

Take the 40 Million Years Without Sex Challenge!

by Con Chapman

Scientists have determined that a tiny freshwater organism known as the "bdelloid rotifer" gave up sex 40 million years ago. And you thought the spark had gone out of *your* marriage.



Bdelloid rotifer: "Not this millenium, dear--I have a headache."

While various weird organisms such as Andy Warhol have claimed to be asexual, the bdelloid rotifers have actually pulled it off. I know this is only the second paragraph of this post, but did I mention that all bdelloid rotifers are female?



Andy Warhol: Can't hold a candle to a bdelloid rotifer.

That's right. The bdelloid rotifers have created an all-female, sex-free society. You can imagine the pillow talk between the last male bdelloid rotifer and his significant other:

FEMALE BDR: What are you doing?

MALE BDR: I just want to snuggle . . .

FEMALE BDR: Yeah right. Go to sleep.

MALE BDR: We never have sex anymore!

FEMALE BDR: You say that like it's a bad thing.

"C'mon--you're acting like a bdelloid rotifer!"

According to two Harvard University scientists, bdelloid rotifers can withstand dessication at any life stage and "spring back into action after being dried out." My question is--how do they know? Once you've done away with the last male bdelloid rotifer, where does a dried-up female bdelloid rotifer go for action? A singles bar where everybody else in the place is the same sex as you and just as desperate? I'm sorry, by then it's too late.



"What time does the action start around here?"

The truly amazing aspect of this story is that the scientists who were looking at these creatures didn't think it was a big deal that they hadn't had sex in forty million years. The bdelloid rotifers, that is, not the scientists.



"Forty million years without sex? This is not so remarkable."

No, what got the scientists all excited was how the bdelloid rotifers had developed a substitute for a byproduct of sexual procreation, namely, the beneficial incorporation of new genetic

material into the offspring of a species that enables them to adapt to changing circumstances. That technique? Female bdelloid rotifers steal DNA from other organisms!

Women's book group, or more precisely, chardonnay group.

So next time your wife comes home from book group reeking of chardonnay and says she's too tired for sex, ask her this question: "Have you 'gals' been stealing DNA again?"

