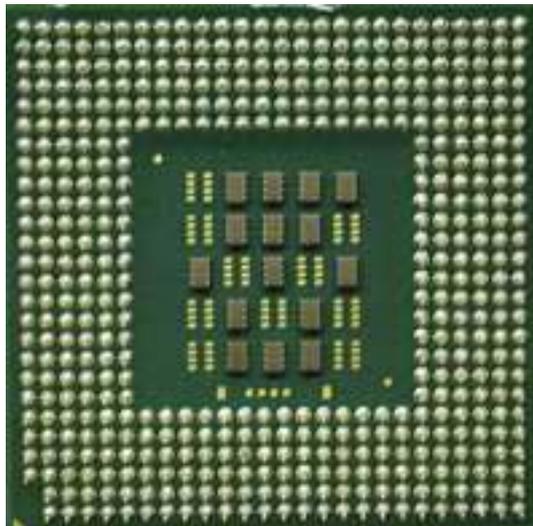**I'm Marrying a Computer Geek**

If your significant other has ever responded "I dunno, I'm busy, go away" to the innocent inquiry as to why there are random-looking metal parts and an empty computer case laying all over your desk (ie. What the hell are you doing?!), I feel your pain.

Having arrived in England in September, a week after I did, to live and work for the year, my now-fiancé immediately unpacked and turned on his new computer.... followed some time later by unpacking the surprise-engagement ring.

Over the time we've been together, however, I like to think I've adapted to thrive in our cozy threesome: him, me, and his laptop. More than that, I think I've managed to actually learn something in the process (and understand the highest compliment he could ever pay me: naming his new computer 'Trish').

So, if your new boyfriend asks if you have a flashlight, paperclip, and a set of glasses screwdrivers, while eyeing your new system, you needn't panic right away. Just follow these five easy steps to a more harmonious relationship with your favorite computer geek.

1) Don't question why his computer always needs to go faster. Just assume that achieving this will involve taking over your work space with very small screws and even smaller unidentifiable parts. And yes, it will be time-consuming, before you ask. It is usually acceptable to ask questions when he's unscrewing screws (as long as it's not 'What the hell are you doing?!'), but generally not if he is tinkering with something that looks like this:
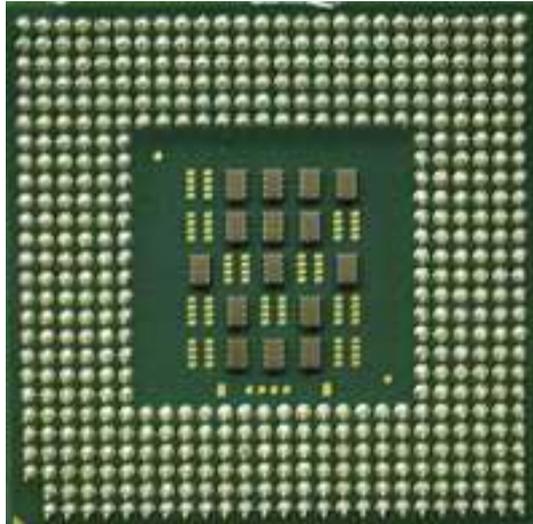

Don't comment on how funny he looks with one eye shut. Instead, remark on how sexy he is when he's concentrating (not sarcastically). Don't expect more than a brief smile, or if you're really lucky, a glance in your general direction.

2) Don't try to initiate any deep conversations when he's up to his elbows in the bowels of his computer. You won't get any intelligible response: the lucky among us are treated to a grunt or 'huh?' noise. Regardless, he's not really listening. I prefer to consider this evidence of intense concentration rather than just being ignored.

Understand his point of view through an analogy: you're glued to the season finale of Buffy (or other dramatic, heart-wrenching series as appropriate). Angel returns, and is about to declare his still undying love for Buffy: your mate interrupts to ask why you took all of his clothes from the perfectly good spot he had them

on the floor. Yes, I know you really need to talk to him, but just postpone it for an hour or two.

3) Show some interest! Ask questions, even if they're absolutely and utterly stupid ('So, they could really call it SUPERclocking, not overclocking, right?') Eventually you'll pick up a bit more and figure out that this:

is actually the CPU. Don't worry, he'll usually dumb-down the explanations enough for a 'normal person' to understand ('The CPU is the part that does all the thinking'). The CPU thing took me about 6 months to fully process. Just ignore that inner voice that's screaming 'Who cares what that part does?!'. He'll really appreciate it when you give caring an honest attempt.

Another approach is to read up on some aspect that does interest you. Ever thought about writing a small personal webpage? Throw out your copy of Frontpage immediately, and look at a free html tutorial online. It won't take that much time, and its easier than you would think. There are tons of companies that will publish your site online for free!

I'll never forget the response I got after I figured out how to play the MP3 music files from my computer on his computer (with better speakers): "Dear! Dear! You're networking! You're networking!", accompanied by a very amusing happy-dance.

4) Ask before you touch stuff if he's got the case open. Don't read articles over his shoulder and then start talking about it before he's finished reading. Don't eat over his computer. Don't question why he gets excited about a component that's scheduled for release in 2008. Most importantly, remember that a neck massage will distract him from almost anything.

5) Acknowledge the perks you get for dating a computer geek: free tech support 24 hours a day! (So much better than getting an annoying kid that doesn't know anything after half an hour on hold.) Also, take him with you if you buy a new system. You won't get hosed if he asks questions that the sales guy has to get his manager to answer. When I bought my laptop about 3 years ago, I paid about C$500 in insurance that I didn't need and C$100 extra on my printer than the going rate. Unfortunately, I suspect that many not-so-informed women pay way too much for less-than-ideal systems. Sigh. Just like cars, haircuts, and deodorant. Do try to be well informed yourself, but having a guy along can give you an edge.

Being in love with a computer geek can try your faculties at the best of times. But hey, just think of the loyalty, dedication, patience, and enthusiasm that must be buried in that boy somewhere! Or.... just remember the free tech support.

[Patricia Gongal](#)

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