

Many Shades of Rude

Written by L.A. Plume

Wednesday, 23 May 2012 07:36



Dear Ms. Plume,

I've always wondered if we're held accountable for someone else's behavior if they are our friend or guest. I'm dating a woman who has poor table manners. She talks with food in her mouth, she collects the dinner plates when people are barely finished eating and scrapes them at the table, she scrapes her own plate while eating until I think the decoration will come off. She is other wise lovely, but I shudder when we have dinner with friends.

Ethan

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Dear Ethan,

We are not accountable for our friend's behavior; we are, however, accountable for choosing those people as friends and bringing them to dinner. Hopefully your friend has social skills that shine so brightly that her poor table manners will pale by comparison.

L. A. Plume

Dear L. A. Plume,

I have recently begun seeing a man; we're not quite to the dating stage yet, but I'm beginning to have some concerns about his behavior. He makes comments that are annoying and/or inappropriate, and then when I ask him what he means, or why he said that, he simply shrugs it off and says, "Just kidding!" The other day we were out driving and there was a poisonous snake in the road; he pulled alongside of the snake and said, "I ought to get him and wrap him around you!" I replied, "That's a poisonous snake; why would you even say that?" Again, he said, "Just kidding! Don't you have any sense of humor?" How do I respond to these statements?

M.P.

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Dear M. P.,

I think your question would be better suited to a psychiatrist than to me, but since we know I can't resist giving advice, here goes. Next time you're getting in the car with him, simply slam his hand in the door and then look at him sweetly and say "Oh, did that hurt? So sorry – just kidding." This gives you the benefit of throwing his favorite statement back in his face, but he also won't be able to determine whether you were 'just kidding' when slamming his hand in the door, or when saying you were sorry about it. Either way, it's more than he deserves.

L.A. Plume

Dear Ms. Plume,

Last week I got a phone call from an old friend that I haven't heard from for years. Sure enough, she was driving from Florida to the northeast and wanted to stop and catch up with me along the way, which, as we all know, is code for wanting a free place to stay for the night. I dutifully said yes, went to the grocery store and stocked up on her favorite soft drinks, beer, and wine, as well as food for breakfast and snacks. We went out to dinner, and when the check came, it sat on the table until I was embarrassed enough to pay it and she didn't offer to chip in. Same scenario the next day at lunch. And when she left after two nights instead of one, she took the rest of the drinks, beer and wine in a cooler she borrowed from me that I will never see again. I know you've addressed wayward houseguests in the past, but how can one stop this from happening?

Bebe

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Dear Bebe,

I wish I knew! It seems that people who want to “visit and catch up” – and who you know deep down will never reciprocate – just come, eat, and go without ever inspiring the required angst over their departing so soon... not to mention the shocking absence of a hostess gift. And more often than not, they “borrow” a book, need a meal to go, and have used every towel in the house. A big tip jar by the bed would seem so tacky, wouldn't it? Or would it? Perhaps we could leave them a thank you note under their pillow chocolates saying something like: “Thank you so much for coming to visit. I have enjoyed making the bed for you and stocking up on your favorite foods and drinks. Since I don't want you to have to worry about the appropriate thank you gift, here is a list of what I would enjoy.....” Then tailor your list to the equivalent of however many nights they've stayed to the cost of a suite at the Ritz-Carlton and never mind the discrepancy in cost – the mini-bar at the Ritz isn't free.

L. A. Plume

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