



# DOCTOR LOVE

The love guru is now taking your questions.

Dear Love Doctor,

*Do you believe in the concept of 'Tabij'? I never used to until recently. My girlfriend and I have been together for six years. Every few months she acts very strange. She ignores me and starts fights constantly. This hurts me beyond belief. It's like I just can't get through to her and she is not how she normally is, a loving and gentle person.*

*Her grandmother is a self-proclaimed spiritual person and has always disliked me. A friend of mine recently pointed out that maybe Granny has done a 'tabij' against me. I would laugh at first, but as time goes on and she repeats these patterns, I am starting to think maybe my friend is right. If that is the case, I don't know how I can win against this supernatural crap. Help me!*

*Superstitious in Shantinagar*

No, I don't believe in tabij. You **know** what else I don't believe in? What happened in the Harry Potter novels. Come to think of it, I don't believe in Star Wars or Lord of the Rings either.

What I do believe, however, is that people go through phases. Sometimes your girlfriend might have to deal with exams, problems at work, familial issues, any of a million things. When this happens, she's bound to be snippy with you. You're supposed to be, at least according to at least forty terrible ballads, the guy who's there to catch her tears before they fall to the ground. It's part of the boyfriend job description.

Honestly, what do you think is more realistic: a human being goes through periods of irritability, or a doddering old woman stealing your

hair, tying it into eleven knots, then reciting surah Ikhlāas backwards? Or keeping a djinn in a mayonnaise jar (preferably Best Foods) and periodically sending the djinn out to make your girlfriend annoyed with you? If Dadiamma has access to djinn power or Twilight vampires, why would she go through such a roundabout way and get Shundori to be mildly annoyed with you? Why not contrive for a piano to fall on you right at the moment you slip on a banana peel? Or simply to give you nightmares and whisper in your ear while you sleep (a common djinn tactic) and thereby drive you nuts? It doesn't seem to be very productive for somebody who theoretically is of the same order of creature as Gandalf. And you know what the wizard would have done if he didn't want you dating his granddaughter? He'd hold a big honking stick in front

of her door and say "You shall not pass! Tumizaibarna!"

Speaking of tabij, I'll share an experience with you. I lived in Dhaka for much of my twenties. My mother, being a superstitious person, would screen every girl I dated for djinn influence or djinnfluence. She would do this by taking them to a special Pir in Kamrangicchor, where a prepubescent girl would read their soul in a silver bowl of water, and a blind man would talk into a paan leaf and communicate with djinns. I used to complain but my girlfriends were justifiably terrified of my mother. Ammu finally stopped when she took me to the Pir to ask why I was so fat. Was it an especially malicious djinn? "No," said the Pir. "He's just a glutton."

*Hey Love Guru,*

*I have been going out with this guy, Z, for about 8 months now. He is a wonderful person and is not only super nice to me but also my friends. Well, I know this is weird and maybe I am overreacting but it has recently come to my attention that he is a little too nice towards my guy friends. He is always finding ways to touch them and when they are around he sort of forgets that I exist. I didn't notice it until one day when we were at the movies Z tried to put his arm around my friend who later complained to me saying it was extremely awkward. I mean it's absolutely cool if his interests lay elsewhere but since we're dating it's starting to worry me especially since my guy friends do not want to hang out whenever he is around which is almost always. I know it sounds silly but do you think I should be worried? If yes, how do I confront him?*

*Sincerely,  
Concerned in Kolabagan*

This is problematic. First of all, there's homosexuality and homosociability. Homosexuality, as we know, is what Alcibiades wants to do to Sophocles in Plato's Symposium. Or what you can get for a reasonable amount of money in Ramna Park on Thursday nights. Homosociability, on the other hand, is when your friends Selim and Regan hold hands and dance in a circle at a Miles concert. They don't necessarily want prostate contact, but you gotta hold hands with someone, right?

Your boyfriend can be gay or he can simply be khat. I say "khat" because personal space is a luxury in Bangladesh and only the wealthy (and therefore English

medium educated, probably went to America) can afford it. So if he doesn't know about personal space, maybe he just has middle class cousins.

But what if he really actually is gay? Statistically, 8 to 10% of any population is. It's not something you can help, it's not something you decide one day. It's genetic. You're born with it. Unless you went to Cadet College, in which case it may be acquired. But given a million social reasons, some of them wrong, all of them complex, very few people actually admit to it in Bangladesh.

So it brings us to this. Are you happy with him? Does he satisfy you emotionally and otherwise? If so, then there's that. And you can always ask him point blank about it. You guys have dated long enough for that. Here's a handy chart:

If he is affectionate towards one specific friend: he might have a bromance.

If he is affectionate towards all your guy friends: he might be gay, he might be khat.

If he has a life-size poster of Shakib Khan in his room: he's probably gay.  
If he has a life-size poster of Shakib Chowdhury: he likes metal, which may be worse.

Finally, I'd like to point out that everybody's a little gay. Here's a mental exercise. You're a girl. Would you rather kiss, full on the mouth, Dipjol as BillaDakat from Kaata Rifle, or Scarlett Johansson as the Black Widow in The Avengers? They're both wearing leather, except Dipjol also knows how to dance.

