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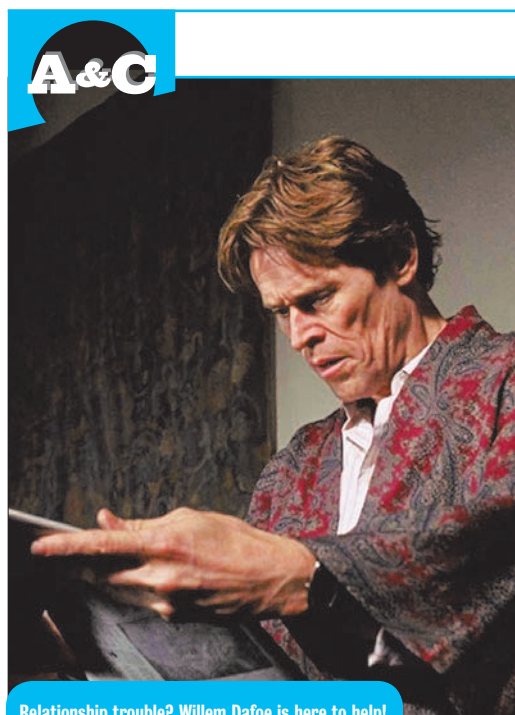
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Relationship trouble? Willem Dafoe is here to help!

The Lighthouse

A movie about two guys in a pretty serious love-hate relationship, this stars Robert Pattinson, hired to help a grizzled old lighthouse operator who's coincidentally played by ... Willem Dafoe. Like a true master, Dafoe sinks into his role as a retired sea dog who enjoys slapping his younger protege around and teaching him to respect seagulls. Your partner voices frustrations about how the movie was snubbed for "Best Picture." You nod silently, though you're not sure why they're talking about the Oscars when they should be heeding Dafoe's warning: "Bad luck to kill a seabird!" Bad luck, indeed.

Same frame of mind

Test your relationship with these five films

BY RACHEL MAYFIELD / rachelm@newsreview.com

It's a common dilemma—you've been living with this person regularly for about 15 years, but you're not certain if they're the right match. Sure, you've got two kids, a chinchilla and a down payment on a house, but do you really know each other? Have you ever talked to each other about your values? Some say the best way forward is to engage in open and honest communication. Or, you could watch some movies. It's simple: If they don't feel the same way about them as you do, it's probably time to break things off. Do what's best for you both—go to a DVD kiosk, grab these five movies and put your relationship to the test.

Antichrist

Some people jokingly label this a "great date movie," but it's not a bad idea if you're serious about putting things to the test. Lars von Trier paints a grim portrait of marriage in this "cabin in the woods" tale riddled with eerie symbolism and gruesome mutilations. But the best thing about this movie? It's got Willem Dafoe, the greatest actor of our generation, playing a normal guy trying to fix his wife. It's mandatory for your partner to understand just how good he is in this movie—especially in that scene where he just stands alone in the forest and looks out with his sad, sad eyes.

Speed 2: Cruise Control

Sandra Bullock has some kind of relationship to Jason Patric in this high-stakes action flick, but it's not really important. What's important is Willem Dafoe's pitch perfect performance as a deranged hacker who hijacks a cruise ship. Halfway through, your partner mumbles something about the original *Speed*, but you're so entranced by Dafoe's scene with a bathtub full of leeches that you don't really hear them. He's got a charisma you can't fake, and if your partner can't see that, it might be time to end things.

Spider-Man

By now it should be obvious to your partner: They need to either get on board the Willem Dafoe train, or get out. Acting is a craft and when Dafoe does it, it's truly magical. Case in point: This movie, in which he flies around on a hoverboard, cackling maniacally as he turns his victims into skeletons. It's the role of a lifetime, and Dafoe gives everything he has to transform into the Green Goblin. You glance nervously at your partner to gauge their expression, only to realize they left the room to tuck the kids into bed. Things are not going well.

Spider-Man 2

You've got one last shot to save this relationship, or it's break-up city. Willem Dafoe is back, playing a dead dad in a mirror that bullies James Franco into killing Spider-Man. "Avenge me!" he screams. You throw the remote at the TV in a fit of rage. It harmlessly bounces off the screen, but you feel lighter somehow, like a weight has lifted off your shoulders. As your partner steps out the door to take the kids to soccer practice, they ask if you could do some laundry. "Sure thing, honey bunch." You sit back, smiling to yourself. Right now, doing some laundry sounds pretty good. □