

Baby deserves top priority in woman's life

DEAR ABBY: I am 21 and have been going out with an older man (17 years older) I'll call "Sherman" for about a year. He and I are having a baby together in three months.

I don't know if I want to be with Sherman anymore. He keeps telling me that if I want to be with someone more my age — which I do — I should break off before things get worse. He says he'd rather be heart-broken now than have me tell him later that I have found someone else.

My friends tell me that if I don't want to be with Sherman, I should just tell him and go on my way. What do you think I should do? Should I try to work things out with him, or tell him that it's over?

— **CONFUSED IN MAINE**
DEAR CONFUSED: Your friends' advice would be good — if you weren't expecting a baby with Sherman. However, because there is a child involved who will need support, and preferably the love and care of both parents, you must consider what is best for your baby. Because nowhere in your letter did you indicate that Sherman has said he wants to marry you or provide for his child's support, your next move should be to talk to an attorney about a legal arrangement for the benefit of the baby.

DEAR ABBY: My mother loves to knit, and she's superb at it. When our children were born, Mama was delighted to have new family members to knit for — and she has done so throughout their lives.

Last summer, Mama announced that she will no longer knit for our oldest, "Heather," who is 12, because Heather loses everything. Mama said she will no longer pour so much effort into a sweater, hat or scarf only to see it disappear because it was left on a playground.

Last Christmas, all the children received scarves, but only those of the younger two were hand-knit. Heather's came from a store. It was nice — but it was store-bought.

Now Heather is very hurt, and I don't know what to do. We love our daughter, but she hasn't learned to care for her things, and Mama is adamant about her knitting.

— **LOST IN OREGON**
DEAR LOST: Explain to your daughter that, as hurt as she may feel about the scarf, it's a drop in the bucket compared to how her grandmother felt having spent hours creating a one-of-a-kind item only to have it left somewhere. Heather is not the offended party — Grandma is. A step in the right direction would be a handwritten letter from Heather to her grandmother apologizing for her carelessness.

DEAR ABBY: My husband, "Ron," and I are at odds over parenting our 7-year-old son, "Brett." My husband is very domestic. He cooks like a world-class chef and does more housework than any man I know of.

I have read Dr. James Dobson's books on family. He clearly states that a father should be the manly role model for the son, to prevent the son from being homosexual. I'm concerned that Brett will learn feminine ways from my husband and turn out to be gay. How can I convince Ron that he needs to teach Brett the more manly things in life?

— **WORRIED MOM**
DEAR WORRIED MOM: From my perspective, you don't need to change a thing. With all due respect to Dr. Dobson, your husband is already a manly role model to your son. He is teaching the boy important survival skills that will be invaluable when he is older. With luck, your son will



Abigail Van Buren

● Dear Abby

turn out to be every bit the man — and father — that your husband is.

DEAR ABBY: I'm 13, and please don't get me wrong. I'm grateful to be living in my parents' house with my family. I know everyone isn't as lucky as I am.

My room is sort of a problem, though. There isn't enough room in my closet to hang anything. My dresser, which holds clothes that don't fit me anymore, was made in 1956 and is falling apart. My bed looks like a crib and holds my sisters' old bedding. I also have a desk that looks as if the hutch is about to fall off. It used to belong to my sisters, too. My bed and desk are white, but the dresser looks like oak. The walls are white because Dad never wanted to paint them. Dad built our house three years ago — but he didn't buy me a proper bedroom set like my sisters have.

During Christmas when I was in the sixth grade we all got computers. They got theirs in their room, but mine is in the study and is used by everybody, which means if someone wants to use it, I have to stop. I always get the last choice of everything, and I am sick of it.

— **OVERLOOKED**
DEAR OVERLOOKED: It's hard being the youngest child and the last in line for hand-me-downs. My suggestion to you is to ask an adult — a relative to whom you can confide your feelings, or a friend of the family — to speak to your parents on your behalf. I'll keep my fingers crossed.

DEAR ABBY: I live in Canada, so I may not be familiar with all of your etiquette customs in the U.S. I was visiting relatives in the states recently, and my hosts invited a friend over who came with a bottle of Irish Cream liqueur. The friend knew that this was the hostess's favorite drink.

After having a few glasses together, the hostess was told by her daughter that "good manners dictate that the hostess give back the half-empty bottle to the guest when leaving the party." Can you please advise me if such a rule of etiquette exists?

— **CURIOUS IN CANADA**
DEAR CURIOUS: If one exists, I have never heard of it. Traditionally, when someone brings food, alcohol, etc. to someone's home, it is considered to be a "hostess gift," and once a gift is given, it belongs to the host or hostess to do with as they wish.

DEAR ABBY: I lost my husband, "Jon," in 2003 after 14 wonderful years of marriage. He left behind not only a wife who adored him, but also our three children, who were 4, 8 and 12 at the time of his death.

When making announcements, I would like to recognize Jon as their father and as my former husband. How should they be worded? If I say, "The former Jon and Karen Jones," I'm afraid it will sound like both of us died. Also, I would like to — hopefully — remarry one day. How would an announcement be worded then?

— **WANTS TO REMEMBER**
DEAR WANTS TO REMEMBER: When issuing announcements or invitations for your children, they should say "... the son (or daughter) of Mrs. Michael Ross and the late Jon Jones."

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