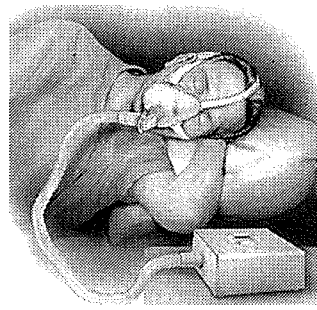


Why I love my boyfriend's CPAP

I never kiss my boyfriend goodnight any more. Any attempt to do so would involve contact with the rubbery paraphernalia spread across his face. In bed, he sports a scary-looking mask from which hangs an 18-inch ribbed tube connecting it to the laptop-sized machine on his bedside table. And the worst thing is, it's all because of me.

When I moved in with him a year ago, at my insistence he got himself a Continuous Positive Airway Pressure device. This little gadget, prescribed by doctors after he was diagnosed with sleep



apnoea, has transformed our lives. The condition causes him to emit thunderous snores and kick out in a panic as he fights for breath. His CPAP forces air up his nose, which prevents the upper airways from collapsing. The result – an end to

nightly gurgling and a year's supply of earplugs chucked in the bin.

He first came home with a face mask covering everything except his eyes, giving him the appearance of a demented frogman. He progressed to one which covers his nose and is kept away from the eyes by a plastic pad on his forehead. The blue velvet strap that clamps his jaw shut (or else the oxygen being forced up the nose rushes straight out of the mouth) lends him the air of a Victorian gent clad in a bonnet tied under the chin.

While snoring is often considered to be a laughing matter, sleep apnoea is a more dangerous beast. Its consequences include depression, irritability, sexual dysfunction, learning and memory difficulties as well as falling asleep at inappropriate times such as while at work, on the telephone or driving.

So though the Hannibal the Cannibal/intensive-care patient look may not be a romantic one, I take comfort from the fact that it could have saved his life. It has certainly saved my sanity.

Zenab Short

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