

## SMITTEN DATE DOES NOT A PSYCHO MAKE

Sometimes I imagine we live in a singles world far, far away, where it's OK to show interest in someone.

When the recently dumped could march over to the dumper's tipi, hut or castle and demand an explanation.



ANDREA LORENZ

PARTY OF ONE

When the admission of feelings for a person equated to a pleasant tingle in the receiver's gut, not dread.

When every time one called, texted or even questioned a date's plans for the weekend, one wouldn't have to consult a straight man, a gay man and a woman to answer a question I find myself asking too often: "Am I being psycho?"

Luckily, Askmen.com provides a handy "10 Signs She's Crazy" to warn men of this most dangerous of dating specimens.

By "psycho," I'm not talking about Jennifer's ex-boyfriend — "Crazy Billy" to her friends — who once beat himself with his fists until he fell unconscious and foamed at the mouth.

Six years later at Bourbon Rocks, Jennifer retells the story of how she wanted her freedom (and at age 21, who could blame her?), but poor Billy just wasn't ready.

Even I can tell that Nicole, 27, was out of bounds when she stood outside her ex's window for weeks before her friends weaned her off the "drive-bys," as she called them.

Breaking into his e-mail account and deleting messages from women further earned her the "crazy" label. Nicole says he made her that way after multiple breakups and "Oops, I believe I made a mistake now that you have someone new" talks.

Somehow, though, I can almost hear her ex at a bar in Baton Rouge regaling friends with tales of "Psycho Nicole."

Not that kind of psycho.

At the beginning of what used to be called courtship, for which rituals such as "pinning," "going steady" and even first dates have long disappeared, there comes a moment when a person expects something. A phone call. An engagement ring. A Saturday night date.

"It's not just the expectations being high or wanting to get more serious," says James Bassil of Askmen.com, an advice Web site with offices in Mont-real that's owned by Fox Interactive Media. "When it's an explicit demand, that's what a guy calls psycho."

It goes like this. Two people go out on a few dates. One person thinks the dates constitute a "thing." The other isn't so sure. The first person wonders why contact stopped.

"When she shows up at his door and says, 'What's going on?'" James explains, "the guy goes, 'Whoa, this girl is psycho! We only went out on a few dates.'"

Which is why the guide on the site

warns men about women who ask too many questions or are eager to make friends with their sisters.

Fine. I can deal with that. Dating is tough, and people are sometimes scary and unbalanced. Best to avoid those who will cause you to waste time in court getting a restraining order.

But the psycho label has turned into a catch-all for anyone who has unreturned feelings. He or she might call an extra time or two to make sure you got the message. When you don't show up as planned, she might drive to your

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house in a blizzard to make sure you're not lying frozen in a ditch next to your totaled car. When she arrives at your house, she might peek in your window.

Psycho?

These "explicit" actions helped me confirm the loser I'd been dating had ditched me for a night at the casino with friends.

James says after years of singlehood, guys (and I'd say single women, too) become more apt to dismiss eager suitors. "You realize relationships are transient," he says. "When you're 18 and completely smitten, it's much more cherished. When you're 28, you're like 'Eh, another relationship down the toilet.' Try to find a guy who will dismiss his first girlfriend as psycho. You won't find that guy."

Apathy. That's what we've come to? I'd rather be psycho.

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