decent clothing? But there's always something else he needs more and my case is foiled. The one time I did drag him along on a spree, we had so much fun buying for me that we forgot about the funky guy stores. Who was I to argue?

He wears boggly, mismatched socks and holey jocks. He goes out with lint on his jacket. He doesn't own an iron. He still wears a jumper his Nanna knitted him. I mean, for my sake, you understand how distressing this can be. It's not that I'm a label junkie, but I would like to be proud of him and people do judge you on appearances. Can you recommend a good fairy godfather?

Signed, Crumpled, SA

My Dear Crumpled,

My mother has always had a deep suspicion of men with an acute sense of style or who cultivate it diligently. She calls them "Spice Pussys"; nothing to do with the brand of Spice we've come to know as Scary or Posh you understand, nor does she mean to imply wimpishness through "Pussy". She just spits it out as if to say, "Sleeze Bucket", and you know she has Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra in mind.

The point is, a man doesn't have to be a Spice Pussy to be well dressed. Truly attractive men are "neat and tidy" and "tall and dark", as mother says. The attractive man simply takes pride in his appearance. He prefers fine quality fabric over cheap 'n' nasty fashion fads.

Men of homely appearance, like your chump, Crumpled dear, are bums. You can't be an attractive man and dress like a bum. Well, you can, but the overall affect, is still bum. He needs to know this.

I loved a man who was a freak of fashion once. He was so romantic, so manly, such a beefcake dear. Raaarrrr. But he was no Spice Pussy, Dear. He'd dress for dinner in a windcheater and matching 'windcheater pants' - I can't bring myself to call them by their *real* name. Bless him, he'd look at me in desperation. Understanding he was less

than prepared to accompany the sparkling creature that was moi, he was more than happy to be led to the appropriate store to buy whatsoever I plucked from the rack. I was fortunate. You, on the other hand, need to employ smarts. Boggly socks indeed. Not in your house, not in mine, not in a fit of lazy Sundays must this be allowed. Holey jocks. I'm gagging.

I don't care if he thinks he has more dire needs. He doesn't have to blow his Telstra shares on a decent fit out. If a person looks good, they feel good and beneath every shabby dresser is an even shabbier self-esteem.

To avoid detection of your agenda, be creative with your gift giving. Birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas in July, name days, public holidays, Bastille Day, *any* celebratory occasion will do for a gift of clothing. So what if it's Father's Day and you have no kiddies. Buy him a fabulous outfit and deliver it with attitude Crump: "One day you gonna make some kid a fabulous father honey but today, you gonna be ma Sugar Daddy!" You know the drill.

And that, quite simply, is that.

Your loving Aunt Ag.

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## Flabbergasted

Dear Aunty Agony,

I'm 31 and I'm with the man I want to marry. Lucky me! We've been together for two years now and love each other very much. I know he's not adverse to marriage, or kids, because we've talked about it but I can't get the guy to ask me to marry him. Every time I think he's about to pop the question, he doesn't. Or I'll create the perfect opportunity for him, and he still doesn't. I don't know what he's waiting for. I'm ready to get hitched and I want to know about it now!

So one night last week, we've had a bit much party and plonk and I ask him if he's ever going to do the deed and he says - 'I don't know'. Can you *believe* it?! After two years I get, "I don't know"! I was so upset (and drunk) that we had a big fight and the next day, he says (hungover) that he doesn't remember a thing. I don't believe that for a minute. I can't bear it. I'm going crazy. What's a girl to do Aunty?  
- Flabbergasted, Qld.

My Dear Flabbergasted,

Your recent evening hi-jinks have obviously cost a few more brain cells than you could spare at the moment. I wouldn't know *either* if I'd just slugged back a bucket of vodka and cranberry and danced myself into a dehydrated prune and had to face my equally ugly, post-party girlfriend at 3am in the morning with a stupid question like that.

So you say you've got him under the thumb, he's prepared to pretend you look gorgeous in the morning in spite of your dumpster breath, crimped face and car-accident hair. You've even mentioned the M word (-arry) and the K word (-ids) and he's *still* there for breakfast, regularly. I can't see there's a problem.

Sweetie, I will say this. If he's drunk enough to erase his memory you can be certain of one of two things:

1. He's telling the truth (and possibly has a drinking problem which you'd be a fool to ignore now. Alcoholics are only fun during the chase. They're a stinking chore the rest of the time.)
2. He's been leading you on a merry chase for two years and the thought of shacking up is so abhorrent that he's suffering Repressed Memory Syndrome, or avoiding you. In which case, you're very unlucky.

Here's the thing. To get a grip on your ghastr, Flabber, pin him down - when he's sober - and try something very rational and adult, like talking. Tell him what he is alleged to have said, tell him you're confused about your future together. And if he admits all his life's faults *and* that he truly doesn't know if you're his goddess, then you have one of two choices.

1. You open the trapdoor and get on with your life.
2. You love him so much you decide to wait for him to come round, you idiot.

And that, as they say, is that.

Your loving Aunt Ag.

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## Pussy Whipped

Dear Auntie Agony,

I love my cat and my partner hates him and wants me to get rid of him but I have been through so much with my cat and I can't bear to be without him. And my partner's really mean to him. What do I do?

Signed, Pussy Whipped, WA.

My Dear Pussy Whipped,

You have every right to love your pet. Pets are good for you; that you have decided to waste your bounteous love and affection on a feline is your sorry problem.

I've never met a cat that didn't have the temperament of a two-year old on an all-day tanty. I can't imagine what sorts of things you've "been through" with your cat, apart

from a good spanking for chewed shoes and stolen fish dinners, and I certainly hope you don't count discussing your personal problems with it as a bonding experience. In many respects, I'm sure I share your partner's opinion that cats are the great imposters of the Felidae family and deserve to be ignored, as they ignore!

I'm rather concerned that you can't "bear to be without him" - your cat. Let me ask you Dear, do you sleep with Fluff-Ball? Do you buy him the premium gourmet meals on the supermarket shelf? Does he have choice of seating during television time? Do you think it's sweet when he knocks your coffee cup over your keyboard and just a tad naughty when he scratches a hole in your new silver-satin slingbacks because you were late home from the movies? You know what I mean. If you're over petting your pet, you possibly have a worse problem than your man. Let me toss a few indicators your way and see if they stick: an inability to relate to human beings, an unrealistic need for unconditional love, a wayward mothering instinct? Am I creating the slightest twinge within?

There's no good to come from treating animals like human beings. They do not understand the responsibilities that go with such elevated status and tend to misinterpret your all-consuming affection as their reason for being. If you should have so much as a bad day and snap at puss, the result for him is utter despair, the equivalent of a personal crisis. And if you ever leave the house for an extended period, leaving puss with partner, you have removed the cat's lifeblood - you. He may pine away to pussy heaven; a cruel and unnecessary end, you'll agree, when really, you've merely escaped for a girl's weekend.

Nevertheless my dear Pussy Whipped, you may be surprised to know this dilemma with your man represents especially good news. You have saved yourself years of frustration by learning quickly that you are dating a curmudgeonly sod. You haven't shackled up with him yet have you? There is something deeply suspicious about a man who feels threatened by a puss-cat.

He sounds like a control freak who needs to harness the will and spirit of those around him lest he lose his footing in his tightly controlled world. Does 'fragile ego' ring any bells? He cannot bear to live without your undivided attention and adoration. Can you imagine what he'd be like if you have kiddies?

Confront him about his possessiveness. Ask him what really bothers him about the relationship with the cat. Is it because you put him out on the couch when you and puss want a quiet night alone? If so, tell him to leave you. On the other hand, if it's because he can't understand you have room in your heart to love many more people than him, and that you plan to do so until eternity, tell him to get a grip or push off. Because I promise you, his disturbance with this arrangement goes far deeper than a heady, flattering devotion to you.

And that, quite simply, is that.

Your loving Aunt Ag.

## Friend In Deed

Dear Aunty Ag,

A good friend of mine is about to make the biggest mistake of her life, for the second time! She's already been through one bad marriage and we all thought he was a loser. The marriage only lasted two years and it was a messy break-up and took her ages to get over it. Now she's met another no-hoper. He seems very like the first husband but worse. He's constantly putting her down with things like "Shut up Deb you don't know what you're talking about." *And* this one's got a drinking problem; even my friend acknowledges it. She keeps saying that he's trying really hard to kick it. The strange thing is, she really is a smart woman who holds down a really responsible job and knows how to call the shots. She takes no bullshit from anyone but when it comes to men, she's hopeless. What can I do? Should I tell her what I think?

Signed, Friend-In-Deed, TAS

My Dear Deed-doer,

So you decide to tell her... She may listen for a nanosecond and allow Sanity to prick her ever so slightly, but she will most likely ignore your well-intentioned advice, or worse, toss her Gin Ricky in your face and stomp off into the gloom, never to be seen again. After all, what kind of a betrothed would she be if she didn't stand by her man?

If the world et al implore her not to hook up with the bum, she's more likely to strengthen her resolve to prove them wrong. No one likes the universe to conspire against them, Dear. When it comes to matters of the heart, some of us resort to the tactics of our childhood to judge a situation. We push ahead in spite of the best advice to prove or disprove our course of action, usually to our own detriment.

It's called "*making mistakes*".

Some people, like your friend, are more emotionally retarded than others. It takes them a while to recognise cyclical behaviour, and then one has to want to understand what drives them to it, if they are to progress beyond it. It may take her, poor thing, a second reincarnation before she snaps into her wits.

To put your mind at ease, if she is truly your closest friend - that is, she knows how you take your tea, your middle name and your most embarrassing moment - then she *will* know how much you disapprove by your silence. The absence of lavish praise will be noted, fear not.

There are tactics one might employ however, that are less likely to compromise your friendship. You can listen. You can be a real friend-in-need. If she has doubts, she will tell them to you - not her family (who knew before any of her friends that he was a dud) or her betrothed (who is a genius at retrieving her good favour).

At the point of confidence, you say: “Luvvie, you *know* I am always here for you, whatever you decide. But it must be your decision and only you know in your heart, whether he is right for you or not.” If she avoids the subject altogether, fine, ignore it too. Don’t stop inviting her to functions for heaven’s sake. Better they come along so he can drink vat-loads of booze and humiliate them both. There’s nothing like a public dressing down to heighten reality.

You must allow her most dreaded thoughts to resonate in your friendly silence. You can support her when he doesn’t - your kindness and caring will throw his heartlessness into sharp relief.

And when she’s not looking, you can shake his stubby before handing it over, spike his coffee with pepper, kill him with kindness (control freaks are bewildered and disarmed by such behaviour) and unleash small children and dogs upon him in her presence - they can smell a fiend at 500 paces and they have a wondrous innate drive to expose them. “Mummy, I don’t like that man. He’s a loser.” “Grrrr. GRRRR!”

And that, quite simply, is that.

Your loving Aunt Ag.

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More information on Lisa Mitchell's writing at [lisamitchell.net.au](http://lisamitchell.net.au)