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Dear Abby

Husband needs to put dog in his place

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DEAR ABBY: "Ben" and I have been married for two years. His dog, "Lucky," adores him. The problem is, Lucky bites me every time I get near Ben. If we lock Lucky out of the room, he barks frantically the whole time. Ben refuses to get rid of Lucky. He says if the dog goes, he goes. I want a normal life with my husband, but he has chosen his dog. Can you offer any solution? — ONCE BITTEN, TWICE SHY IN OHIO

DEAR ONCE BITTEN: Your husband has allowed Lucky to become "top dog" in your household.

Tell him that if he wants to "get lucky," he is going to have to assume control of his dog. This will take the assistance of a qualified dog trainer or other animal behavior specialist.

DEAR ABBY: I'm 16, and my 13-year-old stepsister, "Cindy," is mentally retarded. She stays here every other weekend. We don't have an extra room, so my mom and stepfather make me share a room with her. Cindy won't leave me alone and follows me around.

I have been spending the night at a friend's as often as I can to get away from her. But now my parents say I can go on sleepovers only when Cindy is not here. They say she misses me and seems hurt that I'm not here.

She is supposed to be here spending "quality time" with her father, not me, so shouldn't I be able to get away? — FED UP IN LANCASTER, PA.

DEAR FED UP: You are aiming your anger in the wrong direction. Cindy is a little girl mentally, and she idolizes you. She may be slow, but she isn't stupid. She recognizes rejection.

I recommend a compromise. You should not have to entertain your stepsister every single time she visits. Keeping her occupied should be your parents' responsibility.

An adult should advocate for you in this matter. Enlist the help of an adult to talk to your parents with you.

DEAR ABBY: I'm afraid my best friend's daughter, "Kami," may have Munchausen syndrome.

Kami is 30, a former nurse, and married with a toddler. She lives to be sick. She is always in the emergency room for something. Ladies from her church clean her house and bring her meals because they think she's at death's door, yet Kami and her husband are planning a vacation.

Kami's husband and parents are extremely protective of her and become defensive if anyone suggests that Kami may not really be physically ill.

I don't know how to help her. Have you any thoughts? — WORRIED FRIEND IN UTAH

DEAR WORRIED FRIEND: Until Kami's family is ready to recognize that she may have a complex emotional disorder rather than a physical illness and stop enabling her, there will be no help for her.

