

# CAN THIS BE LOVE?

## HOW TO SURVIVE THE PARTY when he's the world's worst guest

Going to parties and dinners at our friends' homes should qualify as one of the delights of civilized living, right up there with eating burritos and watching *Cagney and Lacey*. This means that if you feel terror at receiving an invitation to a friend's house, as if that house were in the heart of Beirut, something is wrong. Unfortunately, for a lot of us that "something" is our partner, who may not always stack up to our idea of the perfect guest. In fact, when it comes to attending a social occasion, some of us might prefer to leave our mates at home in favor of paid escorts. How about your own partner? Regarding his performance as a guest, would you classify him as a) a delight, b) a nonenti-

ty, or c) an embarrassment?

For my friend Sue, "c" is the obvious choice. Her husband Gil is the life, and sometimes the death, of any party they attend. Unlike Sue, who is terrified of going to large gatherings where she doesn't know many people and who will follow anyone she *does* know to the bathroom in order to keep from standing alone, Gil is loudly gregarious. He has no trouble meeting everyone in the room, generously refilling his glass as he goes. Then, "as if he's not noticeable enough," Sue says with more than a touch of sarcasm, his behavior quickly becomes the kind that people review the next day—as in, "Remember when Gil got down on his knees and sang *Mammy*?" Watching him with a mixture of envy and embarrassment, Sue is in a corner somewhere desperately trying to strike up a conversation with an hors d'oeuvre. Of course, they can never agree about when to say their farewells. Sue is ready to go home five minutes after they arrive, while Gil thinks the only proper time to leave a party is when even their host has gone to bed and he and Sue are the only people left in the room.

My friend Kim has the opposite problem.

Her boyfriend is a film editor with an extremely heavy work schedule that leaves him little time, and less energy, for social occasions. He always promises to meet her at one or another of their friends' homes and then shows up several hours after his promised arrival time, hours Kim has spent coming up with ever more desperate excuses for his tardiness, finally speculating that he might have developed night blindness and been unable to read their friends' address in the dark.

I comfort Kim by suggesting that there are those of us who envy her a partner who makes only limited appearances in their friends' homes. I know there are nights when I wish my own partner hadn't shown up at all. That's because he is a man who can let no remark go unchallenged. If a passing comment about a current movie is, in his opinion, inaccurate, it will be dealt a swift and deadly blow, as if it had been an impassioned defense of the Third Reich. His conversational combativeness can put a pall on the evening's discourse, since more timid guests may quail at having to defend even their most innocent remarks on the weather.

At least he remains interested in the proceedings, however, unlike my friend Janet's lawyer husband, whose mind, she reports, begins to drift away from any conversation that does not revolve around the only two subjects that interest him: football and torts. "When he isn't interested in the topic under discussion, everybody in the room knows it," she says. His eyes start wandering over the ceiling as if he is looking for signs of structural damage, and he begins to yawn with an intensity that suggests he hasn't slept since his bar exam. At this point, Janet will do almost anything to distract their hosts from her husband's obvious boredom, drawing the line only at taking off her clothes.

Evenings out are tense ones for Stan and Marcia, too, since Stan has the unfortunate habit of irrevocably altering any place he inhabits for more than three minutes at a stretch. This he does by the simple process of breaking things, a tendency that makes him about as welcome as an invading army. Since his hands are not made to hold anything less substantial than a bowling ball, crystal goblets are quickly turned to smithereens, and porcelain vases rarely live to see another sunrise. Marcia is forever writing little notes to their hosts that start: "Thanks for the wonderful dinner. I'm so sorry about your grandmother's Waterford candy dish. . . ."

Nobody's perfect, however, and I don't think you should be too upset if your partner doesn't behave perfectly in every social situation. In any case, it's a problem that's bound to lessen with time as a) your partner learns to behave better, or b) you receive fewer and fewer invitations. One way or another, you can't lose.

by Bette-Jane Raphael

# Lerner!

for junior and misses sizes

America's largest specialty chain combines over 65 years of fashion know-how with shop-by-mail convenience.

Here are the clothes you want for the life you lead. Sportswear with sizzle. Dresses with dazzle. Clothes for work and play. Fashion not fad. With the fit and quality you demand...at prices you can afford.

And shopping by mail is so easy. No long lines or crowded parking lots. That means more time for you. And there's no risk...everything you order has Lerner's famous money-back guarantee.

**\$5 OFF first catalog purchase**



Lerner, P.O. Box 8303, Indianapolis, IN 46283-8303

**FREE** Yes! Please send me a FREE Lerner catalog and my \$5 OFF certificate.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_






N87-008-4