

# CAN THIS BE LOVE?

## WHAT'S GREEN AND LIVES WITH LOVE? The beast, jealousy

Now and again, every romantic relationship has to endure a visit from the green-eyed monster. I'm not talking about your partner's ex-girlfriend in new contact lenses, but about jealousy. Unless you and your mate have the collective complacency of a pair of hat racks, this emotion is bound to make an appearance in your home. But if you know the why, what and how of jealousy, you can make its visits as infrequent and as brief as you only wish your partner's mother would make hers.

**Why you get jealous.** Jealousy usually stems from other feelings, such as fear and insecurity. Does your partner get apoplectic simply because you come home at two o'clock in the morning from a meeting with

your colleague—an ex-Olympic skier often mistaken on the street for Don Johnson? Then understand that it is not your innocent behavior that has prompted his irrational response, but his own unconscious realization that he couldn't make it down the beginner's slope in one piece even if he *walked* down it. Knowing this, you'll be able to respond sympathetically to the real cause of his response, the realization of his own utter and pathetic lack of coordination. Similarly, if your partner's recent unexpected promotion requires him to travel around the country a good deal, do you call his hotel at various early-morning hours to check on his whereabouts? Then you should explore the possibility that your reaction is less a response to his new position than to the growing suspicion that you have made a mistake staying so long in your own job, at a company where no woman has ever been promoted high enough to have an office with a window, and where the only travel involved is the forty or so feet between your desk and the ladies' room.

**What triggers your jealousy.** Look back over the events in your relationship that have triggered jealous feelings. When

guests to your home complimented you lavishly on the wonderful dinner you'd prepared—linguini with red clam sauce, leg of lamb with a mustard glaze and frozen lemon soufflé—did your mate mumble something about nobody's complimenting *him* on setting the table? And when your partner was given an award by his company for being the year's most industrious employee, did you feel proud, or make a snide remark about how his "industriousness" ends abruptly at the threshold of your apartment? Then understand that you each may be threatened by the other's accomplishments, and try either to keep them in perspective or keep them hidden.

What about sexual jealousy? When your husband, seated next to an attractive young attorney at a dinner party, showed more animation in two hours than you'd seen in him in the past two years, did you suggest that he hire this woman to represent him in your impending divorce? And when an old boyfriend who is now the president of a large corporation called you to say hello, did your partner suggest that he couldn't be such a hotshot if he had forty minutes to spare for inconsequential chatter with *you*? Then realize that sexual competition has roughly the same effect on the two of you as it had on Othello, and make a vow that when you are together, you will respond to members of the opposite sex as if they were uniformly obnoxious or infectious.

**How you handle your jealousy.** When it comes to handling your jealous feelings, would you say you two show maturity or imbecility? Does your partner show his feelings by pouncing up and down in a mad rendition of the Mexican Hat Dance, shouting in an octave he usually reserves for the final moments of a sporting event whose outcome may mean his temporary financial ruin? Do you show yours by turning into a reasonable facsimile of the sphinx, seeing to it that your home becomes as silent as a pharaoh's tomb that's been sealed for three thousand years? Then you must both find ways to display this emotion that will heal your bonds rather than put them through a shredding machine. Instead of behaving like a jumping bean, for instance, your partner might more wisely expend his energy helping prepare the feasts he so resents your getting compliments for making. And instead of remaining coldly silent, it might be more productive for you to remind your partner of some pertinent historical facts: specifically, that when Don Juan died he was sick, penniless and alone.

Since jealousy can easily shatter the peace of your relationship, handle it as gingerly and with as much care as you would handle something fragile, or overly inflated, like a balloon. Or your partner's ego.

by Bette-Jane Raphael



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