

WHAT'S HIS IS MINE

I believe that a successful marriage must include openness, honesty, and mutual sharing of belongings. In order for a union to last, there should be absolutely no secrets between the partners, and household possessions should not be segregated. I think my husband of 20-plus years would agree.

Then why won't he tell me where his Sharpie marker is??

I know he has one somewhere, but he insists on hiding it like a national treasure that should have multiple impenetrable layers of security protecting it from a family of would-be thieves. To access it, you must give three days advance notice, provide two forms of identification and produce a written contract guaranteeing its safe return.

I don't get it. We've only lost his marker a few times. Once the kids took it to school to color in the former Soviet Union on their map of the world and it understandably ended up dried out and useless after that exhausting experience. And perhaps once last summer I took it outside to mark labels on seedling pots and maybe it got left out in the rain. Maybe even twice. But is that any reason to move the Sharpie from hiding place to hiding place, like it's a member of the government's witness protection program?

That's not the only thing he hides from me. There's the stash of sugar cookies in the console of his truck. There's my favorite cinnamon gum in the linen closet. And he thinks I don't know this, but that high end silver grill lighter that he won as a door prize but is really better suited to light my scented candles in the kitchen--resides in his bottom desk drawer under some old golf score cards.

Why all the secrecy? I don't understand it. We are in a committed relationship that relies on integrity of character. His overwhelming need to conceal these personal possessions is just mystifying.

What? Oh, sure, I hide a few things too. But *my* objects are critical to the success of the household and must be protected at all costs. Scissors, tape and working pens are habitually on the Missing Persons list and therefore justifiably live a cloak and dagger life on top of the utility cabinet. My fingernail clippers are restricted to a radius of 3 feet from my vanity or a series of alarm bells will sound and the local law enforcement will be automatically notified. Of course it's a necessity to keep emergency shopping cash in an envelope in with the cleaning supplies (a VERY secure spot). And the bag of bite-size Snickers bars in the coffee cup in the curio cabinet? Well, every woman understands the fundamental value of chocolate in a crisis, real or otherwise, and no smart man would ever question that theory.

Does this veil of secrecy between us point to marital distress? Are we on shaky ground, headed for the marriage scrap heap?

Nah. I'll just have a mini-Snickers, grab some shopping money and everything will be OK. And maybe I'll pick up a Sharpie while I'm out.

Mary Beth Weisenburger lives in Putnam County and is the proud owner of a new Sharpie pen of her very own.