



Tap, Tap, Flush

When do annoying quirks add up to a deal-breaker?

My new boyfriend takes his laptop into the bathroom with him. It's so easy at the beginning of a relationship, even after just a date or two, to let the small annoyances put the brakes on what could become a good thing. Whenever two people hook up, one, or both, will become horrified by something the other person does or says – that's a given. So the question is: Just where should we set our threshold for annoying idiosyncrasies? Which oddities are deal-breakers, and which might endear us to our flawed flames?

Until the laptop incident, my boyfriend seemed like the perfect guy. Our first dates were the embodiment of the infatuation stage. Like most couples in this phase, we were on our best behavior. Eccentricities were not only not annoying, they were downright endearing. We both carried mints in our pockets to use after a dinner out (and before the goodnight kiss). But soon enough in new relationships, if nothing arises to break the deal, best behavior begins to crack; things start to get comfortable. And this is when I learned about the laptop-in-the-bathroom thing.

It was a Sunday afternoon, and we were enjoying a lazy late lunch. He pulled out his laptop and started showing me pictures of his home and family in South America. I felt privileged that he was giving me a glimpse into

his life back home. We were connecting on a new level. He excused himself to go to the bathroom. He snapped his laptop shut, tucked it under his arm, and left the kitchen. I was a little surprised that he didn't put it on the table or the counter, but my desk was in the other room, between the kitchen and bathroom. I assumed he would put it there while he freshened up.

But as I passed the bathroom door, I heard the unmistakable clacking of a keyboard. I stopped cold and listened more closely, my horror growing slowly as the realization set in. He couldn't be using the computer on the toilet . . . could he? What was he doing? Finishing up some work? Checking the weather? Had he ever e-mailed me from atop his porcelain throne? The questions got even more horrifying: Had I ever touched his now-tainted laptop? Did he set up wireless Internet in my apartment solely so he could answer his e-mail along with the calls of nature? Oh, God, did the laptop taint the kitchen table while we were looking at pictures?

When he came out of the bathroom, he found me sitting, stricken, on the couch. He sat down next to me, placing his laptop between us. My gaze fell on it and didn't shift. I instinctively covered the top of my drink with my hand.

"Uh, so were you checking the scores in

there or what?" I asked.

A sheepish look came over his face, and he laughed nervously. "Oh, that," he began as he moved his laptop to the floor beside us (a clear sign of a guilty conscience). "I guess I wasn't thinking. I haven't done that around you, because I didn't want to freak you out."

Unfortunately, he already had.

I got to thinking about some of the other quirks that I have let guys go over. One boyfriend's eyebrows were suspiciously arched (seriously, they were thin and almost a perfect semi-circle – clearly a wax job). The guy before that laughed like a sick horse. A friend of mine broke up with her serious boyfriend because he walked too heavily on the stairs. I know I'll never find a perfect guy. And I'm sure I have some less-than-adorable habits that I'm not even aware of.

So just what is a girl to do with an otherwise perfect South American boyfriend who takes his laptop into the bathroom with him? Well, I realized I couldn't let such a charming, sweet guy go over this quibble, so we made a few promises to each other. He will never use his laptop in my bathroom again.

And I, most certainly, will never touch it. **BG**

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