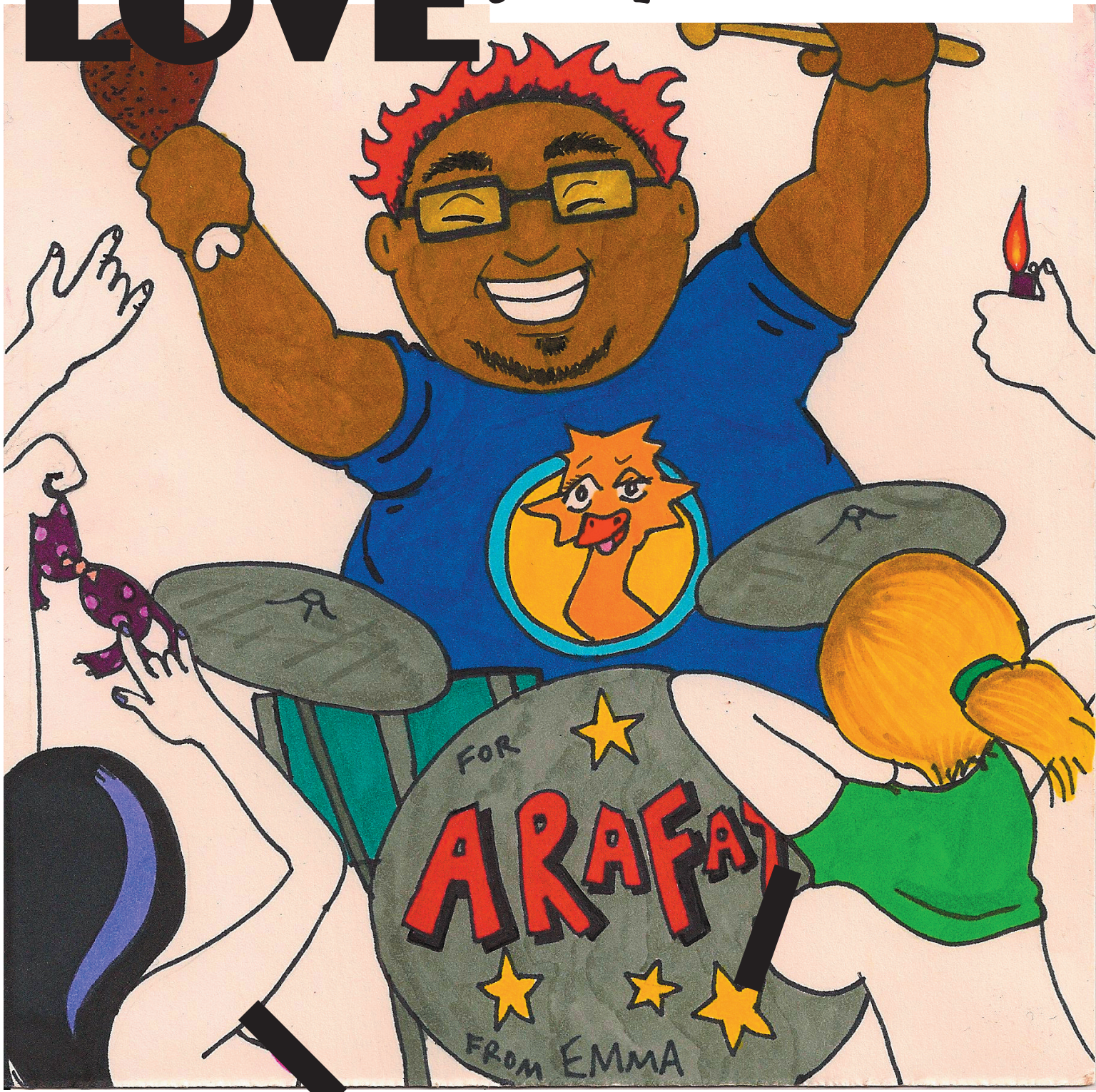


DOCTOR

LOVE

Futhman is now taking
your questions.



Q. My boyfriend is constantly making comments about other girls in front of me. I used to just ignore it, but it's starting to make me feel like there is something wrong with me. He seems to do it more when his friends are around. I don't want to seem like a needy, insecure girl, but I don't think I can take it anymore.
- Girly girl in Gulshan

A. If his behavior makes you uneasy because he's being disrespectful to women, then that needs to stop. Not because it offends his girlfriend, but because eventually that attitude gets internalized and we end up with a nation of incompetent chauvinists.
But you also need to be comfortable with someone to make a relationship last. As the Spice Girls wisely said, "If you wanna be my lover, you gotta get with my friends. Make it last forever, 'cause friendship never ends!"
Ask yourself this. What's the friendship-to-romance ratio in your relationship? Are you friends with your boyfriend, were you friends before you dated, do you foresee being friends with him once (sorry, it's inevitable) you break up? You can't just be in it for the romance and not be there for the hanging out. I mean, you can, but you won't be happy.
As you ride your romantic rickshaw into the sunset, keep this in mind. Sure, there are other girls out there, but you're the one who's getting his endless phone calls, flowers, sonnets, passive aggressive status updates, and Artcell-only mixtapes. Just as how you chose your man over Shakib Khan Or Shakib Al Hasan But not Shakib Chowdhury, because you can't choose another man over him.

Q. I've heard that when a man is lucky enough to get a woman into his bed, the last thing he cares about is the bit of cellulite on her behind that she obsesses about. Is this really true? I've been with my man for a couple of months and am ready to take things to another level. I feel really ashamed of my stretch marks and not so flat belly. Guys do notice these things, don't they?
- Stretchy in Shantinogor

A. Here's the truth. Nothing is sexier than enthusiasm and hygiene.
I wrote up a huge rant about body image, unrealistic expectations set forth by the media, rich girls spending too much time at the salon, people having different tastes, how most men actually prefer softness and abundance, true beauty not being physical, OK so maybe having a bit of physicality to it, Keats on the soft fall and swell of his fair love's ripening breast, Shakespeare on the fact that his mistress's breath reeks, Kumar Biswajit on the mystery of whether you love his flowers or him, how the act of love is more about smiles glimpsed, hair smelled, breath felt, fingers entwined, and finally, how it's better to use chicken bullion instead of salt in omelets.

But as I pounded on my desk and said, "Damn it, that's right!" I realized that it was all unnecessary. Because, really, nothing is sexier than enthusiasm and hygiene. That's all there is to it.

Q. Dear Arafat,
I should probably write to Mita about this one because it's right up her alley, but I thought I'd go a different route. I am in love with my first cousin! I know some people think that's gross, but I can't help it. Cousin love seemed to not be frowned upon back in the day. What's the deal now? Can I approach her without making my relatives angry? I need to do something about this soon, as I've been staring at her inappropriately at family dawats.
-Incestuous in Eskaton

Q. It's not Mita you should be writing to, it's Charles Darwin. Actually, let me take that back. You've made it to 2012 and computer usage without learning about the disastrous effects of sharing too much genetic material. Maybe that ignorance is precious, like a flower in spring's first bloom before it's stomped upon by Dipjol doing a racy dance. Maybe it isn't. Maybe it's pointless to warn you of the consequences of interbreeding manifesting in the seventh generation because someone should have done that six generations ago.
But ignore the evolutionary pitfalls and look at the social inevitabilities. You want to become a haunted and huncle (hot auntie and hideous uncle) couple with your cousin. Your shashuri will be a woman who knows about the time you got caught smoking in Grade 7. She holds a grudge against your mother going back to 1994. She is the sister of the crazy uncle on your father's side who tried to sell the ejmalishompotti to a real estate developer in secret. God help you. And if you ever get divorced, imagine the awkward Eid dinners.
Don't lose all hope though. My mother has a friend (I swear I'm not making this up) whose son married her (not blood-related) step-daughter. They're happy, just worried about how their future children will deal with the dadi/nani thing.

Illustration done by: Emma Palma