

Specialists Go Ape Over Gorilla

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Koko has a diva-like quality unequalled by any other female except Barbra Streisand.

aylene Frizznick is an intelligent, well-educated young business woman. She reads *The National Enquirer* and *The National Review*, loves Judi Dench and Mandy Moore, wears Versace and The Gap with equal aplomb and can rap with The Filthy Five or rapture with the Toronto Philharmonic all in the same evening. Eclectically comfortable at Four Seasons or Mickey D's, Ms. Frizznick, in short, is an asset to her species.

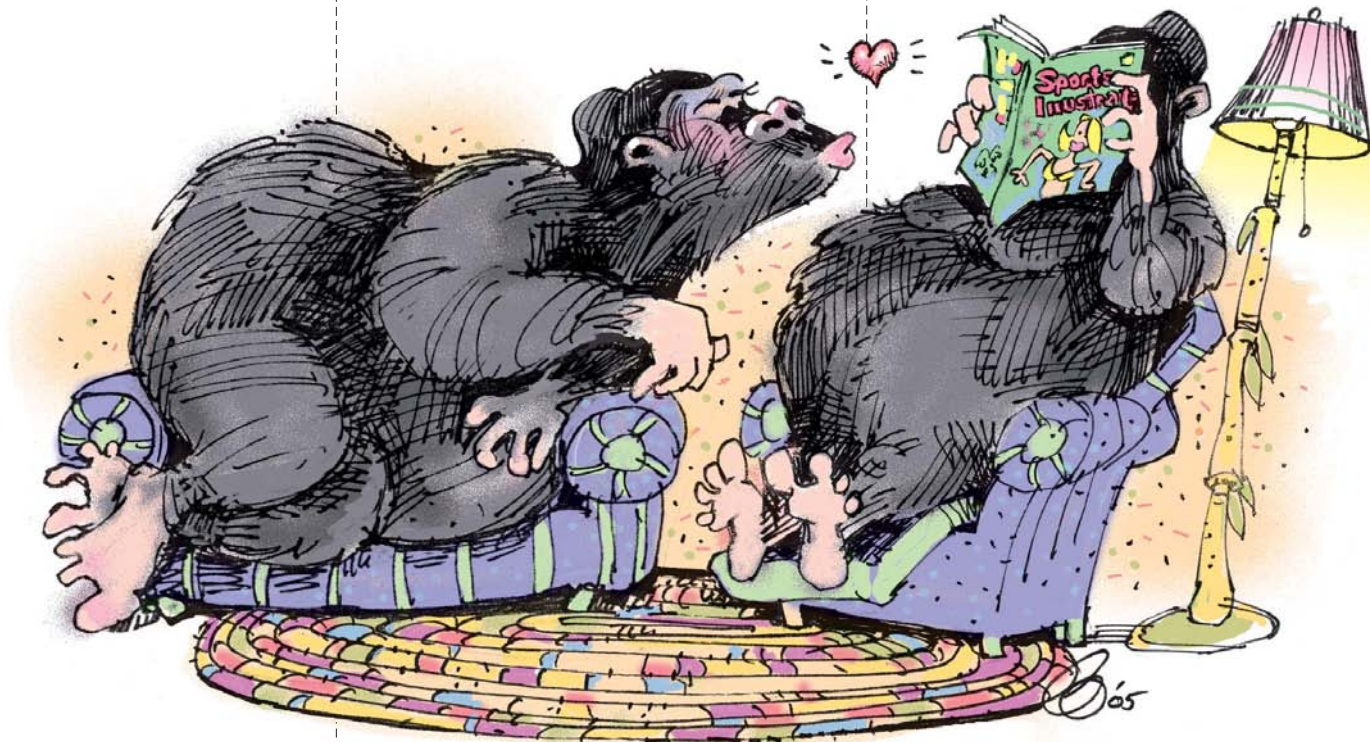
She recently became aware of an oral problem. Cognizant of the complexity of the human condition as delineated in *The Readers Digest* and *Today's Woman*, she began to intelligently assess her symptoms.

Is this a periodontic problem or an endodontic condition? Or possibly both? Should she see her GP first for X-rays and a tentative diagnosis? Does she have a sinus problem or some sort of facial neuralgia requiring the opinion of a neurologist? Is an oral surgeon perhaps her best bet or maybe a herbologist? Tarot cards?

Inasmuch as the various specialists are all within a 25-mile radius, and thus inconveniently accessible, and her symptoms have not declared themselves as definitely chronic or acute, she elects to wait a while.

Koko, a zaftig young female of 33, lives with her Significant Other, Ndume, in an

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upscale apartment in Woodside, Calif., at the Gorilla Foundation. Koko speaks fluent gorilla with a Congolese accent and has a vocabulary of over 1,000 signs recognized by American Sign Language. An epicurean, she demands only the freshest of bananas and bamboo leaves. Ms. Koko is, in short, a prime primate, an asset to her species. Subservient Ndume, the SO, doesn’t speak, innately aware that arguing with a 300-pound mate is not in his best interests.

Koko’s flat features a bathroom, TV and a DVD player. She is partial to PBS programming and is fond of replaying “Pretty Woman” on her DVD machine because of a scene where she sees herself portrayed, not as Julia Roberts, but a stuffed toy gorilla. Koko and Ndume are your average upper middle-class gorilla family, but with a famous matriarch presiding.

Koko recently became aware of an oral problem. Rather than consult with Ndume who has his muzzle stuck in the sports section of the *Woodside Times*, she consults with her friend and teacher, Francine Patterson. In American Sign Language, the dialogue goes something like this:

Koko: “Francine, I have an impending disaster looming large in my mouth that bids fair to driving me up the wall.”

Francine: “Surely, what you want I should do?”

Koko: “Don’t call me Shirley! Alert the team; you know what to do! Chop, chop!”

It should be pointed out that Koko has a diva-like quality unequalled by

any other female except Barbra Streisand. Immediately a team of 12 specialists — a Stanford cardiologist, three anesthesiologists, three dentists, an ENT man, two veterinarians, a gastroenterologist and a gynecologist — volunteer to help. “It’s not often that we get to work on a celebrity,” says Dr. David Liang, professor of medicine at Stanford. Given a choice of divas, choosing the one with a 1,000-word vocabulary is probably the wisest move.

So the team comes to Koko — celebrities don’t go to the team. They bring their portable X-ray, their ultrasound equipment, the forceps, cotton rolls, the whole nine yards that will sustain them throughout the four-hour examination and treatment.

Koko has yearned to be with child before her biological clock winds down, with no success to date. Combined with the dental work, therefore, she receives a colonoscopy, ultrasounds, X-rays, a gynecological exam, and an opportunity to rummage through the toy chest afterwards for being such a good patient.

Koko’s specialists pronounce her fit, pack up their gear and decamp, leaving behind a courtesy discount of 100 percent. Ndume, now the target in the pregnancy issue, is heard to sigh deeply behind his swimsuit issue of *Sports Illustrated* and sign, “They’re gonna give me Viagra. I knew it! I could see this coming!”

Healthwise, the lesson here seems to be you are better off being a gorilla. But perhaps the bigger picture would suggest that if we could get all our specialists together in one building with a “One-Trip-Does-it-All” marketing strat-

egy, the procrastinators, the wait-and-seers and the infamous 50 percent who never go at all, would beat a path to our enclave. Except for Koko and a few others, the convenience of this service cannot be denied, particularly if it is pro bono.

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