



THE REALLY
GOOD GUYS
ARE HEROIC
ALL THE WAY
OUT THE DOOR.

The good good-bye

With millions of ways to connect and infinite options for future hookups, why be nice to a woman while ditching her? Because it means you're a great lay. By Sarah Rose



It's a truth universally acknowledged that great lovers give excellent breakups. There's a direct correlation between your bedroom dexterity and your ability to communicate. To really heat up the sheets, to storm the gates of Isengard, to Spock her Kirk, you must be the kind of guy who gets off on meeting her needs—and she will never be needier than at the end of the affair. There's exactly one drug that works miracles: the good good-bye. ¶ Take it from a girl who gets around, who has an adult lifetime of naked data to draw from: The men who dumped me hard always thought they were much better in bed than they really were. There are 50 awful ways to leave a lover, and the lovers to go with them—and I've slept with every single one of them: the meltdown men, the ghosts, the martyrs, the take-another-girl-to-Paris-whoops-that's-not-OK? guys, and the plain jackasses. Without exception, men who left incompetently were mediocre when they came. Yes, it's easier to take the coward's way out, to bunt your way to a batting title. But my most memorable, legendary partners have been heroic all the way out the door. ¶ Nail the dismount. Exes aren't problems but people. Learn to do it the humane way, like you'd put down a pet—gently and with dignity, not with rocks and a pillowcase. It will vastly improve your game.



FOR A GOOD BREAKUP, DON'T:

Disappear.

■ Don't stop taking her calls, ignore her texts, emails, defriend her, move to a new city, or enlist in the navy. Charlize ghosted Sean Penn, then he took a murderous drug kingpin to lunch. It made him crazy.

My last boyfriend, some journalist, was an ardent electronic pen pal—daily emails, nightly cock shots—until he disappeared. It's not as if he owns an invisibility cloak—I can read his byline five days a week, I know where he is. The technology that makes it easy for you to go AWOL makes it impossible, too. We see you on Instagram, Twitter, and with night-vision goggles in front of your house.

Ghosting isn't actually hiding, but it does create stalker terrorists. You think you're being nonconfrontational when you're really writing recruitment videos for ISIS.

Remember, only you can prevent beheadings.

Blame.

■ Sometimes she's to blame. If she cheated on you, she's wrong, you're right. But mostly, relationships are nuanced things.

A spreadsheet doesn't belong in the final accounting. Dating is a long, emotional job interview. You may have been with the wrong candidate.

Whether it was two weeks or six years, you still can't blame her for being bad at the job description in your head. Your mother probably wrote it.

Torture.

■ There's such a thing as being mean until she breaks up with you. From 19 to 24, all the men I dated preferred malingering at the door rather than just leaving. It was needles under my fingernails. Taking time and space to think is waterboarding. Canceling five dates in a row then scheduling a sixth? Electrodes on the netherbits.

Women are totally on to this strategy. We can and will retaliate with hunger strikes, prison riots, and a shiv before breaking out of your creepy relationship Guantanamo.

Self-pity.

■ Some men feel extremely sorry for themselves, delivering long, sad speeches as they go. That Act III monologue on the weight of your baggage is useful to no one.

In the midst of a breakup, she should not have to hear about the cast of offstage actors in your diffi-

cult life. One of my exes cried about his ex-wife living with someone who wasn't him. Another whined about accidentally knocking up someone who wasn't me. A guy who lost his grandparents at Auschwitz used Hitler as an excuse for being an asshole as he dumped me. (Then sent flowers—such a shit.)

Be the perp, not the victim.

Loot.

■ Your snookum's stuff is not yours. One of my exes kept everything I left behind until finally I swallowed my bile and requested their remittance. Cookbooks, slippers, and a toothbrush are not spoils of war. Don't make her negotiate for her own things.

Unless otherwise instructed, the U.S. Postal Service is not an inappropriate way to divide your belongings. Return her camera to her in person alone, even if you're busy and important and a coward. (OK, I've been guilty of mailing stuff back, too, even gifts, with no note at all. It's a flaming paper bag of emotional poo. I'm so sorry, exes.)

Freak out.

■ One boyfriend, a politico, went full My Lai on me as he bolted for the jungle. It was the most terrifying 14 minutes of my life and I got shingles on my face.

Meltdowns prove you're dangerous to women, children, and pets, doomed to a lifetime of agony... and qualified to work in the White House. Relationship PTSD is no excuse for brutality. If you panic, then double back and try again. Never leave a body on the battlefield. Breakups follow the Geneva Convention: Tend to the wounded, even your enemies.

Also, she's not your enemy.

Get naked.

■ Knocking it out right before you dump her is a disastrous choice. (I'm talking to you, Mr. Journalist ex-boyfriend.) Asking for sex immediately after is worse. (Mr. Banker, Mr. Tech Exec.)

And, out of courtesy, avoid cross-contamination: Don't start sleeping with your next girlfriend before you've appropriately disposed of the current one. (Again, Mr. Tech Exec.)

DON'T JUST DISAPPEAR. AFTER CHARLIZE GHOSTED SEAN PENN, HE TOOK A MURDEROUS DRUG KINGPIN TO LUNCH. IT MADE HIM CRAZY.



Make a clean break. Be kind, be compassionate—and tell her you love your grandmother.



FOR A GOOD BREAKUP, DO:

Set the stage.

■ Always say goodbye in person.

I like to pick a quiet, well-lighted place. Home works, as long as it's not *your* home—you can always leave someone else's place, but it's impossible to get a sobbing ex off your own sofa.

Never dump her in bed.

There's an advantage to public good-byes, to going somewhere she'll be embarrassed to cry or have a heated fight. Prep her, let her know you need to get something heavy off your chest. If she thinks she's going for a romantic meal and discover's she's yesterday's fish, you're just being cruel. Avoid booze.

Say three true things.

■ You'd rather dress your grandmother in a wet-suit than spend another night together, fine—but

she doesn't need to hear that.

Never tell her you're dead inside; instead, tell her three other true things. 1) She has pretty hair. 2) Work is really busy. 3) You always loved your grandmother.

All true! You've complimented her, distracted her, and left her with a nice impression of you.

Use the magic words.

■ She wants an explanation and you don't owe her one. There's a precise and efficient way to get out of Dodge without having a long, meaningful conversation about your horse. These golden words are gleaned from years of experience, so use the incantation wisely:

"I don't want to pursue this."

Note: Never say, "I don't want to pursue you." Simply "this," which could be anything—a rodeo career, a Senate run, a pygmy-goat farm.

Be kind.

■ Really, this is your only job. The good breakup deserves all the

kindness and compassion befitting a great romance. Over time she paid in with love and affection; think of the ending as her pension.

If you don't pay it out in full, you're an emotional Ted Cruz. Nobody dates Ted Cruz. Nobody.

Make treaties.

■ Breaking up can be one-sided, but tender endings require bilateral negotiation.

I'm terribly proud of my best breakups: We loved each other as a couple and forged a way to care about each other apart. This isn't the same as staying friends—though peace agreements make that possible—it's about crafting a humane and diplomatic withdrawal.

Bonus: If you upgrade your let-downs, there can be other benefits: Many couples reunite after a time-out. While some zombie romances are

worth beheading, others look pretty good after months of swiping left on Tinder. Don't spoil the well with a rotting corpse when you might be thirsty later.

Double bonus: Taking the high road lowers the odds she'll unhinge and go bi-polar in your lobby. This is crucial for you *and* your next love, who doesn't deserve to be the model for a slasher voodoo doll.

Triple bonus: After taking the gentlemanly bow, you'll actually be most of the way toward getting over her. If you can't do the right thing—if you need to have the last word, sprint for the exit, or flagrantly foul out—she's still under your skin. The longer that irritation lasts, the longer it'll take to locate your next girlfriend.

Do the do's and avoid the don'ts, for her sake and for yours. Someday you could be on the receiving end of a colossal heave-ho. As long as turnabout is foreplay, only ever dump her as you might wish to be dumped.



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