

Running from love

Valentine's Day brings pangs of loneliness, social ineptitude



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I've got a problem. Actually, I have several problems, and when they're rolled together, I get one big helping of problem casserole.

Problem No. 1: I have this shirt, you see. It's a special shirt. So special, in fact, it's a once-a-year-shirt. The day to wear that shirt is just around the corner, and what's the use in reaching into the bowels of my closet for my special Valentine's Day shirt if there's no one to appreciate it.

Problem No. 2: In fact, there hasn't been a special lady around casa del Munson in such a long time, that something odd has sprouted, and it isn't back hair. Rather, the statute of limitations on dry spells has expired, and my virginity has decided to come back to papa.

Problem No. 3: The Spice Girl formerly known as Ginger has yet to respond to any of my letters.

Problem No. 4: This is the special sauce. I was watching TV the other day, and in all seriousness, made this comment: "Hey, is that new Menard's chick hot or what?"

Can you say I need a date like an aging rock star needs a new liver? I knew you could.

Two weeks ago, I strapped my shoes on tight and decided in true Foxy Brown fashion that it was time to put the mack down, proper.

Attempt No. 1: Forget about hot pants and tube-tops, if there's one thing that makes birds suddenly appear, it's pig tails and/or overalls. And this little minx was sporting

both.
ME: *Could I sneak in and make a quick copy?*
HER:

Sure.

ME: *Hey that's a pretty neat rain-bow you've got on your backpack.*

HER: *Oh, thanks I've been out for a year now.*

ME: *You haven't been home in a year?*

MY BRAIN:

You said what?

ME: *Sorry ... bad joke.*

Attempt No.

2: Let's go where the sea is big and the fish are plenty - Omaha. The music was funky, her hair was red and my roommate called me a nutless wonder.

ME: *Howdy, wanna dance?*

HER: *Only if my sister can come.*

Twins? This doesn't even happen to Hugh Heffner. On the dance floor, I was busting out my best "Shopping Cart" and Aaron was standing slack-jawed.

THEM: *Are you a student?*

ME: *Yes, I am.*

A few moments later ...

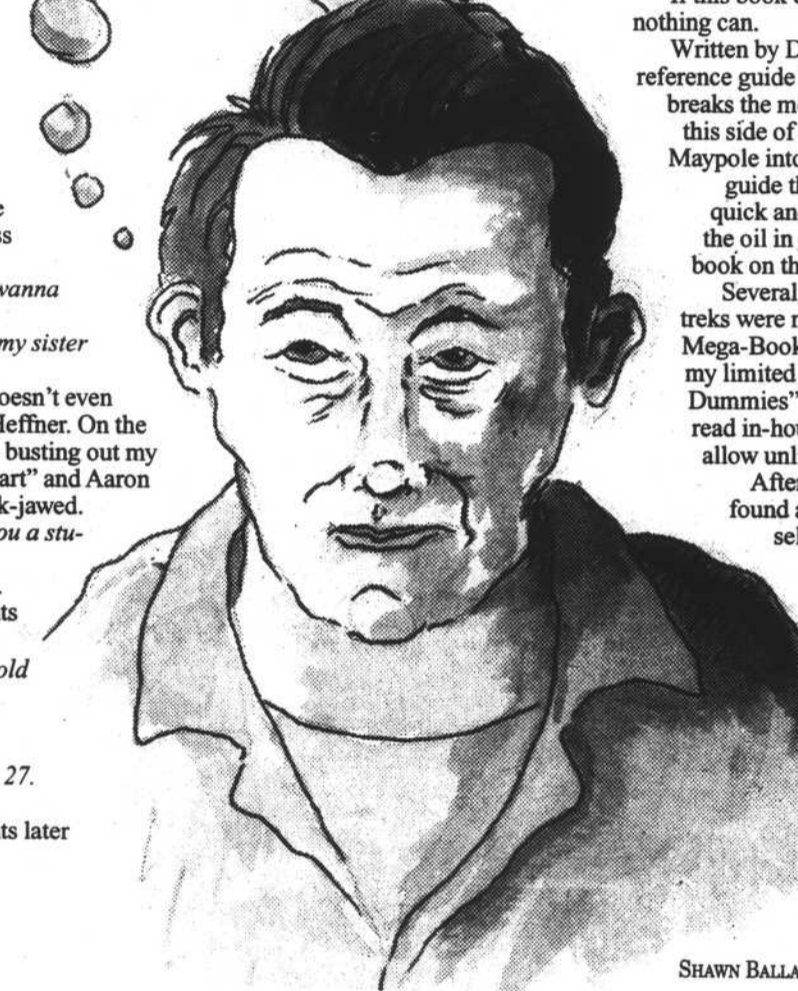
THEM: *How old are you?*

ME: *Twenty-three.*

THEM: *We're 27.*

ME: *Right on.*

A few moments later ...



SHAWN BALLARIN/DN

Curse my youthful exuberance! Oh well, I'll be dreaming of them for weeks, and they probably went home feeling like losers after they were hit on by a little boy.

Problem No. 5: It's becoming apparent that I'm a bit on the socially inept side or, some might label me a dummy.

Thank goodness I'm dumber than I am socially inept. Because bookstores don't have books for the socially inept, but for dummies there more than just a few, including a 404-page opus titled "Dating for Dummies."

If this book can't get me a date, nothing can.

Written by Dr. Joy Browne, this reference guide "for the rest of us" breaks the most confusing ritual this side of dancing around a Maypole into a fun, factoid-filled guide that makes dating as quick and easy as changing the oil in your car. (There's a book on that, too.)

Several nights last week, treks were made out to the local Mega-Bookstore. Considering my limited funds, "Dating for Dummies" would have to be read in-house. Good thing they allow unlimited loitering.

After a lengthy search, I found a copy nestled in the self-help section, first in a row that ended with "Divorce for

Dummies."
ME:
How's that divorce going?

AARON:
Heartless

wench wants everything I got.

MAD LADY: *You little jerks have no tact!*

Wow. Did you know people actually turn to self-help books for help?

Sitting down in the cafe, I realized this book assumes its readers are actually smart. It was missing this warning: DON'T READ THIS BOOK IN PUBLIC. PEOPLE WILL LAUGH AT YOU!

Once the snickering stopped, I opened the pages to see what Dr. Joy had to say. Yes! According to her, high schools are good places to meet members of the opposite sex! Oh, wait a sec, it goes on to say that one is only legal in Arkansas.

From where to meet someone to dealing with a stalker. Dr. Joy rambles and rambles and rambles some more. Can you believe it takes her 404 pages to reveal absolutely nothing insightful about the mysteries of dating? Watching any of John Hughes' '80s teen flicks would tell you more about how to work it than Dr. Joy. The only helpful hint was on what to do if someone breaks wind. "Quickly apologize. Don't giggle. If you can, open a window."

Thank you, Dr. Joy! No wonder girls pull my finger just once. They don't enjoy flattery like men do. If I knew that any sooner, I wouldn't be in this situation.

Actually, reading this book taught me something, as did the caffeine-induced hallucinations from one too many shots of espresso. We'll just call this Todd's Daily Zeitgeist. (The Daily Show has a copyright on "Moment of Zen.")

Finding that special someone is a lot like going No. 2. Most people can't sit down and instantly pinch a loaf. Sometimes, you can tell when something's cooking, and you say, "Hey, it's time to go out." Other times, it hits you like a runaway freight train, so hard you can barely make it to the toilet.

With that, I say to hell with Valentine's Day Nebraska-style. My shirt and I will be going down to Mardi Gras with a fist full o' Ex-Lax.

Aliens in the closet

Proving extraterrestrial life would open frightening doors in



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You've all heard about alien abduction, right? Maybe you didn't know about it before "The X-Files" captured half a generation of Americans, but you're aware of the stories now.

It's said that otherworldly beings visit earth, abduct humans, and experiment on and impregnate them. There's proof, but the governments of the world are hiding it.

That's the gist of the stories, and there are infinite varieties of detail. Just for the mental exercise, let's pretend it's all true. What would it mean for the world?

Foremost, it would mean that for once, we couldn't fault our government for a cover-up. Just showing up here would mean the aliens' knowledge of science kicks our collective

ass. Unlike in the woefully patriotic "Independence Day," humans would be helpless.

If aliens are treating the earth like an ATM for humans, and there's absolutely nothing we can do to protect ourselves, what good would it do for the public to know?

Instead of living ignorant, relatively placid lives as part-time lab rats, people would lead desperately panicked lives as part-time lab rats.

In this case, the truth would do nothing to set us free.

Bigotry might finally be ended - against humans, anyway. Arguments about "diversity" and "tolerance" pour out from every direction these days. But remember the '80s, during the Cold War? Discussing our country's evils took a back seat to roasting those Commie bastards.

Now, the aliens would replace the Communists, and the whole world would huddle together in frightful belligerence! I can just see "We Are the World" topping the charts again.

On the flip side, some of those fighting for diversity now - along with activists for animal rights and saving the trees - would scream just as loudly to "Save the poor aliens! They're people too!" Never mind that the E.T.s talk with their eyes and

would sooner probe your intestine than march in a diversity parade.

Court cases to win alien rights wouldn't go smoothly, since none of the buggers would ever show their faces to testify.

You think talk TV is messed up now? It'd be a whole new world, with show topics like "Alien Makeovers" and "I quit the KKK because I love aliens."

Having an alien's baby wouldn't be reserved for the cover of the Weekly World News any more.

Which leads to an interesting idea - Christians might be forced to entertain the thought that Jesus was alien-human spawn.

The angel sightings reported in the Bible could be explained as close encounters.

(Incidentally, author and astronomer Carl Sagan once wrote that the two were probably the same thing - common hallucinations.)

How does a virgin become pregnant? In-vitro fertilization by aliens in the night. How does that child create miracles? Alien super-technology. (Remember, folks, just a mental exercise. I'm Christian myself.)

Many religious quarrels would go like this: *Christian:* Jesus was the child of aliens? Ridiculous! *Non-*

Christian: Any harder to believe than his being the child of God?

Shoot, just about every religious leader could be accused of having alien accomplices. Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, most of them have at least a few ideas that are way too good for one man to think of - like the Golden Rule. All of them taught a version of it, but it seems just out of humankind's grasp.

Any freakish cult leaders - like Do of the Sunny Valley cult, or whatever the name was - would automatically lose their standing. If it were known that the alien visitation rumors were the truth, even the losers who used to join those cults would know better. Any "Sightings" or "X-Files" installments will tell you aliens aren't here to bus you to Planet Happy Face.

In fact, as much television as I've watched on the subject (too much, obviously), I've never heard an "abductee" claim to have spent any time on the aliens' planet. It seems they only work on an outpatient basis.

Wow, when you really think about it, proving alien visitation would be the biggest thing ... ever. Elementary school show-and-tell would have the added element of "look what the aliens put inside me." Local gambling

rings would form with people betting on who is going to be abducted next. Women would write letters to Penthouse about how their abduction experiences were better than anything a man could ever give them.

Of course, there are things on Earth that wouldn't change. Politicians would just have one more scapegoat, and people still wouldn't believe them. Film studios have turned out crappy movies about aliens for decades, and they still would. Knives and exercise machines alike would still be described in infomercials as being made of "space-age polymers."

The fact is the world wouldn't be turned upside down by alien presence. The sheer size of our universe places the probability that life exists somewhere other than Earth at near 100 percent. It also makes the likelihood of making contact with any extraterrestrial life almost zero.

Lots of us would like to believe otherwise. But when most of us won't even accept changing the seat we take every day in class, how could we ever live with the changes forced by the advent of Joe Outworlder?

I, for one, am relieved.