

Slummy mummy Lucy Sweeney

'I really don't want to end up at marriage counselling again,' says Sexy Domesticated Dad. 'I just can't face all that communication'

Sexy Domesticated Dad is convinced that his wife has found out about his drunken snog with Alpha Mum just before Christmas. He says that he caught his wife searching through his coat pockets a couple of days ago and that last night she asked if he was using alcohol to neutralise anxiety.

"There's nothing conclusive there," I tell him. "Everyone is anxious at the moment. It's February. There's a recession. Everyone is being horrible to each other. Especially to women. Mary Beard. Rebecca Adlington. And a glass or two of wine makes it easier to bear."

"Not me," he says. "I'm only anxious if I see Alpha Mum. I start to sweat and my heart beats out of time. Should I take beta-blockers?"

"I'd stick to alcohol. What's your drink of choice?" I ask, envisaging him downing half a bottle of Stolichnaya every night.

"Pear cider," he says. "And I'm eating a lot more peanuts. Dry roasted."

"I read something in the paper about a connection between peanut consumption and infidelity," I say.

He looks shocked. "Do you think my wife read it?"

I start to giggle.

"This is no laughing matter, Lucy," he says. "I really don't want to end up at marriage counselling again. I just can't face all that communication."

"Have you considered that you might have done this as some kind of revenge for your

wife's affair with her colleague a couple of years ago?" I ask him. There is a long silence.

"No," he says. "It was Alpha Mum's idea."

"We've discussed this before. You have to take responsibility for your role," I say.

"You know how bossy she is. She just wouldn't take no for an answer," he says.

"Have you left an electronic trail that your wife might have followed?" I ask.

"What do you mean?" he asks nervously.

"Texts, flirty Facebook exchanges, indiscreet e-mails, that kind of thing," I explain.

He thinks for a moment.

"Alpha Mum asked me if she could come over for help with maths homework one night, and I texted back to say that I was actually really busy tidying the shoe cupboard," he says.

"Any other changes in habit?" I inquire.

"Like what?" he asks.

"Have you behaved in an uncharacteristic way? Suggested sexual positions untried since your twenties?" I ask.

He shakes his head.

"And what did you get your wife for Christmas?"

He tells me that he bought her a cashmere cardigan from Brora.

"What do you usually get her?" I ask. "A book that you want to read?"

He nods.

"Dead giveaway.

She knows," I say. ■



Things you only know if you're single

Hannah Betts



...that one "just has to be oneself".

Breeders live to say this about lone-ranger conduct. If one is ever so foolish as to admit to a certain unsureness regarding matters of behaviour, in the vultures of banality swoop. Leaning across their overlarge dining tables, patronising faces in full bloom, they proffer a steadying arm and a "Hey, just be yourself, OK?" (They say this largely, one assumes, because they occupy a state of being that bit too much themselves the entire time.)

And, yet, the obvious issue re the matter of selfdom is: which one? After all, the successful lone ranger conjures so many personae. The perky "I love being single, life is so full of possibility" route? The too-cool-for-school "I am so invincibly chic that I won't begin to take the slightest notice of our having slept together" routine? The persona that seems as if it could possibly even be real, complete with childhood anecdotes and a degree of ex twitchiness? Ah, one knows them well.

Second-guessing the correct attitude is exhausting, not least in the wake of intercourse. The decorum of divining whether you like them, they like you, you both liked it, and would actively like to do it again can be positively Byzantine. One wouldn't want to presume, after all.

Ultimately, one spends so long jazz-handing up some socially acceptable performance that one can no longer ascertain one's nature from the layers of protective nurture. Although, alas, in time, one's true character begins to manifest, seeping through the pores like the unpleasant sheen it is. ■

I don't give a monkey's...

Carol Midgley



...for size angst.

It was bound to happen sooner or later, so let's just grasp the nettle and deal with it. There's a new app for measuring your penis. Yes, I know it's a terrible mental image, but don't shoot the messenger. Anyway, you haven't heard the half of it yet. The app, which works for the iPhone, iPod Touch and iPad, requires the male to hold the alert part in

question "straight against the inches or centimetres on the side of the screen". Well. That's the entire female population silently vowing never to make a call from a man's iPhone again. Remember all those studies that say there are more germs on a phone than on the average toilet seat? We're starting to understand why.

But here's a fact about the willy-sizer that prods my inner cynic. The App Store claims it's informative. That it "educates the male population" regarding "proper condom size". Indeed, the app, which you must be 17 or over to buy, is actually called Condom Size.

Nice try. But the word ricocheting around my head here is "balls". Because there has always been a way to measure your bits: it's

called a ruler. The real killer feature here is that it then gives the poor old penis a world ranking. Not only for length, but for girth (for which, incidentally, you'll need "string or soft measuring tape").

That's the stroke of evil genius. What sensitive chap, in an idle moment, won't wonder where on that global percentile chart his old lad lies? And then download it, sharpish? What tipsy girlfriend, in a playful (or sadistic) moment, won't urge her beau to take the measure-up challenge? It's a must-purchase if you're confident and a must-purchase if you're not. It only costs 69p, so I reckon pretty soon it'll be outselling *Angry Birds*. A cruel and rather puerile invention. But, hats off, a clever one. ■