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Yes, Love
at a Ski Resort!



When You're Between Men



Over, finished, kaput—do these wrenching words describe your once-flourishing affair? Take comfort from this astute advice . . .

By Cheryl Waixel

□ You can't sleep Sunday night and daydream all Monday. You tear up his photograph in a rage, then spend the next three hours painstakingly pasting it back together. You dial his number and hang up as soon as he answers. You write him long letters but later trash them. You swear *never* to touch food again, then wolf down an entire chocolate cake. The important man in your life has split, leaving you to languish in lonely limbo . . . between men.

But you're not *really* alone. All around, people in the same predicament are managing to survive. You will, too, and preposterous as it now sounds, you may someday feel stronger for the experience.

Watching the Hourglass

Just how *long* will it take to put yourself back together? That depends.

Take the extreme case of Susan, who graduated from college and, at twenty-three, shipped out to Malaysia for a two-year hitch in the Peace Corps. Despite strict rules against involvement with others in the program, Susan succumbed to a Peace Corps engineer three months before her return to the States.

"It was instant electricity when we met," she recalls. "Richard was thirty-six, extremely *macho*, with a great mustache and dazzling smile. He was my steamy jungle romance, but we never discussed the depth of our emotions or my imminent departure. When we finally *did* talk about our relationship, at six o'clock on the morning I left, he said it would be best to make a clean break. I was devastated! How dare he reject me? I couldn't believe our relationship was over."

For the next six years Susan waited, convinced that Richard would finally answer one of her many letters. She kept in touch with other Peace Corps friends, avidly awaiting news of Richard and

suffering bouts of jealousy when hearing of his latest conquests. Finally, Susan became involved with another man, yet unreconciled feelings for Richard continued to trouble her. "I liked Tom," Susan says, "but worried that if Richard returned, I'd be unable to resist him."

Fortunately, coincidence resolved the situation. One weekend Tom was away, and Susan agreed to show some Canadian friends around New York City. "They insisted on seeing Times Square, which is not the classiest part of town, but I reluctantly took them on Friday night," she remembers. "We walked into a coffee shop and, after sitting down, one of my friends said, 'There's a man staring at you as if he knows you.' 'Just ignore him,' I said, assuming a sleazy character was ogling me. When my friend *insisted* that I look at the man, I turned to see a tall, bearded stranger. 'I don't know him,' I commented. Then Richard said my name, and I recognized him."

Susan spent the weekend with Richard. "Being with him again was a revelation," she says. "It became very clear to me that I had wasted *years* of my life dreaming about somebody who didn't exist. I finally felt whole again."

Susan's time between men had stretched to nearly seven years. Is this unusual? Yes, says Dr. Ari Kiev, author of *Riding Through the Downers, Snags, Hassles and Funks*, who finds periods of mourning a lost love can "last anywhere from twenty seconds to two years, depending on the maturity of the woman and the length of the relationship. The majority of women probably take between three and six months to recover."

"Susan," he points out, "was obviously slower and more insecure than her peers. Her personality type is uncomfortable in relationships, puritanical and fearful. Under certain circumstances in which responsibility for an affair could be minimized—such as during her limited 'jungle romance'—she felt safe in romanticizing it out of proportion, but you'll notice she subsequently avoided relationships."

According to Dr. Kiev, many people, like Susan, "claim to have one great romance that can never be equaled again, but the *real* problem is that they're afraid to try."

Getting Away From It All

While Susan suffered for years, most of us manage to deal with our angst within a few weeks or months. During that painful period, many women feel the urge to escape—either literally, to a different locale, or simply by losing themselves in work. Gloria, for instance, took two vacations and moved into a new apartment shortly after breaking up with her man. She was twenty-four and immersed in a promising marketing career when she met Carl, a struggling medical student two years her junior. Their relationship lasted three years. "He was the college boyfriend I never had," she explains. "I was neither sexually experienced nor extremely popular when I was in school. With Carl, I had my first long, satisfying physical relationship—and I loved staying over at his medical-school dormitory, joining in the feeling of camaraderie there. I would bring work home from the office to finish while he studied. We had a very close relationship. He called me every day, sometimes several times a day when we weren't together."

In fact, Carl actually *ended* their relationship by telephone. Gloria was alone in his dorm room when Carl called from Connecticut. "It was a total surprise," she says. "He told me our relationship was too intense, and he couldn't handle it. He also mentioned that he had met somebody else, with whom he was staying temporarily, but claimed that *wasn't* his reason for calling it quits."

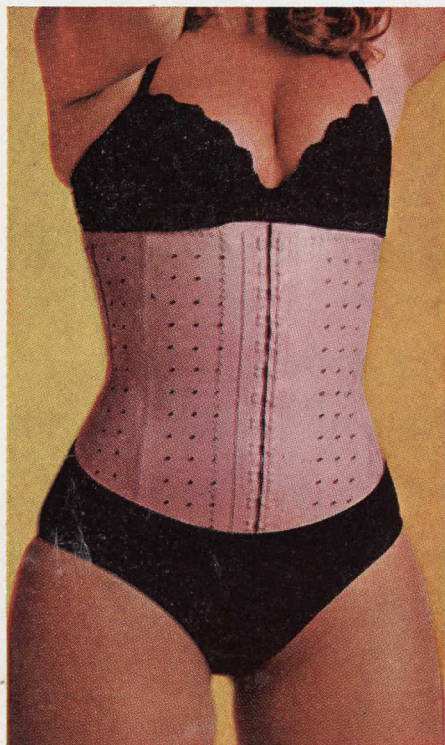
"My first reaction was 'Are you sure you want to do this?' After we hung up, I was awake all night, crying and throwing up. In the morning, I packed my stuff, changed the sheets, and cleaned the room. I left all of our joint belongings to him—except the key to his room, which I sent back six months later, just before he graduated, with a polite note."

Upon arriving home, Gloria realized she didn't want to be there alone. "We had been planning to vacation the next week in Miami. I decided to go by myself for two reasons: to get away and to prove that I didn't need anybody else to have a good time. I changed my travel plans and went to a motel in Orlando, Florida, instead, for four days."

This first vacation was *not* a success. "I went to Disney World by myself," Gloria sighs, "and finished seeing everything by eleven in the morning. I saw four movies! I didn't achieve the emotional satisfaction I'd anticipated because the loneliness was so intense. I couldn't break through my depression enough to relate to other people."

Home again, Gloria didn't feel much better. On occasion, while waiting for the commuter train, she thought impulsively of jumping onto the tracks but knew she'd *never* do it. Instead, to ward off self-destructive urges, Gloria kept busy, spending every night out with friends, returning to her apartment only to sleep.

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BETWEEN MEN [continued]

She had frequent nightmares, reliving her last phone call from Carl and trying to end it differently.

One night, her luck changed. "I wandered into a cocktail party hosted by a group of professional people I'd never met before," she says. "They were running a raffle that evening, and I won the grand door prize—a cruise for one! Two weeks later, I found myself on a ship bound for the Bahamas.

"The cruise was wonderful," Gloria recalls. "I was seated at the Captain's table for dinner and eventually had an enjoyable affair with a young ship's officer. There was something to do every minute. It helped lift my depression."

In better spirits, Gloria developed a sense of purpose. "I knew I had to radically alter some aspect of my life, to get myself out of the rut of focusing entirely on Carl. This time, when I got back to the city, I started searching for a new apartment and found one I loved. The move required a tremendous amount of effort and concentration. I bought new furniture; I explored my new neighborhood, and I kept seeing my friends every night, so I'd have no time to sulk."

The stimulation provided by two vacations and a move nudged along recovery. "It's not uncommon to run away," says Dr. Kiev, "and it's not counterproductive. Getting back on the track in this way is *healthier* than getting into, and maintaining, a fantasy."

In other words, by developing new interests, relying on support from friends, and fighting obsessive patterns, Gloria instinctively discovered the best remedy for lovesickness. "I don't know exactly when it happened," she recalls, "but one day I woke up and *knew* I was okay again. I was even sort of happy.

During Loveless Interludes . . .

DO

- See *An Unmarried Woman* again.
- Take a night course.
- Buy a dress in a color you've always loved but *he* hated.
- Pick a reasonable goal (i.e., losing five pounds), and celebrate when you attain it.
- Read *The Women's Room* by Marilyn French.
- Treat yourself to a haircut and manicure, and then meet a friend for drinks.
- Redecorate your bedroom.
- Work out at a gym.
- Listen to "I Will Survive" by Gloria Gaynor.
- Take a day trip or go on a weekend vacation.
- Plan a festive party.

DON'T

- See *The Way We Were* again.
- Call his sister so you can catch up on gossip.
- Go to your best friend's wedding without a date.
- Spend seven nights a week watching TV.
- Gain ten pounds.
- Have dinner with friends at that special place that used to be just yours and his.
- Listen to "If You Leave Me Now" by Chicago or "Baby Come Back" by Player.
- Leave his photo by your bed.
- Sleep through the weekend.
- Drop by his apartment to return a book.
- Plead sick the night of a party.
- Fall in love with the first new man you meet.



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BETWEEN MEN [continued]

With all the time I'd been spending out each night, I had no opportunity to feel lonely. Comfortable with my apartment and life style, I was concentrating on work again. I'm not saying I don't still think about Carl—maybe I always will—but I've got more self-confidence now than ever before, and I *know* I'm a stronger person."

Throwing Him Out

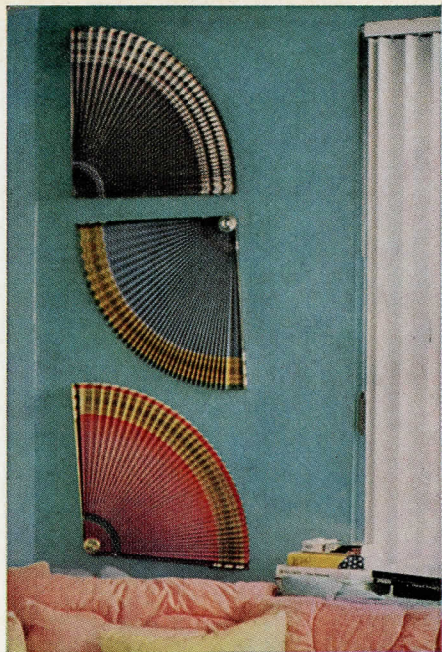
Being dumped hurts, of course, but ending the relationship *yourself* can also be painful. Sharon, a twenty-nine-year-old secretary, had been dating a salesman in her firm for four years when she decided to break up. "When I met David, he'd recently separated from his wife and was extremely bitter," she explains. "He told me that he never wanted to get involved again—that he'd never leave even his *toothbrush* at a woman's apartment—but I refused to believe him. We had so much in common. We laughed about the same things; our sex life was really dynamite. I thought he'd mellow in time. We saw each other every day at work and dated several nights a week, though I couldn't ignore the obvious problems in our relationship: He'd only let a woman get so close, then barriers would come up. His unspoken battle cry was, 'I've been burned before.' He made a point never to see me on holidays or special occasions and never discussed the future. We had many fights but, working in such close proximity, we always seemed to get back together again.

"Finally I had to come to terms with what the relationship was doing to my life," Sharon continues. "I knew I could never *make* him change and that while continuing to see him, I was not going to make the effort to meet someone else. My sense of self-preservation surfaced. I knew I had to get away."

She confronted David, severed the relationship, and sank into depression. "I kept telling myself I had done something positive and should be feeling wonderful—yet all I felt was panic. I didn't want David any more, but I didn't want another woman to have him, either! I dreamed about him, called his apartment at night to make sure he wasn't on a date—and worst of all, I still had to see him at work. When I got home at night, I was exhausted, physically and emotionally. I was paralyzed. It had been so *long* since I had met somebody I really cared for, I didn't know whether it was even possible. I wasn't sure another man would find me attractive and was too scared to put myself on the line and find out."

Sharon decided to go into therapy. "It's been a long, hard process," she says, "but I think I'm going to make a comeback! There are still times when I'm with a man who really likes me and I can't

[continued on 122]



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BETWEEN MEN [cont'd fr. 112]

believe it. 'How could he?' I ask myself, but I've got a lot of supportive people helping me: my therapist, my friends, and the men I'm now dating."

Bouncing Back

Experts agree that in almost all cases, *you'll* recover from a traumatic breakup faster than *he* will. "Women adjust better to the end of a relationship than men do," says Dr. Joyce Brothers. "A woman can express her feelings more easily . . . she can talk to her girlfriends; she can cry."

While wallowing in misery is fine for awhile, be aware—and make others aware—of self-destructive tendencies arising after your breakup. Dr. Debora Phillips, a Manhattan behavioral therapist, suggests seeking professional help if:

- Disrupted sleeping and eating patterns continue after one week;
- Getting out of bed becomes harder and harder; or
- Thoughts of suicide become a preoccupation.

All of the above indicate deep depression, which should be treated at once. In addition, curb any obsessive tendencies you may have. "Women are apt to keep mementos of a relationship and examine them constantly," Dr. Phillips explains. "By keeping these reminders—photographs, playbills, whatever—visible, they are punishing themselves. They may obsessively recall pleasurable events from the relationship over and over—sometimes hundreds of times per day—living in the past instead of the present or future."

Do talk to confidantes about the breakup, but set a time limit on commiseration. "Friends should listen empathically but

not forever," says Dr. Phillips. "After a few days or weeks—depending upon the case—they should start changing the subject to combat obsessiveness. You may think your friends are being unsympathetic when they change the subject, but actually they're doing what's best for you."

Dr. Kiev, however, cautions wariness in heeding advice from well-wishers. "A friend is likely to assume the problem is replacing your man with somebody new, rather than simply looking into your soul and seeing what didn't work out in the relationship and what you want for the future."

Keep Busy!

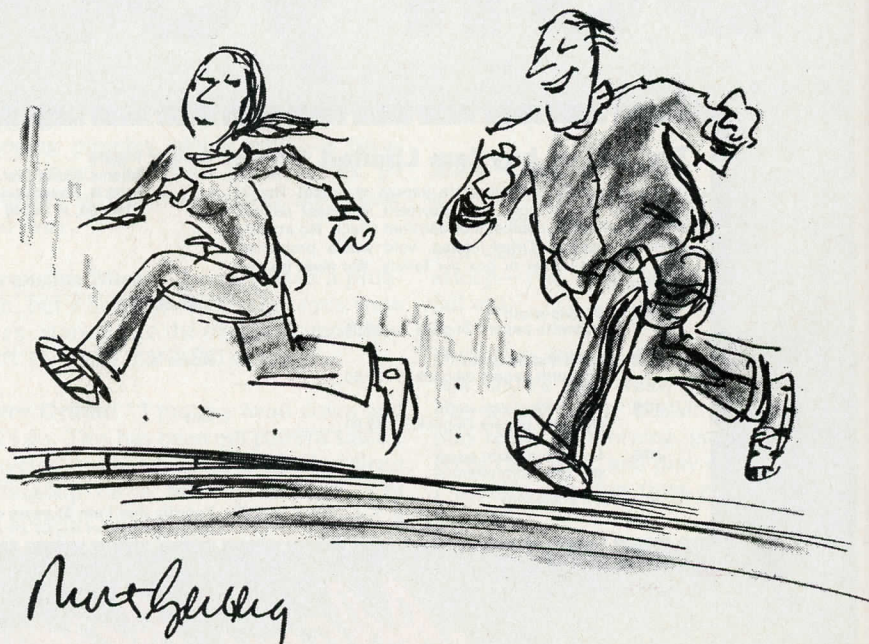
If you allow it, the Big Breakup can become an extremely fruitful and constructive time of your life. *Don't* sit home hibernating. Get out and do things.

"Any kind of activity is good . . . breeding guppies is good!" advises Dr. Joyce Brothers. "What will *eventually* help most is a new relationship. Getting involved with a new man, when you're ready, will run interference with old memories."

"If you're shy or out of practice at meeting men, join groups that interest you," says Dr. Brothers. "Take up photography. Go to a gym. I was at a gym recently, and I saw a lot of men and women putting their bodies back into shape—and checking out each other's bodies at the same time."

"Do socialize; *don't* plunge into new commitments out of sheer desperation," warns Dr. Phillips. "I've seen women who will go out and start a relationship with the first man who comes along. Many disastrous marriages happen exactly this way. Unless you allow time to

[continued on 128]



"Hi, there. Your pace or mine?"

BETWEEN MEN [cont'd fr. 122]

build up strength and reinforce your self-image, you will repeat mistakes. Give yourself breathing space, a chance to gain perspective."

Mirror, Mirror . . .

Before even thinking about shopping around for a new man, women often experience an irresistible urge to splurge on new clothes, a new hair style . . . a *new look*. Is this wise? That depends on whom you ask. According to Dr. Phillips, hitting the boutiques is usually a harmless diversion. "Buying new clothes or getting a new hair style is fine—if it reinforces a positive self-image."

Dr. Brothers, however, advises the clothes be returnable! "Physical changes *don't* do much good, and neither does going out on a shopping spree," she says. "In the future, you'll find that the clothes sitting in the back of your closet are the ones you bought while you were feeling upset. It's *idiocy*. They just bring back memories of terrible times, and you don't feel like going near them. The same is true of a new hairdo."

"Above all," she continues, "you should not try to make yourself into something you're not. You'll only be unhappy and, at the same time, uncomfortable with the new look. First, concentrate on what's happening *inside*

you; the outside will follow naturally."

Gloria agrees emphatically. "There's only one thing I truly *regretted* doing during the period following my breakup," she laments. "I went out and got a permanent; I had to live with curly hair for six months, until it grew out—horrendous! My advice: Think first, act later."

Slow and Steady

Don't expect too much of yourself after a breakup. Keeping busy is sound counsel when you can follow it, but if activity seems impossible or overwhelming, don't force it. "Feeling down at the end of an important relationship is natural," says Dr. Kiev. "Allow yourself to experience what you're feeling. More problems are created by trying to get *rid* of feelings than by riding them out. If you go through tears and pain, you'll know yourself better in the end and learn a lot about your own resilience."

Remember, too, that being between men has definite positive payoffs *not* readily obvious to the lovesick. Intense infatuation, while marvelously bewitching, absorbs every ounce of your energy—love is as jealous and *demanding* as a newborn. Conversely, time between men can be applied to developing yourself, learning new skills, getting in shape, discovering inner strength. Being out of love is often a *boon* to personal and career growth, as Sharon found

after breaking her emotional dependency on a man incapable of reciprocating affection. "I haven't solved *all* of my problems yet, but I already have a feeling of accomplishment," she says. "One of the best things about this period has been the realization that I don't *need* a special man to make my life complete—my breakup has enabled me to face life on my own. I think that will help me in my next serious relationship."

Finally, don't castigate yourself for falling in love with *him* in the first place. Most of us endure many amatory ups and downs before discovering the type of man likely to please over the long haul. "It may take a lot of experimenting to determine what will make you happy, in or out of a relationship," says Dr. Brothers. "Keep an open mind. It may take many relationships to make the *right* one." ☑

POLITICS [continued from 106]

do and use that as a basis for selling your boss on assigning it to you.

If someone who's junior to you is given an assignment or promotion that took you longer to earn, there's nothing to be gained from a sour-grapes attitude. You're usually not in a position to judge the reason for a management decision and you can really stick your foot in your mouth if you criticize it.

You also may have to deal with being the less experienced (and resented) person. Several months into her first job as a news assistant at a TV station, Erlene Berry Wilson noticed a lot of tension between herself and her supervisor, the assignment editor. Erlene was making an effort to learn everything she could about her boss's job because she figured that would equip her for a reporter's job. But the station was undergoing a staff reorganization and Erlene's boss felt threatened by her initiative. Erlene reassured him that she wasn't trying to move into his territory. It worked; in fact, he eventually suggested that she fill in for him when he was on vacation.

The best course of action to take if your boss seems threatened by you is to keep him informed of what you're doing. If he still feels threatened, and begins to tighten his control over your job and generally makes life miserable for you, you'll have to either say something, wait it out, or leave. The only time it makes sense to talk to your boss's superior is when you know your own boss is probably on his way out the door.

Early in my career I bravely thought that the way to get ahead was to show up regularly and do good work. I eventually discovered, though, that being aware of and participating in the positive side of office politics gave me an enormous edge over the person who let her work speak for itself. Always remember to look out for yourself. *You're Number One!* ☑

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