

a ~~Reel~~ MEN IN

Meet The Men
YOU WANT
On Your Own Terms



A GIRLS' GUIDE TO ATTRACTING MEN BY EVIE JASPER



REAL MEN IN

©2003-2015 Superior Living Inc, All Rights Reserved. "RealMenIn" and "Evie Jasper" are trademarks of Superior Living. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission.

The material contained in this and any other communication from Evie Jasper is an expression of opinion and is not to be construed as legal, medical or professional advice. This material may only be used for personal entertainment purposes.

In order to protect the privacy of the men and women whose sexual lives and dating experiences are described in this book, I have changed names and some minor identifying details.



THE 3 L METHOD

Throughout this course I will teach you a little yet simple method that makes men want you and only you. I call it the 3 L Method and each L stands for Lure, Lust, & Love. Let's overview each concept.

Lure

Women often grow bitter and angry that the men they fancy ignore them and place all their attention on the barely legal hottie. They lament, "I have so much more to offer than that stupid bimbo." I get it. It sucks. But there's something you can do about it. Remember: men aren't driven by logic but their dick.

We can take a lesson from fisherman. They attract a fish's attention through using a shiny, tantalizing lure.

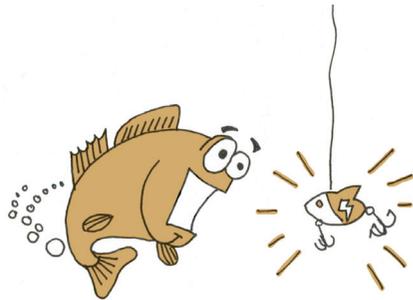
Similarly, anything that's exciting, novel, or rare grabs a man's attention.

While beauty can work as a great lure, so can an unusual piece of clothing or an interesting conversational gambit. I like to wear unusual jewelry and sometimes sport a coonskin cap. These lures communicate speak the language of dick and put the man's attention squarely on you.

Likewise, a good conversational gambit can lure in a man. The trick is to do the opposite of what most women do.

Typically, women attempt to impress a guy by saying something that:

1) Is appropriate for the social situation.



2) *Impresses the guy.*

Do the opposite of this.

Let's look at an example. I once spotted a cutie donning a Yoda shirt. So I told him that Darth Vader was my childhood hero. Most women would never say this - even if Darth Vader was their childhood hero. They'd worry that by giving away so much info the guy would think they're a weirdo. They'd self-edit and settle on, "I love your Star Wars shirt." Or, even worse, they'd want to win points with him and lie, "Oh, I love Yoda. He's my hero."

Two mistakes: one, this is lying. When you lie, you don't come across as genuine. Two, you're doing what every girl does. Self-editing to impress the guy. This makes you come across as ordinary and fails to lure in the guy.

When you stop self-editing and say what's on your mind, men will see you as exciting, rare, and novel. And your words will naturally lure them in.

Lust

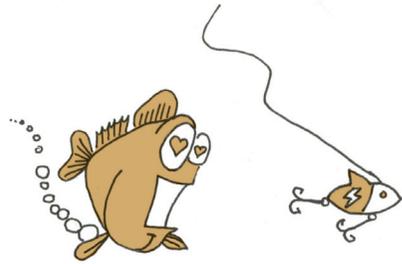
The shiny lure gets the fish's attention but to get the fish on the hook, the fisherman needs to goad the fish into chasing the lure.

Similarly, you need make the man chase the lure - namely you. How do you make the man chase the lure? Think of what fisherman do. When they reel in the lure a bit, the fish chases it. They let out some line. Making the fish think that it has a reel chance at getting it. And then they reel in the line again compelling the fish to chase it even harder.

When you do this to men, the same thing happens.

The process is simple...

- 1) *Reel in the line a bit and let him chase.*
- 2) *Reel in the line a bit more and watch him chase harder.*
- 3) *Let out the line a bit.*
- 4) *Reel in the line again and he'll*



The harder he chases, the more lust he feels for you.

Let's look at an example. One I've used on numerous occasions. Imagine you've lured in a hottie. Ask him: "What do you do?"

When he starts to give you his auto-pilot response, interrupt with, "Never mind. That's a boring question. If you could have any profession and money didn't factor into the equation, what would it be?"

You're challenging him by putting him on the spot. This makes him chase the lure.

If he struggles, give him some help. List the most humorous and ridiculous careers your mind can conjure up - such as a circus clown, mime, or Elvis impersonator. Notice what you've done: you've reeled in the lure a bit more and put the pressure on him. He'll chase harder by attempting to pick the career path that impresses you the most.

Let the line out a bit by saying, "That's an honest and respectable profession. Good choice." This builds his confidence and makes him think: even though this lure's hard-to-get, I think I may have a chance.

He'll inevitably ask you, "If you could be anything, what would it be?" Maybe say, "I'd be a pirate and sport a frilly shirt and an eye patch. Every day would be a new adventure and I'd have a new man in every port."

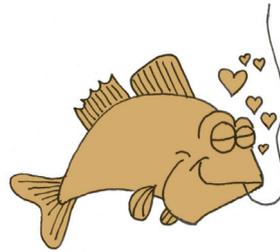
He'll protest, "I want to be a pirate too."

Reel the lure in by saying, "Nope. You already chose. That's your lot in life, buddy."

He'll chase even harder and feel lust for you from head-to-toe.

Love

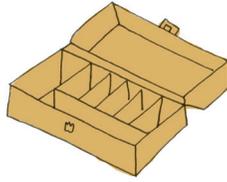
Love is the last stage of my method. If you keep reeling and releasing, he'll keep chasing. Eventually, he'll bite down on the lure and you'll have him on the hook. This is the moment his lust turns into love.



Whether you're looking for "The One" or "The One for Right Now" the 3 L Method will work for you.

I've organized this book so that each section gradually builds off of the previous sections. So if you're worried, we won't be running out and dazzling men until we've gone through a few initial insights and exercises. In the first sections you will learn how to create a good lure. I'll teach you how to grab and keep men's attention. In the remainder of the book we'll focus on using flirting to build attraction and lust and the foundations for turning that lust into lasting love. Love is the moment a man becomes not only physically attracted to you, but also emotionally attracted. We'll discuss this process and how to pace a relationship in the later chapters. I've also included a special bonus on how and when to ask for commitment successfully.

Ready? Awesome! Let's get started!



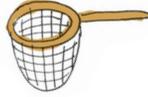
CONTENTS

SECTION ONE: Self-Assessment

Meet Cute (Men)	10
The Unicorn Analogy	13
Just Let the Ryan Gosling Dream Go	19
Be the Most Interesting Woman in the Room	39
Va Va Voom 101	50
Breaking the Cycle of Male Validation	59
I Can't Pronounce Sauvignon Blanc And How I Make Clumsy Endearing	75
Everyday Exercises to Overcome Self-Consciousness	80
How an Independent, Successful Girl Can Still Be His Damsel in Distress	90
A Unique Piece of Flair	97

SECTION TWO: How To Pick Up Men

The Opener	101
Learn From the Lions, the Lone Gazelle Always Gets Picked Off First	145
How to Keep the Conversation Rolling	150
Get Him in Hot Pursuit	172
Make Meeting You Fun (And Easy), or How I Repurpose My Halloween Costumes	186
A Good Wingwoman	198
Social Violation, and, Giving Your Competition Enough Rope to Hang Themselves	205
"I Really Like You," and What Other Things Not To Say	218
Men Want to Have Sex: One-Night Stands Made Easy	229



SECTION THREE: Where To Meet Men

Hassle Your Locals	243
Should I Ask Out My Instagram Follower?	249
The Yes Rule	257
Buying a Ticket For the Date I Want	263
Hot Spot: Your Local Stripping Establishment	269
Internet Dating in the Land of Make Believe	271

SECTION FOUR: The Follow-Up

Closing and Why a Guy's Phone Number is No Reason For Celebration	281
Identifying the Princes from the Frogs	293
Quality v.s. Quantity Dating	302
The Follow Up: Make Him Want to See You Again	306
One-Night-Stand 911	325
Sexting in the Gelson's Freezer Isle and Other Dating Bloopers	345
Baggage, Deal Breakers and Crazy Ex-Girlfriends	356

BONUS: Catching Your Crush

I'm an Opportunist, Not a Stalker	370
But We'll Lose the Friendship... ..	393
Why Fifteen Page Letter Never Win Guys Over	399
I Like Him, So I Slept With His Friend	409
In the Pool Where You Least Expect It Will Be the Fish	417

The background of the entire page is a vibrant cyan blue. It is populated with numerous stylized, cartoonish illustrations of people in various dynamic poses, as if dancing or moving. The figures are drawn with simple black outlines and flat colors. Many are wearing yellow or orange jackets and grey pants. One central figure is a superhero with a yellow suit and a black swastika on his chest. Another figure on the right is holding a grey boombox. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century pop art or mid-century modern graphic design.

SECTION ONE:
Self-Assessment



MEET CUTE (MEN)

I'm doomed. I've watched far too many romantic comedies for my own good. I was raised on crowd favorites like *When Harry Met Sally*, *Serendipity*, and *Bridget Jones Diary*. Even though it's the same formula nearly every time, I'm a sucker for a good meet cute. You know the scenario. Someone bumps into someone else, something falls, and the two people start to talk. Their eyes meet, time slows, and everything else fades away. It's like that pesky sniper Cupid swooped down from his cloud on high to light them up with arrows. The realization hits them. They waited their whole lives to meet. Destined for each other. Sure, some obstacles stand in their way – John Cusack might cry – but in the end they'll live happily ever... or at least until the credits roll and a sappy John Mayer song plays. The thing is, I'm a hopeless romantic. I believe love like this exists.

I've 'accidentally' stumbled into the Barnes and Noble's self-help aisle a few times. Stacks of candy colored Mr. Right rulebooks claim to reveal the secrets of dating: how to win men's hearts and get them to put a ring on it. Pep rally paperbacks like these assure you that Prince Charming is on his way. They dole out tough-love strategies you'll use

once his white horse pulls up curbside. In all these dating bibles, the men magically appear like a genie out of a bottle to whisk you away to a lavish evening at Nobu or the local Sizzler. I'm not sure where these authors reside, and I don't know about you, but if I'm waiting for Prince Charming to pop up in a cloud of smoke at my local watering hole, I'll be waiting for a while.

So let's empower ourselves! Let's not leave it all up to the guys to make the first move. Who wants to take action? Flirt! Let's have some fun, get a few free drinks in the process, and a date or two, or three.

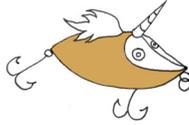
REAL MEN IN isn't a husband hunting guide. I won't talk about men 'completing you.' And I promise, we'll discuss fate only sarcastically. My book is a realistic, practical approach to meeting the men you want, on your terms. Beyond dating, many of these same principles apply to overcoming self-consciousness and interacting socially.

I'll be honest: I wasn't always as confident and socially adept as I am today. In high school, I dressed the part of the 4.0 drama geek, hiding any sexuality beneath my layers of flannel, baggy jeans and Doc Martins. Blurting out the right answers from the front row of class – no problem. But flirting with my locker neighbor scared me shitless, never mind the football captain.

I've come a long way since then. Approaching a situation takes prepping, practice, creativity and, most of all, self-confidence. My goal is to arm you with an advantage. Meeting men doesn't have to be a frustrating or disappointing process. If you're proactive and possess the know-how, it's simple. And quite fun and empowering.

Dating rulebooks, our grandmother's courting secrets, period pieces with women in bonnets – they knock

it into our heads that men must be the ones to approach women. Is it just me or is anyone else sick of being told to look prim, pretty and proper and wait patiently for the right man? I'll warn you right now: I'm going to challenge convention. After all, this is the girl's guide for picking up men.



THE UNICORN ANALOGY

***Always be Yourself
Unless You can be a Unicorn
Then always be a Unicorn***

I'm not that clever, I stole this off someone's Pinterest page. It's a pretty decent personal mantra, although my view might be skewed slightly. I should probably just come out and tell you this now: I'm obsessed with unicorns. So much, I debate building a shrine. I'm one Bedazzler and a can of glitter away.

My affinity with one-horned mythical creatures stems from my childhood. I'm a product of the '80s. With their glowing horns, colorful manes and glittery sun, star, and heart shaped tramp-stamps, the magical creatures of *The Last Unicorn*, *Rainbow Bright* and *My Little Pony* solidified in my young mind the advantages of being special.

Imagine a unicorn. Its horn makes it special, rare, and different from ordinary horses. Of course, some people may argue that with one horn a unicorn is a mutant freak (but "who are these people?" I ask you.). Odd or not, no other creature has one horn. Ok, well, except a narwhale, but they

don't count because they can't prance on pretty rainbows. Regardless, given the choice, hands-down, I'd rather be a unicorn any day over their counterpart, the plain blah horse. Why would anyone want to be ordinary when they could be extraordinary?

Single men tell me they don't meet enough 'cool girls.' Translation: men want unicorns, not everyday blah horses. When I tell 'em, "Look around, dude. They're everywhere," they crinkle their nose and grunt, "Huh? I don't see any. What are you are talking about?"

Then it dawned on me: when a man cannot see a woman's horn – the things that make her special – he sees her as an everyday blah horse. So this got me thinking. How can a woman show off what makes her special, her equivalent of the unicorn horn? It's high time we pow wowed, strategized, and did something about this.

So hi! I'm Evie. I'll be your tour guide, guru, new best friend, journalist, and pickup guinea pig throughout the rest of this book. A little about me. I'll admit I'm rarely the prettiest girl in the room. My nose couldn't be considered small or perky. My lips are anything but full and pouty. My face lacks any of that envious Nordiccheekbone action. Smiling, I sometimes resemble an eager chipmunk. Only with copious amounts of product and hairbrush teasing, poking, and prod-



ding does my limp hair attempt to adhere to a style. My butt is far from J. Lo's and I have no hips to speak of. As I'm not a waif either, I'll never have those jutting collar bones like Gwyneth Paltrow. The first time I sleep with a gentleman suitor, I keep my fingers crossed that my natural D's distract him from my questionable midsection.

Of course, there's some features I'm proud of. My long lean, athletic stems earn me the title of 'best legs' from many a male counterpart. Thus, 'cankles' have never been on my radar. My eyes are great too – big, almond shaped, and exotic with rows and rows of long lashes straight out of a Cover Girl ad. My skin is a wonderful olive shade, swaying my ethnicity from Latin to Indian, and deceptively young looking, making men think I'm seven years younger than my actual age.

But I live in Hollywood, which means any which way I turn there's a line of beautiful, single, younger blondes. Dating is competitive. Without factoring in my personality, I'm not the first girl men notice across a dark and divvy establishment. (My favorite places to frequent given the cheap, stiff drinks and flattering, low lighting.) There's even less of a chance that a guy will approach me. Especially if I'm tucked away in a corner, eagerly waiting for my potential Prince Charming to come find me, as so many dating toms advise.

According to Mr. Right manifestos, I'm supposed to wait around for a man. He'll come. Let the universe bring him to me. (Seriously? The universe? While I'm at it I'll wish upon a star!) I'm forbidden to make any eye contact with a cute guy. Or stand next to him. Pfft, forget about talking to him. Or requesting a Journey song in his honor. Apparently

men drool over bitchy, aloof women. Act unattainable and uninterested and you'll land yourself a hottie. That's great, yet no book tells me what I can do to actually meet these hotties.

And when a man does wander over, why is it always the freak shows? Do I give off a satanic, death metal vibe? Does it come across that I'm into old men with beer guts and dad jeans? Do I look like someone who'd go for a guy with a rat tail? By waiting around, I'm limiting my choices to the men who approach me.

Call it an asset, call it a problem, but I've never been one to stand by idly. I'm horrendously impatient and proactive. I'm the 4.0, dramatic overachiever, remember?

Also, I believe I have a lot to offer, just like I'm sure you do. I'm smart, talented, genuine and easy going. I have a good job, a decent sized apartment with character, I'm independent, and self-sufficient. I jog, practice yoga, paint, and write. I'm open to trying new things and love to travel. I'm outdoorsy and three out of four times can successfully set up a tent. But I love cites and museums too. Did I mention that I still can recite the secret code to Nintendo's Contra? But the right guys will never know any of these things if I'm waiting for them to single me out from the masses. Tucked away in a dark corner, twiddling my thumbs (ok, at least I'm idling time with the aid of a strong whiskey beverage). Don't know about you, but I'm tired of this scenario.

So let's stop waiting for guys to approach us. Let's stop expecting men to do all the work. I'm an equal opportunist. Meeting guys takes some effort on my part too. Sure, there's a risk of rejection, but it's the same risk that guys take and it's the same reason so many men don't approach women. Or at least not the right men. Let's gain

some control over who we meet.

I didn't learn how to meet potential paramours overnight. It took practice, gumption, good and bad dates, and few letdowns. I've learned from my own mistakes. I've learned from other's experiences. I've spent many nights in the self-help aisles sifting through the fool's gold in search of gold. Additionally, I've interviewed a lot of men to understand their side of the dating story.

What have I discovered?

Guys don't want a girl that's insecure, meek, bat shit crazy, or self-obsessed. They want a partner they respect as their equal. A woman who's fun, flirtatious, challenging, a bit mysterious, and overall, confident.

In many ways, success at dating is analogous to a corporation's success at hocking a new product. They might have a great new thingamajig, but if they don't advertise and package it correctly, no one will buy it. Still, there's a lot of room for diversity in the marketplace. For instance, dozens of types of condoms fill supermarket shelves, with choices ranging from ribbed to ultra-thin, varieties that glow in the dark to ones that taste like strawberries. These condoms function almost identically but each targets a distinct market niche. The difference between success and failure relies on satisfying and reaching that niche.

Attracting the men you want is no different. Even a smart, funny, and fascinating gal with a heart of gold needs a well-planned marketing strategy to reach her Mr. Right. Or Mr. Right-Now.

Three Easy Steps To Creating Your Marketing Strategy For Attracting Men

1. Figure out what type of man you want. That's your target consumer.
2. Home in on what attracts him. What are his wants, needs, and preferences? In the supermarket condom analogy, consumer demands vary which leaves a lot of opportunity for diversity. Similarly, one man's preferences might differ from the next.
3. Figure out what you have that he wants and present it to him.

Men like meeting interesting women. They want to meet more interesting women. Picking up dudes is way less intimidating than you think. Trust me, they will be thrilled when you approach them. They'll flirt back, probably buy you a drink and likely ask you out.

But first, let's prep ourselves for the pickup.



JUST LET THE RYAN GOSLING DREAM GO

A twenty-something girl attacked me at the bar and told me she needed my help.

“I can’t meet men!”

I turned back to my vacant bar stool and half-full beer and threw my guy friend a scowl.

His innocent shrug hid his master plan: when I’d gone to the bathroom, he enlisted me in helping out this half-wit.

Tiffany dove right in, “I want to meet a rich man who lives in Malibu. Your friend tells me you know how.” My eyebrow arched at my friend; this was gonna be good. “Tell me what to do? How can I meet a rich guy? Maybe one who looks like Ryan Gosling?”

The chances of Tiffany seeking out a billionaire Ryan Gosling lookalike and ending up happily ever after with him are slim to none. Here’s why: her problem wasn’t meeting men but the type of men she wanted to meet. Similar to many women, Tiffany’s standards and expectations weren’t too high but too low. She didn’t know in earnest the qualities

and expectations she wanted in a man.

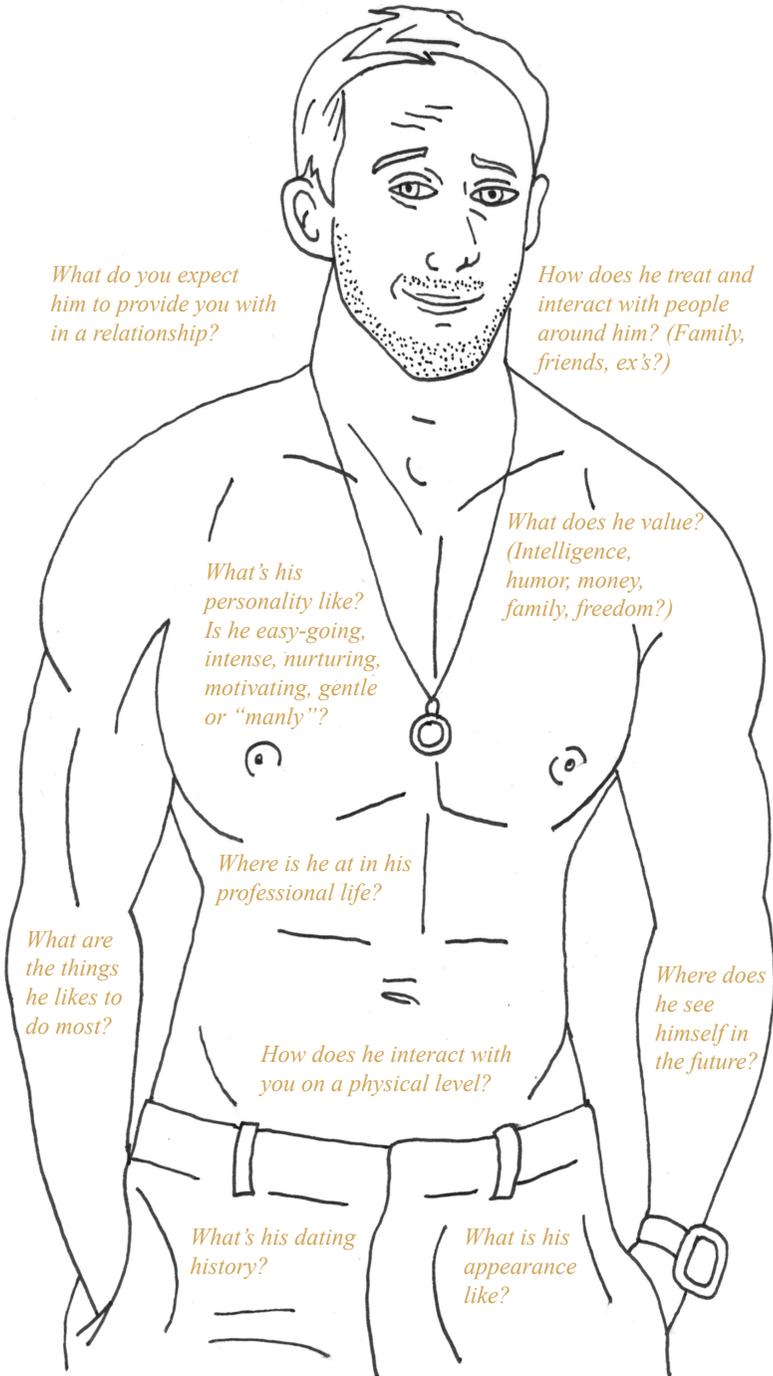
Sooner or later, someone needed to break it to her. It was time to let the Ryan Gosling dream go.

Exercise:

Now I want you to do a fun, kind of silly, but crucial exercise.

Grab an old-school box of crayons (colored pencils, '90s grape and strawberry flavored sniffable markers, heck, even eye shadow will do) and print out the next page.

On it you'll find a coloring book image of Ryan Gosling and within each coloring quadrant, several questions about your ideal man. These questions are borrowed from a great book on attraction by Christian Carter called *Catch Him and Keep Him*. While shading in Ryan's bare chest, chiseled biceps and those mmm-mmm-mmm abs, ponder your answers to each question.



Besides the sheer enjoyment you probably gleaned from coloring in this hunk, you accomplished something else: you got in touch in earnest with the qualities and expectations you're looking for in a man. It's important to know what you want. For us girls, the clearer we get on what we honestly want and expect, the higher quality partners we attract.

Yet, many women struggle to meet good guys because they set the wrong dating expectations. They create rose-colored fantasies and make assumptions about a partner's compatibility and character based on his physical appearance. While looks are important – you need to be attracted to your partner – a man's aesthetic prowess tells you little about his wit or intelligence, ability in the bedroom, and proclivity for romance. Don't cut yourself short. You're better than that.

Sometimes our standards go beyond physical looks, but that doesn't mean they're not equally as stifling. My friend Camilla sets a pretty darn rigid set of qualifications:



Camilla adores men with strong jawlines. Ones she needs to crane her neck upwards to kiss. Ones with black AMEX's, extensive wine knowledge, inflated job titles, and red Ferrari's parked at their summer homes.

While at New Years Eve party at a fancy hotel downtown, a man sauntered over to Camilla. With a grand flourish of his hand, he introduced himself as Matt and bent down to hear her name.

Matt pranced around the bar, buying her a drink, stealing extra olives, all while showing off his powder blue tuxedo and top hat. New Years served as a good excuse but he'd obviously taken liberties on the party invite's suggestion to dress formal. Even his hearty laugh and relaxed grin added a lively zest to his every statement.

After showing him some pictures on her phone of her last boyfriend's helicopter, what do you think Camilla's first question to Matt was?

"So what do you do?"

She said it politely, but her immediate probing signaled her intentions.

Matt said, "I teach six graders American History. Not the fake history most people learned in school but the real one. In fact, my book is going to be published in a few years – hopefully."

Camilla's warning siren whirled: He may be fun, daring, cute, and smart but he's a teacher. Teachers are poor. Stop wasting precious time. You could be talking to Mr. Rich.

But where was Moneybags? Oh right, he's coming. Probably finding street parking for his Ferrari...

I do it too. I have a thing for bearded hipsters, so I ignore the clean cut bro chatting me up at the juice bar. Why bother with the personal trainer? He probably doesn't eat any carbs and I'm obsessed with Sprinkles cupcakes. And Mr. Nantucket in the boat shoes? Forget about it! With a snap judgment, we minimize our dating pool. We limit our interactions, narrow our options, and, sadly, risk missing out on Mr. Right. Guys we want, we just don't know it yet.

One of the most stifling things you can do is leave no room for surprise.

When You Have a Rigid and Idealized Conception of Your Type, You:

1. Are oblivious to his flaws.
2. Present the guy with zero challenge.
3. Close yourself off to other potential suitors.

1. When you're oblivious to his flaws.

Mission accomplished, you found Mr. Perfect and have him all figured out. When blindsided by love, it's hard to see anything else. If you're giddy and googly-eyed over someone you don't know, there's a good chance you'll miss some blaring flaws. Looks, money, or a checklist of attractive interests don't guarantee intelligence, wit, humor, honesty, or passion between the sheets. Chemistry doesn't equal compatibility, or visa versa.

2. When you present the guy with zero challenge.

With something as trivial as a cleft chin, common literary taste, or coveted address you christen a guy as the bees knees. Without any effort on his part, you stick him up on a pedestal. Since you're already sold on him, you

eliminate his opportunities to impress, woo, and surprise you. Sadly, you end up trying to win him over instead of the other way around. This encourages conceit and complacency on his part and diminishes your value in his eyes.

When you first meet a guy, keep your lust and emotions in check. In those early stages, your interest level shouldn't go beyond slightly peaked. Mildly entertained.

Challenge him. Leave room for a guy to surprise and impress you.

3. When you close yourself off to other potential suitors.

While you puppy dog eye Prince Charming, you'll probably miss some otherwise amazing guys. If only McDreamy wasn't lapping up all your attention.

When you set your standards too low, or, even more dangerous, too narrow, you end up squandering your time on chasing the wrong prospects and handing over all of your power to these questionably desirable men.

When you set your standards too low, or, even more dangerous, too narrow, you end up squandering your time on chasing the wrong prospects and handing over all of your power to these questionably desirable men.

Oh, I'm a culprit of this too. We each have our ideal type. We rally our friends and camp out in the neighborhoods our type frequents. All to increase our chances of crossing their path and getting noticed. Because how lucky would we be if one of these guys selected us? But is this even what we're really looking for?

The thing is, while we're waiting and watching for one possibility, our preconceived version of Color-Me-Mine Mr. Gosling, we narrow our standards and cut ourselves off from other desirable opportunities out there. Such a narrow scope locks us into a rigid type and prevents us from discovering what we really want.

My friend Michelle expressed she has a hard time meeting good guys.' I probed further until I uncovered the culprit – a defense mechanism that stifled her ability to meet possibly better suited matches:

“When guys approach me, I shut them down. I find myself being downright mean. And then after I feel awkward and bad.”

“Why do you think you do it?” I asked her.

“I don't know. I feel like they have an ulterior motive. They're trying to pull one over on me.”

“So, you're skeptical?”

“I think they're just trying to sleep with me. I jump immediately to that conclusion.”

“Do you think you're jaded?”

“I'm definitely jaded. I'm not even thinking this could be a nice conversation that could last 4.5 seconds. I'm definitely not thinking that a guy could surprise me and be different and want something more. I'm assuming he's trying to pull a fast one on me.”

Michelle, like many of us, uses snap judgments to weed out the good dudes from the dozens of duds. Snap judgments lean on past experiences and superficial barometers to save us time. Yet they limit space for new discovery.

The fun of meeting someone new is the surprise. Give a guy the opportunity to be his best self. The same opportunity that you hope a guy will allow you.

Pop Quiz:

Choose Which Response Fits You Best From Our Panel of Friends

1. What's the first thing you notice about a guy?

Anna: How tall and muscular he is.

Blair: The way he carries himself.

Catherine: His smile and laugh.

Darcy: What type of watch he's wearing.

2. What do you brag to your friends about after you meet a cute guy?

Anna: He's super hot.

Blair: He seems super cool.

Catherine: He seems really genuine and nice.

Darcy: He's got a great job.

3. While you and a few friends sit outside a café, a man packing a few extra pounds approaches your table and says, "Hi, how are you doing?"

Anna: Sorry, we're talking right now.

Blair: Hey, we're good. Thanks.

Catherine: Hi, back at ya. We're good. How are you?

Darcy: Um, can you please leave us alone. Can't you see we're having lunch here?

4. How long does it take for you to get to know someone?

Anna: After the first date I know if I want to see him again.

Blair: Probably a couple weeks to a month hanging out.

Catherine: I think you're always learning about someone. Maybe a couple of months?

Darcy: 3 dates.

5. A friend sets you up on a blind date. When you arrive, he's a far cry from the prince your friend promised. What do you do?

Anna: I'd finish the date and be polite, but then hope he never calls.

Blair: Hey, maybe we could be friends?

Catherine: I'd get to know him. If we're having a good time, you never know, your attraction towards someone can grow.

Darcy: Text Samantha immediately. She knows my type! What was she thinking?!

6. If when first meeting a man, a quirk of his annoys you, how do handle it?

Anna: He's really hot, so if it doesn't work out I can always just sleep with him.

Blair: I'd go out with him again, but I'll bring it up the next time he does it.

Catherine: It probably was a one-time thing and I'm sure I have annoying quirks as well.

Darcy: Done. Goodbye. Next!

7. How did your past relationships end?

Anna: In spite of his good looks (or the great sex), we didn't have much in common.

Blair: We just weren't in the same place at the same time in our lives.

Catherine: He broke my heart.

Darcy: He treated me like a doormat.

8. How did you meet most of your past boyfriends?

Anna: At a party, a bar, or on the internet.

Blair: We both do the same things. Random chance I guess.

Catherine: Through a friend.

Darcy: At work.

Anna, Blair, Catherine and Darcy demonstrate extremes. Although I'm sure there's a little bit of each of them in us.

Blair and Catherine are open to meeting different kinds of people. Independent Blair wants a partner that is her equal. Catherine holds to her standards, but allows a little wiggle room for surprise.

Anna and Darcy are much more superficial, but both for different reasons. They know what they want and go after it. They're quick to eliminate potential suitors, but maybe for the wrong reasons. Just because a man moves you, doesn't mean he'll fit well with you in the long run.

I like to think I've always known my type. But I've been wrong before. This is evident with the gamut I've dated while 'thinking' I knew my type:

- *I obsessed about a musician twice my age.*
- *I dated a guy who said he was a musician but was a bellman.*
- *I dated a guy who I thought was a musician but turned out to just carry the band's equipment.*
- *I dated a millionaire who drove a Jag and always ordered the cheapest thing off the menu*
- *I dated a guy who lived in his mother's basement and was starting a cult*
- *I went out with a server at TGI Fridays who had a weird disease that luckily prohibited him from stalking me to collage (my parent's still dodge his phone calls)*
- *I obsessed over a guy who closely resembled Beaker from The Muppets*
- *I hooked up with an artist who painted only lemons*
- *I once dated a guy with a lisp*
- *I fell for a shy, balding, cyclist who's baby mama phoned in daily death threats*
- *I went out with a DJ who looked like Max Headroom in pleather*
- *I dated a semi-pro hockey player (kissing him without his false front teeth was like gumming someone's grandpa)*
- *I dated a schizophrenic who chased me to Europe and gave up showering*
- *I dated a guy who was three inches shorter than me and had to use a bucket to climb onto his motorcycle*
- *I fell in love with a guy who was five inches taller than me, but weighed the same as me (which made me want to feed him copious amounts of cheesecake).*
- *Surprisingly, I kept going out with a guy who said I love you on our first date and talked about the two children and house in Topanga Canyon we were going to share together.*
- *Shortly after, I fell for a guy who I absolutely hated when I first met him.*

Exercise:

Make a list of the different types of guys you've dated.

Really? That was fast. If you cheated and just jumped ahead, please humor me for a minute and go get a pencil, pen, iPad, feathered quill. Jot down four men you dated outside your usual type. This could be for physical, emotional, or material reasons.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

I hope to dissuade you from choosing men based on physical appearance or a strict set of specifications alone. We ask guys not to judge a book by it's cover. We shouldn't either. Yes, you need to be attracted to who you are with. But a lot of dudes have more to offer than just good hair, a hot ass and a Black Card. Remember, looks and money don't

guarantee intelligence, wit, humor, honesty, or chemistry between the sheets.

Exercise:

I know we did a similar exercise while coloring Crayola Ryan, but ask yourself again: what am I looking for?

Get your trusty pencil out and make a list of the top five qualities you look for in a guy you'd like to date. These qualities can be physical, psychological, or material. Rank them in order of importance.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Got five? Good. Now look at your list and ask yourself these questions:

Do you meet men with all these qualities? Some of these qualities? None of these qualities?

Are more than three of your qualities not related to physical or material attributes?

Do the qualities you look for stem from ego? In other words, do you want to date these types of men mainly to get approval from friends and family? Or do the qualities you look for stem from what genuinely makes you happy?

Why did you pick your number one quality over your number two quality?

Exercise:

Now take that first list of qualities you want in a guy and make a second list beside it with the exact opposite qualities to the ones you chose. For example, if you said ‘honest,’ the opposite would be ‘cheating, lying scumbag (or dishonest).’ If you wrote ‘bad boy,’ the opposite could be an ‘upstanding nice guy who loves his momma.’

Quality you want in a guy: Opposite of that Quality:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Ask yourself these questions:

Do you date guys with any of these opposing qualities?

How bad would it be if you found out a guy had one or more of these opposite qualities? (You can say whatever you want here. I can't see your list. I won't judge.)

On the one hand, automatically eliminating a guy because he doesn't fit your type, and on the other, turning into a gooey glob of tapioca pudding because a guy happens to fit your type are two sides of the same coin. Both don't leave any room for serendipity. Moreover, they don't leave any room for men to impress or surprise you.

Here Are a Few Things You Can Do to Meet Men Outside Your Norm:

Don't go in with an agenda to meet men. Instead, meet interesting people and see where the day takes you.

Stop slumping and frowning because there are no hot guys in the bar or coffee shop. Be inviting. Smile and say hi to strangers. Strike up conversations with people you wouldn't normally talk to. Notice what this simple exercise forces you to do: discover more about the qualities you enjoy in a man and the ones you disdain.

When a man approaches you, talk to him.

Remember Michelle? Don't shut people down. Have the 4.5 second or 5 minute conversation. Maybe you'll enjoy their company or learn something new. If they're not your type, who knows, they could have a cute friend?

Accept the dates that come your way, even if you go just as practice. The more men you meet the better odds you have of meeting Mr. Right. The more men you date, the better you'll get at discerning the gold from the fool's gold.

Take a Different Path

Ditch your regular routine and discover a new set of bachelors. Fetch your cup of Joe at a different coffee shop. Grocery shop in a new neighborhood. Walk a friend's dog at a dog park. Hit up a gallery opening of an artist you've never heard of. Find a roller derby race. Hit some balls at a driving range. If you go to dive bars, try a dressier lounge. By choosing a different path, you'll meet a whole new pool of bachelors.

Exercise:

Give blind internet dating a go

Grouper allows you and a couple of girlfriends to meet a group of guys on a group blind date with very little obligation or risk. If you're feeling uncomfortable you can leave after the first drink. (By the way, the first drink is free!) The plus side: you're out with your friends, so the situation can't be that bad. And if you aren't vibing with your table of men, switch. Grouper chooses a meeting location so there are plenty other Grouper dates going on all around you.

With the launch of 'Crazy Blind Date' OKCupid is striving to become more than just a place where you met your last one-night-stand. This feature randomly pairs up singles and sends you and a lucky suitor on a date with little or no notice. For the spontaneous and adventurous, daters meet up at an agreed location hours after signing up, armed with only basic knowledge of the other person and without any indication of their dates appearance.

Chemistry and Compatibility

With a smoldering glance, your adrenaline explodes like fireworks - your heart thump-thump-thumps, your skin flushes red, your breath catches, your tongue twists up, butterflies line kick your stomach, and your mind gurgles with impulsive, carnal fantasies. The mutual spark plasters that dopey, love-struck smile on your face. "You must see this person again," chemistry cackles in a voice reserved for scheming super villains.

While physical attraction and passionate sparks are good signs, they don't guarantee your compatibility with a

man. On a dinner date, you may be dying to jump a boy's bones, but you won't get past the appetizer if you're tearing at each other's throats. On the other hand, you and a guy could converse until sunrise, but you won't make it between the sheets if the thought of kissing him brings up a mouthful of bile.

Vibing with a guy reveals both compatibility and chemistry. A couple may appear outwardly like polar opposites but they can still make a relationship work. Compatibility doesn't hinge on a personal inventory of traits. Compatibility isn't something you have. It's the rapport you build. In other words, it's how well you communicate, interact, trust and click. Think of the phrase "you met your match." You want someone who challenges, intrigues and spars with you.

A Quick and Easy Trick for Gauging Compatibility Between You and a Man:

For one week, move your focus of attention from the superficial to the super compatible. Instead of focusing on a man's looks, bank account, or career, pay attention to your compatibility with him.

- *Does your conversation with him effortlessly flow? Or does a series of awkward, lingering lulls slow the conversation to a snail's pace?*
- *Are jokes met with blank stares and silence? Or do you laugh at the same time?*
- *Do you get that warm fuzzy feeling around him?*
- *Do you feel open sharing new experiences with him?*
- *Does your experience of the world overlap with his and his with yours? Or do you have little in common each other?*

Another Quick and Easy Trick For Gauging Compatibility:

Open a guy up by talking playfully before exchanging facts or bragging on cars, coveted addresses or corporate statuses. For example, I may start a conversation with a guy about a song on the jukebox:

Me: *“No way, this is not New Kids on the Block. I can’t believe someone is actually playing this.”*

I seize his attention, but have not committed to liking the band.

The guy smiles and says, *“Wow, Hangin’ Tough.”*

Now I share a small fact and my opinion of the band. Remember, it’s good to have an opinion.

Me: *“I used to love New Kids. They were my first concert. I’m sure that neon peace sign necklace I got at the show is still someplace in my parents’ basement.”*

I’ve divulged something a teensy bit embarrassing, which cracks the conversation open for him to share something more personal. Notice I didn’t blurt out anything too over-the-top. Nothing like I was fourteen years old and bought the complete set of New Kids on the Block Barbie dolls. Also, I’ve introduced a new topic and segued our tête-à-tête to our first concerts. This is good because I’m not sure I could discuss Jordan Knight for the next half hour.

Discussing experiences, commonalities, incidentals and anecdotes reveal more about a person than lifeless titles and possessions. Plus, these topics often lead to conversations that reveal the compatibility between you and a man.



BE THE MOST INTERESTING WOMAN IN THE ROOM

Just be yourself.

When speakers begin with motivational go-getters like this gem I'm usually thinking: Yawn. May as well conk out for the next thirty minutes.

Actually, don't just be yourself, be your best self.

Bring out your best qualities. How do you do that? By being different. When you do, say, and think about things that deviate from your normal "script," you'll discover charming, sexy and attractive traits about yourself. Ones you didn't know you possessed. You'll surprise yourself.

Sorry to get back-to-school special on you but it's all a part of the planning phase. Whenever I'm helping my friends meet men, we take a time out, sit down and get a grip on the gravity of our situation: what has worked for us in the past, what hasn't worked, and where we can improve by taking a risk and trying new behaviors. I encourage them to step outside their comfort-zone and do something out of character at least once a week.

You should do the same. Even little things. If, for example, you always wear jeans, put on a skirt. Even better, once a week, take something you think your terrible at and do it. Let's say you've never considered yourself a word-smith, sign up for a writing workshop. Or if you considered yourself athletically challenged, join a dodge ball league. Or if you considered yourself painfully shy, approach that hottie at the bar. You may surprise yourself.

Use this as your opportunity to reflect on your own strengths and weaknesses. Personally, I have fun stories and odd quirks that I work into my conversations. As cheating and using mine will get you nowhere, I ask that you do the exercises I offer, so you can utilize your own material later on. The purpose of this chapter is to find what makes you unique and embrace it, so you can express it and become more attractive to men.

Positivity

If you want to meet a great guy, go in with a great attitude. Your emotional tone says a lot about your confidence level and plays a big part in creating attraction. The adage "be a positive person" may strike you as simple and obvious but it's a key piece to becoming successful with men.

I know it's hard sometimes. We've all been heartbroken. There's times when we feel inadequate. We've all been there clutching that tube of cookie dough, not even bothering to turn on the oven, thinking, I'll just throw in the towel, I've tried enough, I'm tired, I'm done. Maybe I'll just start hoarding cats? I could name them each something clever like Pickles or Ross or Toaster? And with all the free time I'll have now, I can catch up on *Downton Abby*. See, the life



of a lonely cat lady doesn't sound so bad.

Rather than feeling bad about the past and what didn't work out, I peel myself off the couch and move on. Because I'm not going to meet anyone lounging alone at home. Well, except the errant Jehovah's Witness, but so far I'll save you some time and tell you I've had no luck there.

Instead, I focus ahead.

Honestly, I truly believe in love. Life is full of love stories, big or small, involving Colin Firth or not, that begin with meeting someone intriguing. The possibilities are what really excite me. Think about it. Every time you go out to the coffee shop, the grocery store to pick up a carton of milk, a bar, a concert, a movie, the dog park, or a restaurant, you could meet an amazing person who changes your life. How exciting is that?! It's worth leaving *Downton Abby* and the cookie dough I suspect. (Maybe not Toaster or Ross or Pickles though, they're kinda cute.)

Regardless of what happened in the past, recall my Unicorn Analogy. You are what I call, "The Most Interesting Woman in the Room." You have so many qualities that make you unique. Men should feel privileged to meet you.

Being The Most Interesting Woman in the Room is all about confidence, positivity, originality and what I call "sexual allure." Being interesting has little to nothing to do with looks, and everything to do with attitude and how you

see and carry yourself.

Confidence

An interesting woman is happy with her life and secure with herself. A woman who sets a positive emotional tone with a man demonstrates a certain type of dominance at a deeper level. When a woman's tone is consistently positive, even in tough situations, it exudes control, which makes her more attractive to men. A happy woman is patient. She waits for the right time to go after what she wants and sets realistic expectations within her control. She's not desperate to get male attention. She's not jealous or cynical. And why would she be? She knows she's beautiful. Strong. Badass. She has a lot to offer. She's proud of her accomplishments, excited to share her ideas, and pursues her passions with zeal. She's smart and calm under pressure. She respects herself and would never settle for less.

When a woman's tone is consistently positive, even in tough situations, it exudes control, which makes her more attractive to men.

Even at times when I'm not feeling my best, I make up for it by consciously fixing my body language to convey a more confident and positive attitude. Smile wide. Tighten the muscles between your shoulder blades and pull your shoulders back. Hold your chin up high, puff your chest out a bit, and walk tall. Walk into a room standing taller and men (and even women) will notice you.

Positivity

Talk to any of my friends and they will describe me as a bubbly, gregarious person. Okay, that's an understatement. Understandably, not everyone is quite as untiringly zippy as the Energizer Bunny but there are ways to improve your outlook so you can convey a more positive vibe.

Britney Spears might not do it for you, but a great way to get in a positive mindset is to play your favorite up-beat music. No kidding, every night before going out, you can find me gyrating around my bedroom, shouting out the lyrics to Brit, Robyn, and Katy Perry (without shame) while I model outfits and put on makeup. After I'm always in a more joyful, energetic mood. Karaoke singing in the car also works wonders.

Or, I know mantras sounds kind of lame, but repeat to yourself in the mirror, "I'm the most interesting woman in the room. I'm beautiful. I'm fucking awesome. Who wouldn't want to talk to me? Who wouldn't love to date me?" I've done this while getting ready. I've done it at 1am in a dive bar's ladies restroom.

In Hollywood, they say fake it till you make it. The same goes with confidence. Even after the worst day in history, no one will know, if you don't show it.

Originality

Skinnygirl mogul and sassy housewife Bethenny Frankel once said, "It doesn't matter if I'm the most beautiful woman at a party. I aim to be the most interesting."

The Most Interesting Woman in the Room stands out from the crowd. She may have a unique style or rare physical beauty. But more, her hobbies, interests, opinions,

attitude, and accomplishments summon the most attention. Being the Most Interesting Woman in the Room means you aren't afraid to bring a different perspective to the table. Your originality draws and keeps men's interest.

Here's my friend Sierra's story:

Sierra missed the memo. She arrived at the Chi Phi house in a white linen dress, while every other girl donned a black ball gown, stilettos, and their mother's pearls. Two dozen pairs of eyes planted themselves on her. Lips curled. Eyebrows raised. And a palpable lump formed in Sierra's throat. A snicker followed by two more turned her face the hue of a maraschino cherry. Sierra darted her eyes at the door.

Just as she was planning her escape, one of the guys from the fraternity broke free from the pack and approached her. The muscles bulging through his checked button-down made her blush.

He gestured towards her with his red plastic cup of beer. "I like that you wore white." He smiled conspiratorially, revealing dimples. He leaned in closer, and whispered. "Breaking the rules a bit though, aren't you?"

Sierra felt a zing of attraction, and then, relief. How was this possible? This hot boy liked her outfit!

She nudged him lightly, insinuating, "I like to break the rules."

The guy introduced himself as Chad and invited her to have 'punch' in a private room with some of his other fraternity friends. While her other sisters gawked in the front entryway, fretting with their stuffy dresses, Sierra glided into the exclusive party.

That evening in her sweet, white linen dress Sierra

danced with Chad (made much easier in flats), made out with him on the dance floor (fantastic kisser!). Although impressed by Chad's wit and charm, when the crowd thinned out, ever the lady, she said, "I thank you for the enchanted evening, Good Sir. Alas, I have class tomorrow and need to get going." Chad asked for her number and called two days later to set up a date.

Unpredictable and unexpected women intrigue men. In this example Chad singled out Sierra because of her unique, white dress. The linen dress itself wasn't that impressive. Rather, the impression Sierra gave drew him in. A girl who broke the status quo. A girl unlike everyone else. It's a good thing Sierra didn't confess she was dying a silent death of embarrassment.

Here's another example from my friend Rose:

While waiting for a drink at the bar, Rose struck up a conversation with the guy beside her. Their discussion turned to music.

She knew the question was coming. "Who's your favorite band?" A test amongst music snobs to gauge each other's coolness.

Rose really liked a small cult band called The Twilight Singers. Yet whenever she brought the band up in conversation, people stared at her vacantly.

With his skinny jeans and hair peaked into a nest of product, she guessed he'd be most impressed with a band that



played Coachella or something indie but classic.

She began with safe bets, “I like Arcade Fire and Radiohead.”

“Cool. Cool.” He bobbed his head and his eyes shifted away from her. She was losing him.

“Actually. Have you ever heard of a band called The Twilight Singers?”

“What?”

What was she thinking, of course he hadn't. No one had.

But his eyes grew wide. “There's no way that's your favorite band. That's my favorite band.” He lifted his arm up to display a colorful array of inked artwork. He jabbed his finger at one tattoo in particular. It was the symbol on The Twilight Singer's first album cover.

Okay, so let's nail down what sets you apart like Rose. Do you have a favorite obscure interest? Are you really fascinated with space and read magazines and blogs on the subject? Or are you an outdoor junkie? A foodie always on the hunt for the perfect fried Twinkie? Can you recite Walt Whitman poems from memory? Do you make the most amazing spaghetti sauce? Do you follow sports and have a favorite team? Can you tight rope walk?

Make a list of the ten most interesting things about you. These should be qualities that pique a listener's curiosity. The more outrageous, the better. On the flipside, what you might consider a mundane hobby or minor talent could actually be quite interesting to others. For example, you may woo a kitchen-challenged bachelor with your homemade pizza. Keep your list handy as we'll come back to it later on during the pickup chapter.

Exercise:

Your most interesting qualities/hobbies/interests:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Sexual Allure

We've all seen that 'come hither' look certain women throw. There's a reason a woman like that is called a vixen. Sexy without even a blatantly sexy outfit. Her body language - her raised chin, proud chest, wide eyes, and strut as she stalks across a room – exudes self confidence. Just one look at her and you know she's not the girl in the bedroom asking for constant reassurance, "Is this ok?" "Am I doing this the

right way?” “Do you like it like this?”

There’s a fine line between slutty and sexy. Slutty girls look like they know too much. Guys start to wonder if these girls have a night job working the corner they’re not telling them about. Or they start to picture how many times they’ve done what they are doing to other men. Slutty girls tend to use sex as validation for their own insecurity. Sexy girls view sex as a shared experience. They don’t need a man’s approval. Sexy girls don’t need to show off or do things just to please a guy. Sexy girls don’t fake orgasms. Blow jobs don’t serve to make a man like them more. No. Foreplay arouses them and plays an integral part of the shared experience.

Part of being sexy is knowing yourself and what turns you on. First off, every girl needs a good vibrator. If you don’t own one, go out there right now and buy one. Don’t be embarrassed. Look at it as a learning tool for your sexual education. Second, a quick peek at the internet and you’ll find that sex is far broader than the missionary position.

I grew up in a conservative Midwest household. In our family, you didn’t talk about sex. My mom even used the Fargo accent when she’d tell me before a date, “Now, you mind your P’s and Q’s.” We’re taught to think certain things are taboo. *Fifty Shades of Grey* might not be exactly your style. On the other hand, you may be surprised what turns you on.

My sexually uninhibited friends are very vocal with their preferences:

“I want a guy that is gonna be rough. Throw me up against the wall. The next day I want to find some claw marks.”

“I’m taking a dominatrix class. Flogging is next Wednesday.”

“Choking? Hmm, yes, I kind of like choking. You should give it a chance.” “Why are men afraid to spank me?”

All this I heard over brunch one Sunday.

As we get older, we become less self-conscious and able to have more mature discussions about sex. Being open to exploring new things, verbalizing your fantasies, and asking partners what they like shows that you are comfortable and secure with yourself. Men respect women who know what they want and are ballsy enough to ask for it.



VA VA VOOM 101

I wish I could tell you that I pick up men with my hair disheveled, my face bare, slobbering around in my ratty sweatpants from college. The fact is, looks matter when it comes to attraction. Men are very visual creatures.

Just like in advertising, you get one shot to knock a prospect's socks off. Seconds to unveil the glossy packaging, highlight key features and reel your audience in. Never enough time to show off the whole package. Similarly, men's first impressions start with your appearance and grooming.

So let's hit the sales racks, salons and makeup counters and see how we can better advertise ourselves to attract the right kind of guy.

Appearance

When I interviewed men for this book I asked them what was the first thing they noticed about a girl. I assumed a slim figure would top their responses. Call it unfair or shallow, but slim is a given.

"I'd be her friend," one guy offered when I asked him if he'd consider dating a very beautiful but overweight

girl. “I’m just not attracted to overweight women.” His justification, “I put in effort to stay in shape, I’d expect the girl I date to do the same. I like small, trim girls.”

On the opposite end of the spectrum, my friend Brian and I were watching a line of girls enter a bar in North Hollywood, and I asked him to pick out the one he’d approach. After three passed who could be runway models or just anorexic, I nudged him. Obviously he’d choose one of them; they were 10’s. “No. That’s gross,” he commented, “I want a girl with some curves. Something to hold onto.”

Girls make the erroneous assumption that all men want to date stick-thin models. Some of the top responses for attributes men noticed first were boobs, booty, flat stomach, and toned legs. The consensus was that guys don’t want a girl that’s anorexic or obsessed about her weight. Nothing is less attractive than a girl telling a guy her caloric total of everything she consumed that day. Or puking up that expensive dinner he just bought her. Guys like fit girls. But also ones not afraid to indulge with them once in a while. Let’s face it, guys drink beer and eat pizza and want someone to share in the fun. No one wants a cranky girl (because 300 calories a day will do that) or a guilt-tripper. There’s a reason Marilyn Monroe remains a sex symbol. Kanye married Kim Kardashian. J. Lo dates men half her age. Curves and muscle are in.

“I want a woman who’s a woman. Or an athletic tomboy.” replied my friend Shawn when I asked him about his type.

“I don’t want to sleep with a little boy,” one guy named David joked when I asked him about dating super skinny girls. “Who said that’s attractive? Other girls might think that’s attractive. But they’re all skin and bones and

what's feminine about that? When I see a girl like that I just want to give her an Arby's Roast Beef sandwich." Well said, David. I like Arby's French Toast sticks too.

"Curves are fucking sexy, man." Shawn concluded. Somehow calling me a man after. Maybe he looks at me like one of the boys or maybe I need to get a few more curves.

Style & Grooming

When a guy hooks up with a hot girl, he brags to his friends. Guys all want to believe that they are dating a celebrity. So dress the part and be their celebrity.

Whenever I leave the house, I look the way I'd want to look the moment I'd meet the man of my dreams. One ill-timed pair of ratty sweatpants could totally blow my chances with Prince Charming. I wear makeup, a stylish and form fitting outfit, layer on the deodorant, shower daily (sometimes twice daily), do laundry weekly, style and brush my hair, and take care of my nails. These seem like simple, obvious tasks. But a few of my friends have pulled dirty clothing from a pile lumped on the floor, scraped crap from the sleeve, (is it pizza sauce? Puke? God knows?), and off to the bar they'd go. For another friend, we strategically placed deodorant sticks around her apartment, hoping she'd take the hint.

Your grooming habits say a lot about the rest of your life. My friend Brian assesses girl's nails. He says if they have a manicure and pedicure, he assumes that most likely they have other parts of their life – and body – put together. That alone is worth the forty bucks (besides you get that free chair massage.)

When *Harper's BAAZAR* interviewed Sofia Vergara on being a sex symbol, they asked her, "Is it ever a bit ex-

hausting, being a bombshell 24 hours a day?"

"No." She replied, "I'm Latin; I do it no matter what. It's automatic. I shower, do hair and makeup. For me, it's like shaving. I don't believe in a natural look. Lipstick brightens your face! Unless you're Gisele Bündchen or 19, you need something," she explained. "Most of my girlfriends are very good with it because they're Latin, but some of the Americans, I give them lipstick like, 'Put it on!'"

My makeup rule: wear at least mascara and lipstick. Don't go overboard though. Too much makeup and you'll come off as high maintenance or fake. If you feel timid about lipstick, try a lip stain which is subtler, less messy, and longer lasting. Josie Maran offers a wide array of hues that won't dehydrate your lips but still remain flawless after a few morning cups of joe.

A flattering haircut and color can make all the difference. Halle Berry rocks a dark pixie. Blake Lively owns California beach waves. Zooey Deschanel reinvented face-framing fringe. Before she was an Oscar-nominated, household-name red-head, Amy Adams was a blonde. Not every style works for everyone. It's important to find what works for you. If you don't know what you like, go to a reputable hair dresser and ask for their advice. And if you are starting to gray, get your hair dyed. Gray hair ages you by a good decade. Dying your hair doesn't mean you have to spend a fortune either. I pop by my local Walgreens and pick up a do-it-yourself box. After, my bathroom usually looks like a chocolate bunny exploded in there, but the fifteen bucks is fifteen bucks well spent when guys still think I'm in my mid-twenties.

There's a reason the perfume industry is so big and everyone from Brit to J. Lo is releasing a signature scent.

Scent arouses men on a very primal level. Your scent can enhance your overall attractiveness. The right aroma can make you come across as sexier and more daring. So for this reason, I'm careful when choosing a fragrance. If I'm not seeing results, I'll update my perfume.

Americans don't consider lingerie as important as they should. We don't spend the money compared to our 'oh-la-la' female French counterparts who throw 18% of their clothing budget at bras, 'strings' (as the French so cutely name thongs), bustiers, corsets, and garter belts according to the French Federation of Lingerie and Beachwear. In another poll, only 3% of French women thought they were more seductive in the nude over underwear. So it's no surprise that lingerie stores in Europe are offering underwear seduction courses by real strip tease artists. As if French women needed more of an advantage? Maybe this is why they are stereotyped the most desirable in the world? The lesson we can learn: invest in some seductive lingerie stat.

One time a group of guy friends and I went to a strip club in Las Vegas. When my favorite stripper (Candy? Summer?) finished dancing, and left the stage, I sprinted across the club to meet her first, knocking any man in my path out of the way. Move boys, this is important. I had a question I desperately needed answering. I wanted to know where she bought her lingerie.

French women and Candy (Summer?) know that sexy underwear makes you feel hotter. You'll be more daring approaching men, keeping a conversation rolling, and flirting, when you're dressed for the part. And if you're feeling really adventurous, sign up for a burlesque class.

Coco Chanel said it best, "Dress shabbily and they remember the dress; dress impeccably and they remember

the woman.”

When deciding what to wear, I dress to highlight my best assets and what I'm comfortable wearing. Comfortable doesn't mean hiding under layers or digging out those ratty sweatpants. I'm dressing strategically. I'm proud of my legs and feel good wearing leather shorts. Heels make my legs look even longer. Although, if I'm falling over in six inch heels, I won't come off as a sex kitten, I'll just be clumsy and awkward. If you feel self-conscious in a two piece swimsuit, don a one piece with a really awesome pattern or an interesting cut.

Lady Gaga said, “A girl's got to use what she's given and I'm not going to make a guy drool the way a Britney video does. So I take it to extremes. I don't say I dress sexily on stage – what I do is so extreme. It's meant to make guys think: ‘I don't know if this is sexy or just weird.’”

Gaga's made a point of doing things her way. My girlfriends call one another for fashion consultations. If one friend decides to wear a dress, then another girl feels pressured to wear a dress. I don't call anyone; I wear what I feel confident wearing and I don't care what anyone else thinks. I've paired an Alice and Olivia dress and stilettos with a Dinosaur Jr. concert. And I've rocked leather pants, a rocker tee, and spiked heels at an expensive restaurant.

Lastly, you want to show skin but not too much skin. Men are visual, but they also like a bit of mystery. The sexy librarian fantasy doesn't exist by coincidence. Let's be honest, they are already picturing you naked, so you don't need to go so far as to be naked. Just help their imagination get a jump-start and they'll do the rest.

My friend Rebecca recently came to me, asking for

advice on how to dress to pick up men:

Rebecca is one of those women I hate who can eat a mountain of Hostess cupcakes, never work out, and not gain an ounce. Her fiery red hair drapes around her angelic face and brings out the primal part in men – the part that would make them ravage her if only she showed a glimmer of interest. But she doesn't. When she looks in the mirror, a treasure troll stares back at her. She could use the excuse that she lives in Minnesota, the land of Dress Barns. But I know Rebecca better than that. Heck, she taught me, a small town Wisconsin gal, about Prada, Gucci and Dior.

It all started when she came to visit me in LA. As soon as I picked her up from LAX, we headed to my favorite bar.

I glanced from my plunging dress, signature thigh high stockings and heels at her saggy jeans and t-shirt, probing, "Are you sure you want to go to the bar dressed like that? We can stop at my apartment on the way so you can change into a dress or something?" By "something" I meant a skirt. This was LA after all.

She laughed like this might be the funniest thing I ever said, "Me? In a dress? Have you seen my wide shoulders?"

The next day we packed up for our road trip to Joshua Tree where we'd be staying and hiking for the next two days. The weather predicted whopping eighty degree temperatures.

"Did you pack shorts?" I reminded her.

"No. I don't own any shorts."

"You don't own any shorts? Not even for hiking?"

"No. My legs are pale and skinny."

Bundled up in her thermal yoga pants, Rebecca

opted for our car's air conditioning while I hiked.

After dinner, we headed down to the roadhouse. Rebecca, her red hair tied back and hidden under a felt hat and dressed in stretchy black pants and a sweatshirt, took a liking to a short, buff army boy sitting in the corner with his friend. As it's my rule to never leave the house without looking like I'm meeting the man of my dreams, I had on my white lace shorts, a low cut top, leather jacket, and a statement necklace.

All night we talked and played pool. Rebecca waited for the army guy to ask for her number and when he didn't, she asked for his number. At the end of the night, our groups parted ways, without so much as a kiss for Rebecca.

Drunk in the room later, she sent him a text: "Why did you guys just leave?"

He wrote back, "You didn't seem into it."

"I was waiting for you to make a move."

"You could come over now?"

Now, it was three in the morning.

"Come pick me up."

"I'm already home."

Rebecca got more persistent. "You should have made a move earlier. Why didn't you?"

He replied, "I liked your friend. She looked hot in those white shorts."

Crap. When she read the text aloud I felt bad. Horribly bad. Like the worst friend ever. It was never my intentions to steal her guy. I wasn't the least bit attracted to clean cut G.I. Joes, I'm into dirty rock musicians.

Rebecca held up her phone and frowned. "He wants your number."

Of course I didn't give him my number! What kind of friend would that make me?

Before we brand him as a superficial asshole, we have to admit, girls have similar standards for men. For me, boat shoes and Crocs are deal breakers. If a guy's chin is sprouting any kind of soul patch or landing strip, he's out of the running. And roller blades, good god no (those things should have stayed gone after the '90s)! I don't think that's being too harsh.

Once Rebecca returned to Minneapolis, she asked for my advice. She wanted to dress sexier, but she didn't feel comfortable dressing revealing. I told her she didn't have to dress in any way that made her uncomfortable. Although, it would help to dress more feminine and in form fitting clothing.

I convinced her to try on some shorts. After the army boy incident, she asked if it was okay if she copied my white lace pair. I told her, "Go for it." By the way, they are available at Urban Outfitters.

We researched dress styles and discovered broad shouldered women look best in cuts that actually reveal their shoulders. By covering them, their shoulders only look larger. Rebecca bought a slew of longer halter and strapless dresses, a few pairs of heels and even splurged on nylons (not hold ups, but sheer nonetheless).

She sported her new look for her next three Match.com dates. Two months since the trip to Los Angeles, Rebecca met a sweet guy named Julian. Julian complimented Rebecca's style and confessed that his ex never dressed up for him. He says Rebecca's the sexiest woman he's ever met.



BREAKING THE CYCLE OF MALE VALIDATION

The first time Hunter kissed her, Emily knew she wanted more.

Emily had been with her boyfriend Will for over a year the day Hunter first walked past her cubicle to his new corner office with a panoramic view of Boston. Sometimes she'd catch him in the hallways on her way back from lunch, with a bright smile, his polo always meticulously tucked into his salmon pants, his hair gelled to a spike, carrying around crisp copies of Hemingway, Henry Miller or Kurt Vonnegut and a salad. Will wore Batman t-shirts, cut his own hair, mowed down entire frozen pizzas and collected Watchmen action figures.

The other women in her office orbited his doorway. Their staccato laughter, his boisterous roar, sailed all the way to Emily's cubicle. Janice and Lauren didn't pose a threat: one carried ten extra pounds and the other donned sleeve tattoos.

She glowered at Ms. J. Crew and said, "Candice and

Hunter would make the perfect couple for a glossy brochure soliciting America's elite to attend an overpriced yacht party," but not aloud.

Emily slumped down in her chair just as Hunter rounded her desk. She didn't stand a chance with guys like Hunter.

"Hi," He said.

Her heart skipped a beat.

"Hey!" Emily leapt from her seat, unsure if she should shake his hand, sit back down, or kiss him. She felt her cheeks flush. "I'm Emily. You're Hunter. You're new here, right? Where are you from?"

His eyes were the kind that reminded her of the ocean and right now they were doing that wonderful sparkling thing. "I just moved from Pittsburg."

"Pittsburg," she let the name roll off her tongue, desperately racking her brain for a Pittsburg fact to keep the conversation going. "Steelers, huh." she named off their football team. Emily secretly thanked Will for leaving ESPN on at their apartment.

"Yeah."

"I like your bike," She motioned towards his Trek, parked along the wall outside his office.

"You ride?"

"Yeah," Emily said. "I love biking." The last bike she rode had a banana seat and streamers.

"You know, I'm trying to find good bike routes around here, if you want, you can come along with me sometime?"

"Yeah, I'd love that. Anytime! Let me know."

"I will. Ok, gotta run. I'll see ya around," Hunter winked at her and retreated down the hall to a meeting room, leaving Emily's heart racing.

A small shopping spree at J. Crew over the weekend with Will, Emily sashayed into the office the following Monday feeling confident. A few of the IT guys even complimented her on her new outfit.

Hunter had his headphones on when she walked by his office. Sure, it had been the third time that morning she'd happened to pass by, but she doubted he noticed. Besides she had solid excuses. Such as the free baked goods in the kitchen. Thank you Janice for loving to bake.

Hunter slipped off his headphones and motioned for her to come in, "Good weekend, Emily?"

Her breath caught, "Yeah."

"What did you do?"

She leaned against the door frame. "Just watched a movie with a friend of mine." Will was a friend, a boyfriend, but still a friend. And it's not like she needed to be shouting to the world: I'm Emily, I have a boyfriend! There was no reason for Hunter to know that.

"Which movie?" he asked.

Emily blushed. "The Green Lantern."

Will and his comic books. Emily tried to take an interest at first. Weekends spent milling about comic book shops, she picked up a bunch of graphic novels on everything from the Ninja Turtles to mice that fought with swords. She even dressed as a purple leotarded Batgirl for Comic Con in July. To Will's dismay, Facebook lacked any evidence. Last minute, the only suit she found was an Extra Small and it cinched in all the wrong places. Advertising a comic book festival online is one thing, stuffed in a purple sausage suit is quite another.

Emily changed the subject, "What are you listening to?"

Hunter smiled broadly. “The National.”

“Oh, I love them!”

Emily had never heard of the National. Listening to The National quickly climbed her afternoon’s to-do list. They must be fantastic if a cute, smart guy like Hunter was listening to them.

“Yeah, their new album is really good.”

“I love their new album.” Emily gushed just as Adam, Hunter’s boss, walked by, saving her.

Emily turned and smiled at Adam, posing a little in the doorway in her new dress and cute new flats. She watched Adam’s eyes wander from her cleavage to her shoes. Adam had a reputation for sleeping with a lot of girls at the office. She hoped this would pay off to make Hunter a little jealous.

“I like your dress, Emily,” Adam commented as if on cue.

“Thanks!” Emily beamed back, adding flirtatiously, “Figured I should step it up a bit at the office.” She could feel her pulse racing as she pushed the conversation further, “Maybe next time I’ll spring for some high heels.”

“You have good legs, you could pull it off,” Adam winked.

“I like your dress too,” Hunter said, pulling her attention back to him. “So hey, I was thinking I might go grab a drink after work and check out my new neighborhood. I invited Janice and Lauren but they’re busy tonight. Candice might come.”

Damn, Candice and her perfect sweater sets.

Emily had plans with Will to watch Game of Thrones and cook some salmon they’d picked up on sale. Drinking with Hunter sounded like way more fun. “That sounds great! I’d love to!”

The rest of the afternoon was spent listening to The National, researching bikes, and brushing up on random facts about Boston's Back Bay. Such as, did Hunter know that they filled in the entire bay in order to build the neighborhood? Fascinating material. She prayed Hunter liked her. He must like her a little or he wouldn't have invited her out.

At the bar, Candice left after one drink, saying she needed to get home and let her dog out, leaving Emily and Hunter alone.

Two drinks later Emily was getting tipsy. "Bartender! My new favorite bartender! I'll take two more Mr. Samuel Adams."

Since they arrived, Emily had been successful in getting free drinks from the short, chubby, red headed guy who worked behind the bar. "You're Irish. If I'm lucky is there beer at the end of my rainbow?" she had teased to earn her prize.

Two more free beers in hand, Emily stumbled back to Hunter, purposely hip checking him as she plunked his Sam Adams down.

She batted her eyelashes and said, "Drink, courtesy of moi."

"Oh are you French now?"

"I'm whatever you want me to be." she insinuated in a lower voice that she hoped sounded sexy.

Hunter jerked his thumb towards the bar, "I think you're Irish friend likes you."

"Oh he's just my little lucky leprechaun. We're buddies, he gets me free drinks. You know who I really like?"

"Who?"

"I think," She paused dramatically as he watched

her, *“I like you,” she poked her finger into his chest decisively.*

“Do you now..?” Hunter leaned across the table closer to her.

“I do.”

She inhaled his cologne.

She prayed she smelled good. She hadn't been able to go home and change or reapply deodorant. To be on the safe side she should go to the bathroom soon and see how she looked in the mirror. Maybe check her phone to see if Will called. He was always writing her sweet, thoughtful texts throughout the day hoping she had a good day.

“Wait! I can't do this.” Emily suddenly pulled back. Imagining Will at home, all alone watching Game of Thrones and eating salmon for one. Will thought she was out with Candice. Ok, so she never mentioned going out with Hunter. Will was a good guy who said he loved her, she couldn't worry him.

“I have a boyfriend,” she admitted to Hunter.

“Oh, really,” Hunter pulled back and sipped his beer, his eyes scanning the bar, “that's too bad.”

“But I think you're really cute.”

“Hmm, hmm.” He still wasn't looking at her. A busty blonde passed and she thought he might be looking at her. Hunter would like busty blondes like that.

“Do you like me?” Emily asked.

His focus came back to her. “Sure I like you.”

“Do you think I'm cute though?” She cocked her head and smiled sweetly, “Like on a scale of 1 to 10.”

“It's not like you're available..”

She qualified, “If I didn't have a boyfriend.”

“Emily...you do.”

“Come on,” She whacked his arm playfully, “You

can tell me. What's my number?"

"I think you're pretty high up there."

"Like a seven?" Emily guessed. She bet he thought Candice is a nine.

"Emily.."

"Would you date me?"

His attention was elsewhere again, "So, maybe we should get you home to that boyfriend of yours."

"In a minute. Answer my question."

He was indirect. "You have a boyfriend." He smiled and his smile made her whole body tingle. "But if you didn't.."

"It would be different, right." She finished his sentence.

"We really should get going."

"One more drink." She wasn't ready to go home yet. "I'm going to go use the restroom first." She scooted her beer closer to him. "Watch my beer for me."

At the mirror, she dashed away a streak of errant eyeliner and puckered her lipsticked lips at her reflection. After Emily texted Will that she loved him and missed him, she returned to her table to find Hunter at the bar in an intense conversation with a brunette over baseball. Where had this girl come from? She'd only been gone for five minutes. Ok, maybe ten; but she had to check in on Facebook and download the new app that Hunter was telling her about. At their table, her beer sat abandoned. Emily grabbed it and walked up to Hunter, smiling and massaging his shoulder. She figured she could forgive him for not watching her beer. He probably just forgot.

Hunter didn't glance over when she touched him. He was arguing with the girl about how the Yankees stole Babe

Ruth from the Sox.

Emily whispered in Hunter's ear, "I'm going to get you another drink. What would you like, Monsieur," she said, continuing the charade from earlier.

"Sure, anything's fine," he waved her away like an unwanted gnat.

Fine, Emily thought, storming over to the bar. Two can play at this game. She looked everywhere for her bartender but he must have gotten off his shift. The teenager behind the bar who took her order charged her twelve dollars. She stomped back over to Hunter and the brunette. The girl wasn't even dressed cute. She was wearing a Yankees hat pulled over frizzy braids and she had so many freckles they looked like chicken pox. Emily wondered how she stacked up to Sporty Pippi Longstocking. Surely, she was a better catch.

"Here you go." She said, plunking his drink down in front of him.

"Thanks." He replied politely. For ten more minutes Emily sipped her drink while Hunter and Pippi moved the conversation from baseball to music and food. She stared at her beer. She fluffed up her hair. She rechecked her phone. Maybe she should leave.

"I'm going to leave," Emily finally got the courage to nudge Hunter. "I should get home."

"Wait, I'll come with you," Hunter said, finally acknowledging her.

"Oh, okay." Emily waited another five minutes. Pippi programmed her number into Hunter's phone. As soon as the girl disappeared out the door, Hunter pounded his beer.

"Ready?" He offered Emily his hand.

Emily, still a little upset took it.

Hand-in-hand they walked down the street from the bar. He gave her palm a squeeze when they reached an intersection. Emily's heart was fluttering again.

"Well, I guess this is goodbye. My apartment is this way." He dropped her hand.

Emily pointed in the opposite direction. "My train is this way."

"I could walk you that way for a little." Emily offered, sad their walk was so short.

"Don't you have a boyfriend you need to get home to?"

She wrestled with the idea. "Maybe?" She grabbed Hunter's hand back. "The problem is I really like you." She swayed on his arm, to and fro. "But you were talking with Pippi-"

"Who?"

"That girl with the pigtails all night."

"We talked for like twenty minutes. She's a Yankees fan. I hate Yankees fans."

"You like her."

"Do I?"

"Yeah, you got her phone number." Emily leaned towards him and Hunter leaned towards her and they kissed.

"You have a boyfriend," He reminded her, still kissing her.

She smirked deviously, as he wrapped his arms around her waist. "I might not always have a boyfriend."

Emily's story didn't have the happiest of endings. She broke up with her boyfriend Will hoping that this would allow things to progress with Hunter. Instead of taking time off between her breakup, she spent many nights chasing

Hunter around Boston to different bars. Every time the outcome was the same. She'd end up crying alone while Hunter hit on other women. At the very end of the evening, Hunter would find Emily, kiss her, she'd forgive him, and she'd feel privileged she was the one he was taking home with him. She'd give him great head and let him fuck her from behind. She thought he saw her as adventurous and fun and good in bed. In the morning, he told her he really liked her before she slipped out of his apartment at 8am. She'd be optimistic until the next week when he'd ignore her and she'd be back to tears. When she confronted him, he explained he wasn't ready for a relationship yet.

In an attempt to get Hunter to ask her on a date, she bought a bike, and several times suggested they go riding, but he always put it off. She surprised him with tickets to the National. He ended up canceling at the last minute, claiming he'd forgotten he had a comedy show that night with a different friend, and so she took Janice to the show instead.

When he started seeing a mousy nurse he'd met on Match.com, Emily got depressed, she started dieting, thinking maybe she wasn't thin enough. She read Hemingway, Henry Miller and Kurt Vonnegut thinking maybe she wasn't smart enough or well-read enough. When he broke up with the nurse, the late night calls returned. She'd give in and meet him out at a bar, even once bringing along a new guy she was dating in hopes to make him jealous.

It's a bad cycle and we have all known friends like Emily. Some of us have been Emily. The problem is, like many women who seek attention and validation from men, they don't know their worth. Emily is smart. She is a marketing manager who graduated with honors from the University of Michigan. She is very pretty, slim, stylish, and outgoing.

An all-round amazing girl!

But she's insecure. She isn't looking into herself, at her accomplishments or what makes her special. She's looking outward to seek her value. She didn't feel she deserved a man like Hunter. She thought Hunter belonged with Candice or the busty blonde or the nurse. Emily sought approval from any man, even men she wasn't necessarily attracted to or interested in: Adam the office player, the guys from IT, and the unattractive bartender, to prove to herself that men liked her.

We've all had friends like this whose lives and conversations revolve around men. Their moods swing to dramatic highs and lows coinciding with their relationships. When something goes wrong, they are the victim. Emily rationalized to herself that her boyfriend Will was boring, that he didn't give her enough attention and excitement, and that is why she cheated.

Emily wanted so bad to please men that she adopted a variety of interests that weren't her own. Will read comic books and dressed up for Comic Con, so to please him she did too. She wanted to be cool in Hunter's mind so she said she liked a band she never heard of, lied about riding a bike, and bought an app that he'd suggested. She wanted to feel closer to him by reading the books he liked. She thought by pleas-

While most women have the tremendous advantage of being the selector who accepts or rejects a man's advances, Emily reversed the roles by working for Hunter's approval and acceptance.

ing him sexually, he'd like her more. She wanted to know what Hunter was thinking, so she could insert herself as his perfect girlfriend. She tried too hard to make things work.

While most women have the tremendous advantage of being the selector who accepts or rejects a man's advances, Emily reversed the roles by working for Hunter's approval and acceptance. Hunter became the one being chased after and making the decisions.

Men like Hunter play games with attention seeking women and use them for sex. Since Hunter possessed the decision making power, he knew he could get Emily whenever he wanted her. All he had to do was give her a little bit of attention and she would crawl right back to him no matter what he had done. She had little respect for herself because she didn't believe she was worthy of Hunter's affection and therefore didn't deserve to be treated as well. Sure, Hunter was toying with her emotions, but Emily was letting it happen by waiting around for Hunter after he clearly wasn't interested, and taking late night phone calls.

Adding to that, male validation forces women to compete with each other for self esteem. In the game of dating, male attention is the 'prize.' When other girls get male attention instead of us, we perceive ourselves as less worthy and attractive. We are constantly comparing ourselves to our competitors. When a woman walks into the room, she surveys the other women to see where she fits in the pecking order. Emily was pleased that Janice was lower in the office pecking order because she had gained weight. By judging women like this, we, unknowingly, criticize ourselves. Emily put down Janice for her tattoos and nicknamed the competitor at the bar "Sporty Pippi Longstocking."

Worse, we ask men to rate our looks. As women,

we shouldn't give a shit what men think of us in relation to others. Why do we need to be better than another women? We're all different and pretty in our own way. When we allow a man to rate us, our dignity hinges on his

NEVER ask a man to put you on that 1-10 scale of beauty. Remember, you decide your worth.

arbitrary assessment. His subjective take. His silly, little opinion that can slice and dice our self-esteem. We fuel our competition with other women and set ourselves up for disappointment. What if Hunter had told Emily she was a 5? He could have done that just to chop down her self-esteem so she'd feel bad. She'd sleep with him to prove her desirability.

NEVER ask a man to put you on that 1-10 scale of beauty. It's a huge pitfall and you're asking only for trouble. The idea that someone is prettier or smarter or worthier of a man than you is a fucked up idea. Remember, you decide your worth.

I've stood in Emily's shoes too. In fact, we are all probably guilty of trying to win over a man by feigning interest in the things he likes. I've dressed up as a vampire not on Halloween, seen endless bands perform without knowing any of their music, rode a dirt bike and almost broke my leg, bought a guitar in a sad attempt to be a rocker, ran a marathon in a Supergirl costume, and purchased a \$5000 road bike to impress guys. Look cool. Win them over. Why couldn't I just admit that I hate biking. Possess zero musical talent. That reggae isn't my thing. Because I wanted these guys to like me.

So how do we stop this cycle of male validation?

First, let's stop seeking approval from strangers. Especially men we don't find attractive. Who cares if the guy in the Starbucks line thinks you're cute or not? Why are you wondering if the man in the Mercedes next to you finds your profile attractive? You're not interested in him. Let him go.

A biggie, we need to stop accepting guys bad behavior. If we are secure with ourselves, we expect better treatment. Showering a woman with attention or expensive gifts doesn't make up for bad behavior either. We need to respect ourselves if we want men to respect us.

The media doesn't help. We're bombarded with images of skinny women and tabloids criticizing celebrities. We shouldn't feel bad about our bodies. Have you ever had a day when you didn't care, where you sat in public with your legs splayed totally unlady-like, mowing down an entire meatball sandwich with reckless abandon? Do it once in a while. It's sheer joy.

The next time you enter a party rather than sizing the other women up, smile at them. Ask them questions about themselves. Become their friends. Let's join forces with other women instead of viewing them as the enemy.

A need for validation can gnaw away at your dignity and self-esteem. Emily needed to feel desired, admired and wanted by more than just one man. Will was a nice guy but her relationship was doomed because he couldn't fill her emotional void. No one man can until she's secure with herself. Emily's not alone. Many women hop from boyfriend to boyfriend, believing they need a man to feel complete, loved, or beautiful. Instead, they need to take a time out to focus on themselves.

Every week I try to better myself by doing one new activity. I enlist friends to join me for a concert, gallery

opening, comedy night, or wine tasting. I hit the cinema. Read books from the bestseller list. Take up a hobby like surfing or yoga. Sign up for a cooking class. Pick up a musical instrument. Brush up on my business skills by enrolling in a course or studying a business journal. Buy paints and a canvas and create my own masterpiece for my apartment. Compete in a trivia night. Enroll in an improv class. Pen a short story. Take a day trip hiking or an afternoon checking out a new nearby city I've never visited. I scope out new restaurants and constantly sample foods I've never tried. (Who knew I'd love chicken liver?) A friend of mine takes flying lessons. How cool is that?

By getting involved, working on me, and having a life, men cease to be my source of validation and self-worth. I make my life about me: my dreams and my accomplishments.

And if my mind ever starts to wander down that old destructive path, I'll remind myself, I don't care what this guy thinks of me, because I am the Most Interesting Woman in the Room. I mean, I'm now an author, a painter, a hiker, an amateur wine connoisseur, a chicken liver lover, a yoga... do-er. If a guy likes me and wants to hang out with me, cool! If not, I move on, because I'm too busy leading an exciting, fulfilling life with all my wonderful, inspiring friends to worry what some dude thinks.

So here are two exercises I want you guys to do.

Exercise:

In the next week, I want you to go out and do one new activity. It can be a new sport, a hobby, a place or restaurant you've never visited. Do something you always

wanted to do. After, share your experience with a friend or co-worker.

Exercise:

10 Things I Love About Me:

Make a list of characteristics that you love about yourself or accomplishments that deserve some bragging rights

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____



I CAN'T PRONOUNCE SAUVIGNON BLANC, AND HOW I MAKE CLUMSY ENDEARING

Ok, remember my unicorn tirade in the beginning of all this? That was only a few chapters ago. I hope you haven't forgotten already. The point is we all have interesting quirks. Whether they are good, bad, annoying or endearing depends on the way that we position them and how other people react to them. Like advertising, I believe there's a positive spin for everything. If a guy wants to date me, here are some of my more endearing habits and quirks that he will just have to deal with:

I chew pencils and pens like a loud chipmunk. Every writing instrument I own looks like I fed it to a dog I do not own. And as an added bonus, I'll find shredded bits of black plastic between my teeth for the rest of the day. Very

attractive, I'm sure. The sound of me gnaw-gnaw- gnawing on my pens, not annoying at all.

My favorite wine is Sauvignon Blanc and you'd think that by ordering it over and over I'd be able to pronounce it. Nope. Sovin-non? Savin-young? Sov-ing-young? See I butchered it again, didn't I? I'm impossible. It's embarrassing on dates and it takes me an extra three minutes to order every time as I go through every possible iteration. Maybe I should just switch to Chardonnay?

Graceful isn't a word I'd use to describe myself. I'm horribly clumsy and very unlucky. For example, I was talking to a guy on the phone and before he could ask me out, I yelled, "Ow!" He asked what happened. "A coconut fell on my head." Seriously, as I paced under a line of tall palm trees, one of those tiny coconuts fell and hit me right between the nose. What are the chances?

Another time a pigeon crapped on me. White goo running down my hair. I showed up a half hour late to the date after dousing my head under a McDonald's sink.

Another area for improvement is balance. Every shoe I own has a high heel, even though I'm constantly tripping down stairs, falling off curbs, and getting caught in grates. I've snagged my jewelry and clothing on railings, stop signs, and fences. Catapulted into bushes. Ran into poles. Slipped from ski chairlifts.

After a meal of porcini rubbed filet mignon, I managed to fall out of a chair. I laughed so hard and with such force I lost my sense of balance and literally toppled backwards and onto the floor. The four glasses of Sauvignon (Soving-yon?) Blanc I guzzled with dinner probably didn't help. The jury is still out on that one.

Yet another instance of my elegance was the time I

fell down on Figueroa Street right in the middle of oncoming traffic. Cars were honking and swerving around me. My date just laughed, but didn't come to my rescue. I'm still undecided whether I should have given him a second date.

I'm also a messy eater. The entire lower half of my face doesn't transform into a BBQ sauce and chicken wing finger painting or anything quite as embarrassing as that. It's just, I really like small foods that you can eat with your hands. My problem is I'm horrible at keeping everything contained and all nice and tidy on those minuscule appetizer plates.

As much as I want to change or stop these bad habits, I'm well into my thirties, and for the most part, I realize the effort is futile. I'm addicted to chewing pens and there's no way I'm going cold turkey. I have no control over pigeons crapping on me. And the chances the next curb is going to put me in a body cast aren't that terrible. These little habits might sound funny, but when meeting men any of these things could be major deal breakers.

So rather than avoid palm trees, miniature golf pencils, and white wine all together, I realize I need to embrace some of the funny things that make being with me sort of hilarious. Often, the quirks we desperately hide from men are the qualities that make them fall in love with us. So relax. Stop stifling the real you. I give you full permission to let all your oddities and strange behavior wild. And when you do, ironically, men understand why you're a unicorn.

**Often, the quirks
we desperately
hide from men are
the qualities that
make them fall in
love with us.**

Besides, nothing puts a date at ease like a girl butchering her way through the wine list, but laughing about it after. And if my date can't laugh, then he isn't someone I'd want to be with anyway.

A good example comes from my dinner date with a guy named Gerrit.

"Look at your wineglass!" Gerrit shouted so loud you'd think he'd found something disturbing in our food.

Of course my glass looked like a sticky child molested it with greasy paws. Just the Evie usual. I cringed and could feel my face grow red. "Yeah..."

"No, no, no." He waved his hands quickly. "You're taking it the wrong way. I'm not saying it's bad. I like it."

"You like that my wine glass is covered in fingerprints?" I raised an eyebrow. "You like that I'm a messy eater?"

Okay, so earlier in the date he stopped me mid-sentence, grabbed and held my forearm to pick stray bits of cheese off me. Like he was my mother.

"I like that you don't care," Gerrit elaborated.

"Great." I rolled my eyes in a full circle and huffed a sigh. "Now you think I don't care." I raised my hand to signal for the server. I'd just get a new wine glass.

"Stop." He snatched my arm down and held my hands to settle me down. "I like that you don't care. I like that you don't notice your wine glass is dirty or that you had a piece of cheese fall off your plate. You're just enjoying your meal. That's nice. I wish I could do that. I'm OCD."

"Yeah, you are." I motioned towards his pristine wine glass, "Your glass is crystal clear-"

"-But I'm glad yours isn't. I'm glad you're not like

me. That would be hard, two OCD people.”

I wanted him to get to his point. “Okay..”

“The thing is, I like that you’re laid back. You’re not controlling. My ex was always telling me what I could and couldn’t do. She was constantly judging me. About every little thing. Nitpicking me. She yelled at me once for chewing gum before going to a party.”

Apparently that was his ex’s deal breaker, chewing gum out in public. Because billions of people don’t do that.

He continued while I still attempted to flag down a server for a new glass. “Don’t get a new glass because of me. My OCD is my problem. I’m the neurotic one. I hope you can accept that.”

A beat passed as he waited for an answer. Hold on, I’m supposed to accept him? It never occurred to me he thought I was judging him. Or that his neurosis made him nervous too.

“Gerrit, of course not. I’m fine with it. It’s who you are.” I smiled, “The guy with the clean wine glass who wipes shit off my arm.”

He laughed and with that he kissed me, adding, “And I think it’s kind of cute that you’re messy.”

My date Gerrit was right. Quirks make a person interesting, endearing, and well, human. Certainly, we’re not perfect and it’s reassuring to know that our dates aren’t perfect either. We all try to hide our worst habits from each other, but it’s those zany neurosis coming to light that allow us to bond and ultimately accept and love each other. Personally, if someone didn’t joke or tease me about my strange habits, I wouldn’t want to be with them. I’m cool laughing at myself. And in doing so I’ll probably fall off my chair.



EVERYDAY EXERCISES TO OVERCOME SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

My friend Beth always describes herself as shy. I tell her to stop calling herself that. The way she says it, she makes it sound negative, an excuse why she shouldn't bother to try in social situations. Sure, she's not as outgoing as me. Meeting new people doesn't come as naturally. She wouldn't consider the entire experience anxiety free. But Beth isn't by any means a social outcast. Once you've spent a little time with her and got past that initial meeting barrier, you'd never think to call Beth shy. After all, while studying abroad in London, she was the one who christened our flat's 'sex couch' with a mighty fine Englishman. When Beth is comfortable she's downright boisterous, funny and very well spoken. You wouldn't think she's got much to be nervous or afraid of. She's traveled all around the world, scuba dived in South America and trained as an Olympic hockey player.



Beth's tough. So what gives with the shyness?

Unsurprisingly, when Beth started dating again after ending a twelve-year relationship with her past boyfriend, she tried internet dating. The risk was low. She could take her time answering questions. A month into Match.com, Beth had gone out on a few unsuccessful dates. Overall though, I was proud of her for stepping out of her comfort zone and meet-

ing a wide variety of men for sushi, pizza and one, bowling.

One night a guy named Steve winked at her. Clicking over to his profile, she discovered he fulfilled her physical checklist: tall, dark and handsome. He owned his own company. He volunteered as a firefighter. In his pictures, he was bald, which for some women could be a turnoff, but didn't bother Beth. Then she uncovered what could be his major flaw: in his status column Steve checked 'divorced.'

Normally, she didn't date a man with a previous marriage under his belt. Her head buzzed with the questions: Did they leave on good terms? Does he still talk to his ex? Did he cheat? Did she?

What the hell. Beth decided to initiate contact and wrote a simple message, "Is your wink your shy way of saying 'hi' or 'you're cute but not my type?'"

She was worried he wouldn't write her back but Steve replied the next day, "The wink was me telling you I was interested but didn't have time on my lunch break to send you an email."

A few messages later, Steve asked her out.

When I spoke with Beth initially, I asked her, “So what do you think would have happened had you not written Steve first after he winked at you?”

“Nothing,” she replied.

“You don’t think he would have written you?” I clarified. “I mean, he said he was going to but didn’t have the time.”

“He says that now,” she said matter-of-factly, “But he’s very shy.” “But you’re shy and you wrote him.”

“He’s more shy than me. He’s never approached a girl before.” “What about his ex wife?”

“They met in high school. She asked him out.”

I posed, “So what do you think would have happened if you only winked back at him.” Surely, I thought this would be enough incentive for even a shy guy to grow some balls and take a chance.

Again, “Nothing.”

So what happens in situations like this where a guy is genuine, successful, and handsome but too scared to approach the girl?

Beth’s probably right. Nothing. Wait all you want, but you might never meet.

We all know how it feels to be self-conscious. Even the most confident people have felt like outsiders at one point. If you’re a girl immobilized at the thought of approaching a guy, you’ll always be waiting for him to make the first move. But what if he doesn’t? And subsequently, what if a hottie walks over to you at a party to strike up a conversation. Will you be ready? Or will you run the other way?

There’s nothing wrong with being shy, but it can hold you back from meeting great people and putting your best self forward. Overcoming self-consciousness isn’t about

changing who you are, but changing how you interact and connect with people.

Here's a few pointers and exercises on overcoming shyness:

Prepare Conversations Beforehand

Actors don't perform without practicing their lines. For your spotlight situations, enter armed with stories you've rehearsed. If you recall from a previous chapter, each week I asked you to take part in a new activity, such as attending a yoga class, going to a gallery opening, diving into the latest bestseller. I suggest you select culturally rich and relatable activities. Or ones with the most intrigue, like visiting an offbeat museum or themed event. These activities serve as interesting topics you can bring up in a conversation. For example:

"I went to a future-themed party last night."

"I brought a blanket and some wine and saw the movie Blue Velvet screened at the cemetery."

"So I went to the Museum of Death on Wednesday. Wow..."

"Did you know they let you drink beer while shooting a bow and arrow at the Renaissance Fair?"

"Have you gone to that Indian street food place?"

"Apparently you can suck at bumper bowling..."

Having topics prepared beforehand alleviates the pressure of coming up with a smart, witty conversation starter on the spot.

Exercise:

Go out and do new activities each week or at least every other week. You'll start to build up a good repertoire of anecdotes to choose from.

Celebrate All the Things You are Good At

I'm referring to things like: I'm a smart, talented person. I'm a good friend. I bake a mean carrot cake. Jot down a list of your strengths. Refer to this list often. Be proud. You might not be the most popular person in the world, but who cares if you have a lot of other wonderful things to offer.

Don't Go Into a Situation With a Negative Attitude

Just because you're not the center of attention, doesn't mean people won't like you. There's no need to go overboard. No one expects you to perform stand up for them. Or deliver Oprah wisdom. The main difference between confident and low self-esteem people is how they approach a situation. Confident people go in expecting people to like them.

The main difference between confident and low self-esteem people is how they approach a situation. Confident people go in expecting people to like them.

Focus On the Other Person. Ask Questions. Listen, and Observe

Don't fixate on feeling uncomfortable. Instead, move the attention away from you and onto the other person by:

1. Asking them questions.
2. Taking an interest in what they say.

Moreover, you don't always need to control the conversation. Sometimes it's okay to let the other person take the conversational lead.

Accept That You Might Be Less Experienced

You know what: just because you're less experienced approaching men doesn't mean you're bad at talking to men. It just means that you need to do it more.

Accept that Everyone Gets Rejected

Even popular people are not liked by everyone. And if someone doesn't like you, instead of taking it personally, move on. Their loss, not yours. In spite of the reaction you get, give yourself a pat on the back. You took a risk. Pushed your comfort zone. If you'd ran away, you'd only reinforce your shyness. By sticking it out, you're building your confidence.

Stop Placing So Much Value On Looks

It is always easier to talk to someone you are not attracted to, right? When we are attracted to someone, we tend

to exaggerate their worth. The higher we hoist them up on that pedestal, the lower our dignity sinks. The longer you obsess over them, the worse it gets.

Personally, I once had a huge crush on a musician living in my neighborhood. Any other guy I could walk up and talk to, except this guy. My knees buckled. Language turned to baby garble. My attraction towards him paralyzed me. Although I didn't know him personally, I followed his band on Facebook and Instagram, and saw him out and about. Yet every time I attempted to build up the courage to approach him, my mind intervened: Why would he go for you? Are you good enough? My confidence dropped and I chickened out.

Rather, I should have asked myself: What does this guy really have to offer me besides looks? *The possibility of a love song in my honor? Are we even going to get along? I have zero clue. I think he might date strippers?*

Until you spend time with someone, you have no idea what they are like, so never assume anyone is better than you.

Also, don't wait for the stars to perfectly align before approaching someone.

Back to my musician crush:

As time passed, I'd run into him on the street, at a juice bar, in a parking lot and while eating Japanese noodles. None of these circumstances I deemed a worthy meet cute. The timing was off. The place smelled like ramen (it was a Japanese ramen restaurant). He was talking with other people. It wasn't the 'right' moment, so I shied away.

There is never going to be a ‘right’ or perfect moment, so just be assertive. The longer you wait the more nervous you get. It’s best to act on impulse. I call it the ten-second rule. I’ll get more in depth on this in the approaching men section.

There is never going to be a ‘right’ or perfect moment, so just be assertive.

Pencil In Some “Me Time”

No matter how outgoing or energetic you are, everyone needs a moment to recharge. I schedule time for myself every week. I restrict Me Time to quieter activities that don’t involve electronics, such as televisions, computers, or cellphones. Try reading a book at a coffee shop. Relax in a beautiful park or make a picnic and eat outdoors. Go on a long walk or hike. Write in a journal. Buy a camera and snap pictures of something that interests you or document your neighborhood. Sign up for a yoga or meditation class. Go to the symphony by yourself.

Exercise:

Schedule some “me time” this week.

Find What’s Comfortable

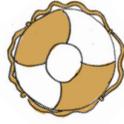
You know what: bars and clubs may not be your cup of tea. There are a lot of other communities and activities where you can meet and connect with people on a personal level. If you like animals, volunteer at an animal shelter. Help out

at a soup kitchen over the holidays. Habitats for Humanity unites volunteers to build homes. Take part in a poetry reading at a coffee shop. Try an improv class to challenge yourself. Join a small meet up group like a bicycle riding gang, running meet up, church group, or book club. Seek out activities that interest you. A great place to start is a site called meetup.com. For nearly every hobby and interest imaginable, there's a group of people looking to connect with like-minded others.

Practice 'Pickup' Every Day

Similar to other bad habits, conquering your self-consciousness takes time. Don't start by trying to pick up the hottest guy you see on the street. Start small. I 'pickup' everyone - males and females alike - everywhere I go. I chit-chat with new friends at coffee shops, ask fellow restaurant diners for menu suggestions, and compliment fashionable strangers' outfits.

You know the checkout guy at Trader Joe's who asks how your day is? Instead of mumbling, "Good," and avoiding eye contact while he packs up my hummus and frozen fish, I elaborate on my day. I regale Joe the Cashier on my trip to the beach, my five-mile run, and the cute shoes I scored on Piperline. I'll pepper Joe with questions too. Admittedly, I select my check out aisles strategically, although I'm not necessarily hitting on Joe. Joe serves as practice. I'm getting comfortable chatting with strangers. I'm preparing myself for when it is important.



HOW AN INDEPENDENT, SUCCESSFUL GIRL CAN STILL BE HIS DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

Andrea had always been an independent women with a successful career. She'd meet men and tell them about her job as a creative marking director at a big advertising agency in New York City, traveling the globe and working on big, international campaigns.

Her whole story's intent was to display her intelligence, independence, and capabilities. Men want an accomplished, independent woman who they can share stimulating conversation with, right?

Although the business men and lawyers Andrea talked with respected her and weren't intimidated by her credentials, they weren't attracted to her. She could be argumentative and competitive. She spent long hours at

the office, and usually came to dates straight from work. The men she dated said they wanted an independent and assertive woman but secretly pined for a passive, nurturing elementary school teacher.

“This is who I am,” Andrea told me over dinner one evening, “I’m not going to change to be someone I’m not. I’m not going to pretend to be meek and needy. No way! I might want a man, but you know what – I don’t need one.”

As a hobby, Andrea penned chick lit fiction novels, her latest one a star crossed love story between a young Amish girl and a robot. Very Romeo and Juliet forbidden love. Besides myself, she kept her writing hobby a secret. Afraid others would call her little dream silly. Back in college she’d considered perusing writing, but how many authors really become the next Sophie Kinsella? Advertising was much more lucrative.

Writing remained a pastime until one weekend, after a particularly stressful seventy hour week at the office, when exhausted and fed up, she decided she wanted to do something more for herself.

“I want to take a three month sabbatical. I want to move to Los Angeles to write my novel.” Andrea told her boss. In the middle of February, a sunny Los Angeles beach seemed ideal. Besides, isn’t LA where everyone runs away to follow their dreams? Her boss said HR wouldn’t allow such a thing. On top of that, she was on one of the agency’s biggest accounts. She couldn’t just run out on them.

But she did. “Well, then I quit.”

Andrea had never done anything this radical in her life. She was rational, organized, and, above all, dependable. Yet, through her entire twenties she’d slaved away for everyone else. It was high time to do something for herself.

When she arrived in Los Angeles, she found herself lost. She'd always been: Andrea Green: Marketing Coordinator. Andrea Green: Marketing Manager. Andrea Green: Creative Marketing Director. She based so much of her worth and identity on her job's accomplishments. Now in Los Angeles, she was unemployed, renting a shabby room off Craigslist for \$500 a month, surviving off her meager savings, and writing her would-be Amish/robot love story at coffee shops. Andrea Green: who? Maybe potential author? Maybe not?

When men approached her in coffee shops, bars or on the street, she wished she could jump into her usual spiel. I used to be director level! Instead, she found herself talking about her personal life. When talking to men, she'd muse wistfully aloud about her novel and its offbeat plot. Surprisingly, they wanted to know more.

Instead of hiding behind her past accomplishments, she opened up. She joked and laughed more. She asked them a lot of questions. She admitted to being scared to move to Los Angeles alone. She copped to her dream possibly panning out to 500 pages of unreadable crap. But even so, taking the chance made her proud.

When I spoke with Andrea, she told me she never felt so happy or calm until moving to LA. With her meager savings, her usual routine of expensive dinners and take-out food weren't an option. Instead, she started hitting up the local farmers markets for deals and found she really enjoyed cooking. Her normal business attire clashed with the bohemian coffee shops she frequented. Unable to afford designer anymore, she scouted out a few good thrift shops, and started sporting funky, colorful dresses, vintage costume jewelry, and floppy hats. Her afternoons free and the weather warm,

Andrea began running and hiking.

In as little as a month, she went out on three date with men she met in the neighborhood.

“These men really don’t know me,” Andrea explained over the phone, “They think I’m some damsel in distress,” she chuckled, “A helpless girl running off to follow her dream.”

“You’re hardly helpless.”

“I am practically broke though. I let this one guy Evan pay for our entire dinner and our drinks at the next bar.” Evan worked as a children’s pediatrician. They met when she stopped him on the street to ask him where to go for good tapas.

“You should let him pay, he’s asking you out.” I advised. “Was dinner good?”

“Yeah. He took me to the place he’d suggested. It’s his favorite restaurant. I was going to order us the bacon wrapped dates as an appetizer because you know how much I loooove bacon wrapped dates but he told me about this amazing cheese, burrata, that I had to try. I was going to argue, but, I figured, he’s the one that’s a regular there. And maybe, he’s right? I should try something new.”

She segued into another guy Matt. “He’s a third grade teacher. I never saw myself with a teacher, but I like him. He’s laid back and really fun in a sarcastic way. He took me bowling on our first date. He said it was supposed to be ironic because he’d just taken his class there the week before. I don’t know the last time I bowled. Girl, was I terrible!”

Last but not least, a chef invited her hiking in Runyon Canyon.

“Oh, get this!” she exclaimed. “I talk about writing

as my destiny now. Can you believe I used that word? I think I might have described myself as living off the universe at one point too! Who am I?"

"Don't go all California hippie on me," I laughed.

"I'm boho. You should see me. This New Yorker is actually wearing color!"

I'm not advocating that you go out, quit your job, and become a bohemian writer 'living off the universe' to get a date. After three months, Andrea finished her novel and found a high paying job at a talent agency in Los Angeles where she's currently a marketing agent. Pretty cool gig actually. Great hours. She still wears the colorful dresses for work. Best of all, she met some great connections for publishing her novel.

Let's analyze Andrea's story. Specifically how her attitude and behavior towards men shifted.

She joked that she became a damsel in distress, whereas actually she made herself more approachable and needed by men. Men are problem solvers by nature; they like to find a solution. If you're stubbornly independent, always have the solution, and never appreciate their effort, men never feel needed. Andrea allowed men to help her out. She met Evan by asking for a restaurant suggestion. I bet the teacher gave her bowling tips. She appreciated and acknowledged their kindness.

Andrea's aspiring writer mentality made her less intimidating and more intriguing. She didn't talk business; she talked about her personal life. She was welcoming and willing to meet people, eager to share her experience, and had a positive outlook on change. When talking she laughed and joked playfully, which sounds suspiciously like flirting.

Using words like ‘destiny’ and ‘universe’ might make you throw up a bit in your mouth. But the words are not what’s important here, it’s Andrea’s delivery. Her conversations were lighter and more playful since she wasn’t spouting off her resume over the appetizer.

Finding herself in a new city, she became open to suggestions. She handed over control to the guys and let them plan the dates. She even let Evan choose the appetizer and (God forbid) pay. Now, I’m not sure if she actually fought for the check prior to moving to California, counted out coins to split the bill, or made a huge scene over ordering dates over burrata, but that kind of strict, controlling behavior brandishes a red flag at men. Behaving bossy and stubborn doesn’t exactly make guys want to lavish you in kisses.

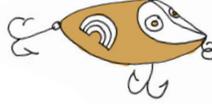
Overall, Andrea redefined herself as a woman. Her demeanor softened. Whereas her past conversations revolved around marketing strategies, her new discussions on cooking, hiking, and farmers market deals must have allowed her to come across as much more nurturing. She showed her feminine side. She dressed like a girl. Her skin browned with all the time outdoors. Her wardrobe beamed with rich colors and eclectic textures. Daily runs and a less stressful lifestyle transformed Andrea’s vibe from uptight and controlling to carefree and easy going.

The types of dates she went on changed as well. Matt the third grade teacher chose a nice lighthearted date - bowling. He probably didn’t foresee Andrea’s competitive side. Luckily, playful activities like bowling, miniature golf, arcade games, go-carts, darts, or pool are less aggressive and allow for some witty banter. Andrea probably came off as flirtatious and fun on her first date, instead of cutthroat. Same goes for the chef’s hiking date. Unless Andrea was

racing him to the top of the hill, hiking is a relaxing activity.

Her compatibility with different types of men, surprised her. Compared to the men she usually dated, the teacher, chef and pediatrician desired another set of qualities in women. Let's return to the question: do men like assertive and independent women or passive and dependent women? The truth is, both situations satisfy social and emotional needs of men. Just different needs. Independent women allow men to feel less pressured. An independent woman won't make men feel tied-down. On the other hand, a dependent woman allows a man to feel needed and powerful. Both freedom and power satisfy different needs that men have. By changing her dating expectations, Andrea met men outside her usual type and explored dating a wider variety of guys. Unlike the high-powered, self-centered businessmen she consorted with in New York, she started dating sweet, gentle, laid back men. Nurturing men such as a teacher, chef, or someone in the health profession are a great balance to Andrea's more aggressive, independent nature. Proving sometimes opposites really do attract.

After her experience, Andrea's still independent. Although, now she admits she's not always right. She could use help, at least some of the time. And like the young Amish girl, the heroine in her novel, Andrea's knight in shining armor may be who she least expects. She just needs to keep an open mind, so she can give him a shot.



A UNIQUE PIECE OF FLAIR

If I have one piece of advice before going out into the dating field, make it easy for men to approach you.

My rule: wear one piece of flair.

What is flair? Flair can be many things. It can be a cool jacket. A unique hairstyle. A standout nail design. A bird tattoo so you can quote Portlandia “I put a bird on it”. A statement necklace you

found at a little boutique. A fun hat. A pair of really badass studded shoes.

A unique piece of flair will make you stand out from the crowd. Essentially, you’re giving yourself an advantage by creating an easy opportunity for the guy to come up with an opening line. The flair is doing the work for them. And once you have their attention, you’re in.

It’s important your flair says something about your

**My rule:
wear one piece
of flair**

personality. It needs a story, no matter how trivial or ridiculous. Wear something that you can elaborate on.

I own several large gem stone rings from a designer named Adina Mills. Adina is the equivalent of a California gypsy, roving the desert in a hippie van, collecting stones to make her one of a kind rings and necklaces. Cool, eclectic story. Even cooler statement pieces. One ring I own is a four-inch wide circle with spiky mountains of smoky black quartz. Another is a three - inch long arrowhead made of graphite. Girls will stop me on the street and ask who the designer is. Guys will literally grab my hand and yell, “Wow, look at that thing!” I’ve also gotten, “Holy crap. You could stab someone with that!” Either way, conversation lift off. Every time I secretly thank Adina for creating such stunning, massive rings.

My friend Michelle owns a large antique key necklace. Men approach her, staring directly at her cleavage. “What does it unlock?” is their opener. I love it when she lets out a school girl yelp. “My heart.”

Before you blow your paycheck on a leopard jacket, crazy stacks of rings, blinking necklaces, furry hats, shutter shades, and platform goldfish dancer shoes, heed my warning: *Don't go overboard*. You'll end up looking like a kiosk of tchotchkes with feet. Or, even worse, a circus clown. Choose one piece to express yourself. One piece is all you need.

I wear an Stussy embroidered, black and gold, fur lined jacket. The jacket is a bit loud. Outrageous even. I've nicknamed it my ‘Rock Star Girlfriend’ jacket, as it is probably what a rock star’s girlfriend would wear when lounging on a velvet couch in a green room backstage. Every time I wear it, my entire aura radiates a confident coolness. Guys

notice it right away. I always share my nickname. They usually laugh. Truth is, guys want to date the girl that stands out. Guys want to be the rock star dating the rock star girlfriend.

The background is a solid light blue color. It is populated with several stylized, cartoonish illustrations of men in various poses, suggesting dancing or social interaction. The men are wearing a variety of clothing: some in jackets, some in plaid shirts, some in t-shirts, and some in suits. One man in the lower right is holding a boombox. The overall style is modern and graphic.

SECTION TWO:
How to Pick Up Men



THE OPENER

Alright, so I think we're ready to enter the field.

When approaching a guy, an opening line doesn't need to be complicated. Don't over think it. Unicorn theory, Ladies, you want to stand out and showcase what's unique about you. That's why we're approaching guys in the first place. In this section, we'll discuss your pre-game strategy which will determine the opener you use.

Before we get too far, I'll be the first to admit my pickup strategy is a bit aggressive for a female. But here's the thing, my close isn't. I stand firmly that men should be the pursuers. What can I say? As hunters, they like a good chase. By introducing myself first, all I'm doing is giving myself an advantage. Approaching women is nerve-wracking for a lot of good, quality guys. By taking the initiative, I'm meeting a larger pool of eligible bachelors. On top of that, I'm meeting men on my terms. I'm selecting the men I find attractive, rather than settling for the ones that have the courage to introduce themselves but aren't my type.

My friend Malory and I stopped by a friend's pool party. A bare-chested, shaggy blonde was throwing a foot-

ball around with a few friends. As another guy tossed the football to my Fabio, I quickly raced in front of him and with a few playful fake-out shuffles right and left, challenged him for the football. We caught it together and began wrestling for it. Truth is, I like my guys a little competitive. After a game of tug of war, he conceded and handed it over to me.

Raising an eyebrow, I smiled as I hurled the football back to his friend in a perfect spiral and bragged, “Yep, knew I’d win.”

He tucked a golden lock behind his ear and shot back, “That’s ‘cause I let you win.”

We duked it out for the next few minutes with conversation wit and our wide receiving abilities. I teased him about his throwing form.

He protested, “I’m much more skater than NFL superstar.”

I faked disbelief although he was a spitting image of a young Stacy Peralta.

“You? A skateboarder? I had you pegged as a one of those shirtless rollerbladers on the Venice boardwalk.”

He laughed and cocked his head. “I do mostly vertical. Ramps, half pipes and stuff. I don’t know, does that beat your rollerblader fantasy?”

I shrugged, “The rollerblader has knee pads.” I smirked, “You know how sexy I find those?”

“Do you skate?” He asked.

“No, I tried, but kept falling off. I have horrible balance. Though, you should have seen my Pogo ball skills back in the day. I killed it.”

He quipped, “Did you have Skip-It? I dominated my third grade.”

Although I introduced myself first, I’m a strong

believer that the man still needs to charm me. I am the prize after all. My skater suitor was a good balance between laid back and competitive. We bonded over '80s and '90s pop trivia.

After my third catch I joked that I might need to play against one of his other friends; beating him was far too easy. He suggested I come watch him skate sometime. He even threw in a free lesson.

But I wasn't committing to anything. I may be aggressive, but he'd have to put in the effort to show how interested he was in me. With a smile I told him it was nice meeting him and walked back towards Malory.

Before I could pop open a Miller Lite, he returned.

I broke the ice, but it was his job to impress me and pursue me. By approaching him, I was just flaunting how awesome and unique I am. But getting me wasn't a certainty. He'd need to catch me, which I was going to test him on, just like his wide receiving prowess.

Ready to get started and meet some men too? Good.

Determine What You Want

First, let's consider what you want.

Are you just looking for a rocking Sunday night with no strings attached?

Are you hoping to meet some cool people? Make some new friends to hit up Six Flags?

Maybe you just want a nice Italian meal?

You can admit it if you've been window shopping at Restoration Hardware and ogling other people's babies.

Whatever the case, let's determine what you want

out of your interactions with men. You can't have success until you define success.

Hey, wait just a second, you're going to protest. How can you determine what you want if you don't know what's out there? If you're a hopeless romantic like me, you've seen Disney's *Aladdin* one too many times for your own good. You imagine the fairy tale meet cute. While looking to get laid, surprise, surprise, you discover the man of your dreams. The diamond in the ruff with perfectly coifed hair and MC Hammer pants that throws you for a loop.

Sure, this fantasy could come true. Poof! You meet a Sultan-esque suitor, strike up a sing-a-long with a blue Rob-in Williams, and ride off on a magic carpet. Though, realistically, slim chance on the flying magic throw rug.

Even in the case of movies like *Aladdin*, our female heroine was still out looking for something. Jasmine ran away to that market, and I can tell you, she sure wasn't shopping for organic produce. Her dating arrangements weren't working out. She was seeking alternatives.

Once you meet someone, yes, your outlook may shift. Out for a night on the town you may come across someone you really vibe with. Cool. That's allowed. Go with it.

Yet what if you want something more serious but end up compromising for a one-night-stand? I'm asking you to determine what you want because I want you to get dates. I don't want you to sell yourself short. There are quality guys out there who will treat you well. Set your expectations high so you don't settle for less.

Ok, so let's see where you're at. Are you looking for a hot and heated escapade with a hunky Adonis? A little ca-noodle with a Casanova? A fun, flirtatious conversation with a mysterious stranger? Or a hot date with a cute guy? Going

in with an end goal will determine your pickup strategy.

For example, I'd take a different approach if I went with door number one: the heated night of passion with Adonis. Since I wouldn't see it as anything more than a one-night-stand, my opening remarks could be much more direct, outrageous and sexual. Just as a guy can forgive drunkenness, belligerence, and even crazy emotional confessions if he knows he won't see you after sunrise. Heck, he'll listen to you blather on for hours about your cockapoo Tinkerbell and how you dress her in fairy costumes. All that matters to him is that he's getting laid. So as long as you're not dressing him up in pink tutus, he'll put up with a little bit of crazy. For a one-night-stand, you just need to show up and make your intentions clear. Don't you worry, we'll get more in depth on one-night-stands later in the book.

On the other hand, approaching a potential date with a cute guy is much more difficult. In this situation, it's important to remain mysterious. After all, he needs to be interested in you enough to ask you out later. You want to be lingering on his mind long after the conversation is over. You want him picking up the phone hours or days later, hoping, praying, pleading that there's the slightest chance he has a shot with you.

Therefore, for a potential date, information is sensitive. I wouldn't want to let it accidentally slip that I just broke up with a boyfriend, or that I haven't had a date in two months, or that I save a jar with all my tears under my bed. I want to hide the tear jar for now and make the best possible impression. Appearing panicked, needy, or lonely isn't going to fare well either. The last thing you want to do is look like you are approaching a guy because you are desperate.

I stress that my time is valuable and it's up to him to entertain me. If a guy starts driveling on and on about a hopelessly mundane and pointless topic that makes me want to fall asleep, like how he's mostly German but his great grandfather was part Danish, I'll let him know that I'm bored. I'll yawn, sigh loudly, and glance around the room. Or I'll cross my arms and lean away from him, indicating that he needs to work harder for my attention.

With potential dates, signal that you have a very busy, fulfilling life. Your attitude will convey cool ambivalence. Yep, you're just passing through. You're happy to have bumped into such a cool guy. It's a fun coincidental meeting, isn't it? I do this by avoiding long, drawn out conversations. Save those conversations for something to talk about on the first date.

My rule: limit you interaction time. Focus on quality conversations over quantity. With guys you are interested in long-term: get in, flirt, and get out. Leave him wondering whether you actually like him or not. We'll go into this later in more detail.

The Ten-Second Rule

I've definitely committed the waiting mistake. By the time I work up enough courage to approach a potential paramour, he's walked away. Or I wait so long I completely chicken out. Hesitation can kill your momentum. The longer you wait to approach a man, the more your anxiety builds. Your mind constructs a mental barrier and as time passes it becomes harder to get past it. Eventually you'll talk yourself out of it completely. To avoid this, I like to play by something I mentioned earlier: The Ten Second Rule.

When I spot a guy (my target), I initially check him out. I maintain eye contact. This gives him a moment to approach me first. For anywhere from two to four seconds I'm giving him an invitation. This is when I'll display my unique piece of flair. If I have a hat on, I'll fidget with it. I'll seductively show off one of my Adina Mills rings by touching my face or running it along my lips.

The next five to six seconds I set aside for pre-planning. I scan and assess the scenario. Is my new boyfriend, er, target, there with a girlfriend? A group? Alone? Does he have a full drink? Is he checking out at the cash register? Or is he lazily reading a book? Basically, is he leaving anytime soon or does he look like he's settling in? Is he wearing a wedding band? I always forget to check. Do me a favor, check. Lastly, I study his mannerisms, dress, and survey the environment for interesting clues. All these observations will determine which opener I'll choose. In a minute, I'll reveal my five opening strategies.

That final second is when I push myself to make my move. I literally force my legs to start walking forward. My heart races so fast I can barely hear the words I'm repeating in my head, *You can do this. You can do this. Just go. Just go! Go already!* Sometimes it helps to have a wingwoman to physically push you at the last second. Like a timer, a good wingwoman will sound the alarm when your ten seconds are up. I'll get more into wingwomen in the coming chapters.

Truth is, I know it sounds scary, but once you've moved the distance, the momentum will help you approach a guy.

Attitude

There's a reason we examined everything we did in our self-assessment. The initial approach utilizes all the principles we learned earlier.

Just to be on the safe side, let's quickly review.

First, be positive. When using these openers smile and appear upbeat. You are a fun person to be around and he should be excited to meet you. No one wants to talk to the moping Debbie Downer. Always assume you'll get a positive reaction. Really, every guy I mentioned the subject matter of this guide to was ecstatic. Men want to be picked up by women. They are frickin' excited about it, so expect good results.

Next, radiate confidence. Don't slink up like a creeper and pretend you accidentally appeared beside him. Make your approach known and intentional. Strut up with purpose, your head held high, chest out, and shoulders back. If I'm approaching a guy at the bar, I own my territory by plunking my drink down. I make eye contact immediately.

Lastly, don't be afraid to make fun of yourself. Remember, this isn't an interview. Flirt! Flirting also means teasing this cute guy of yours a little. Stay tuned, I'll get more into flirting in the coming chapters.

**Always assume
you'll get a
positive reaction.**

**Make your
approach known
and intentional.
Strut up with
purpose, your
head held high,
chest out, and
shoulders back.**

Positioning

When picking up a guy, there's a good chance he's in a group, so it's important who you interact with and where you stand within that group. In general, I like to give the guy I'm after my initial attention. Guys are competitive and if you flirt with his friend or play too hard to get when first meeting him, he may think you're not interested. As girls, we assume some game playing will spark jealousy and spur the guy we like to fight for and chase after us. In this scenario, unless he dates for sport, he'll most likely assume that you like his friend.

The reality is, most nice guys don't go out with the sole intention of picking up a bunch of hot chicks. Sure, meeting a cool girl would be wonderful. But in reality, they're just living their lives, mostly oblivious to your attention. They're out with their buddies for a few drinks, hanging with co-workers after a long day, or catching a beer while watching the game. There's a good chance he won't even notice you standing in line at the coffee shop. Not because you're unattractive, but because he's wrapped up in his own thoughts, schedule, and, well, life. He isn't watching for or anticipating a girl's move.

As women, we're pretty perceptive. We multi-task. Men focus on one thing at a time. Therefore, most men aren't scanning the grocery store, waiting for you to pop out of aisle five. Any which way you approach a man will leave him flattered and elated that you're interested in meeting him.

That said, playing games by hitting on his friend, won't win you points with a nice guy. Although you should include his group of friends in your conversation. Especially

if there are other females present. Be polite and engaging. You don't need to be obvious by planting yourself at a guy's side. But overall, make sure that you greet your target first with solid eye contact and your opener. This will give an indication of your interest.

The Five Openers

There's a known pickup rule: If you say something interesting, you'll get an interesting response. Just as if you say something boring, you'll get a boring response.

When initiating conversation with a guy, toss him a conversation curveball. Guys predict the normal greeting. 'Hi' is vastly overused. 'How are you?' is replied with a monotone, 'Good.' Maybe a head nod if you're lucky. Either way, conversation is over, game over. Although, if you reel them in with some interesting material, they are going to view you as intriguing and want to keep talking with you.

There's a known pickup rule: If you say something interesting, you'll get an interesting response.

Here are my five Types of Openers:

1. Environmental
2. The Survey
3. The Unique Feature
4. Contact
5. Direct

There are also Some Different Levels of Originality:

1. *Easy:*

It gets straight to the point and takes less ingenuity

2. *The Negative Jab:*

Here, you tease a guy about something to rile him up and get a flirtatious response

3. *Advanced:*

Usually more creative and sometimes can be pre-planned

4. *Outrageous:*

These are the most creative and aggressive openers, but also the riskiest.

As we go through each of the five openers, I'll provide you with examples.

1. Environmental:

Environmental Openers are interesting comments about what's going on around you. It could be about the place you are at or an observation of other people. You relate on the common experience. This opener isn't about the guy's physical features, clothing or attitude.

To begin this opener, gather inspiration from clues around you. Take note of what's on TV, if there is one. At bars I've seen everything from wrestling to low budget horror films. Scan the crowd for oddball characters. At parks, events and festivals, people watching is at its best.

Use unexpected facts or observations to your advantage.

The Environmental Opener creates a bonding experience. You're at the same place, at the same time, enjoying a meal, an event or interaction. Introducing yourself in this way establishes camaraderie and highlights your similarities. Since you've singled a guy out and entrusted him with your opinion, he will feel comfortable to reciprocate and share as well. With one line, you're in. You and your target are now in cahoots together.

Easy Examples:

A sexy stud slugs back a beer while watching the Cubs game on the flat screen above the bar. I walk up beside him and pretend I'm ordering a drink. I casually glance at the TV screen, catching the replay reel and open with:

"What just happened there? Was that a double play?"

At a small deli, I'm waiting in line to order lunch and spot a handsome stranger get in line behind me. An employee passes us to deliver a sandwich I've eaten a dozen times and will probably order again. I turn to the

**Environmental
Openers are
interesting
comments about
what's going on
around you.**

gentleman and start a conversation by pondering:

“That looked good. What sandwich do you think that was?”

A dashing fellow saddles up to the bar beside me to order, while the bartender heaps a mountain of ice, long pour of bourbon, and mint (Previously spanked. The cute guy missed that or it could have been an opener as well) into a tin mug.

“Hey, what do you think that drink is?” I motion to where the bartender is giving the grand finale, a few taps on a metal canister to dust the entire thing in powdered sugar, “...with the cocaine on it?”

At Whole Foods, as I’m casing the joint for free samples, I hit up a hunk waiting in line at the seafood counter. I leaned in close to him like we were conspiring in a spy movie and lowered my voice like I was tipping him off:

“Amazing chocolate chip cookie samples in the bakery. Just sayin’.”

Somehow I didn’t score the best seats for a show at the Greek Theatre. As my friends and I snuck past a group of hotties, also in the nose bleed section:

“Look at these seats. We’re in the make-out section.”

At a restaurant slash bar, a pungent, tangy order wafts past my friend and me, while we approach the bar to order. I strategically slide in beside a smoking guy sitting at the bar.

“Why does it smell funny in here? Is it just me? Do you smell it?”

Just so you know, after my opener, Mr. Stud Muffin and I Sherlock Holmes-ed it. Turns out the menu has a German influence. Aha! Sauerkraut!

My friend and I walked into a bar in San Francisco's Tenderloin district before a rock show. Two dapper chaps sat at the bar, talking. At a booth opposite the bar, a man slugged back a silver goblet of beer that he must have smuggled in. In his tunic, tights, and swarthy cloak, he looked like he'd just returned from the Crusades. All that was missing was a crown on his long golden locks, and maybe a broad sword.

I tapped one of the gentlemen on the shoulder and motioned towards King Richard.

"Is that normal around here? Is there a Renaissance Fair that I don't know about?"

For your information we made fast friends with the guys after my pickup, and it turned out they were going to the same concert. Being a good wingwoman, I forfeited the cutest one to my friend. The crazy part is, we're all still in touch years later. Whenever the band plays, we meet up.

Weddings offer great opening opportunities. At one wedding, my friend Michelle attempted to hit on a guy taking pictures of a fountain. At the end of their conversation, he didn't ask for her number.

When I asked her what they talked about, she couldn't tell me. Apparently, their conversation was that memorable. I told her she needed to flirt and open with a line that would make her stand out.

So rather than beginning with the same line a Grandma would use (Do you know the bride or the groom?), try a more inventive approach. For example, if

he's taking pictures like Michelle's guy, offer some offbeat art direction like:

"Awe, come on, I know you can get more creative than that. Get down low at it. Really get on the ground."

When everyone's out there dancing to 'Footloose,' find the lone stranger hanging back at his table, nursing his watered down gin and tonic, and ask him, *"Want to dance? I can't promise you I won't lead,"* or offer up a dare, *"Hey, want to go get another drink with me and then start a cake fight? Maybe after, if you're up for it, we can jump in the chocolate fountain?"*

The Negative Jab Examples:

Returning from the bathroom, two sexy strangers had commandeered our booth.

I walked right up to them. *"Hey, that's our booth. You totally stole our spot,"* I berated the cuter of the two. Then I feigned shock and disgust.

It helps if your acting skills are up to par. This type of comment is meant to be playful teasing; you don't want them to think you're really pissed.

When they offered to move (which a good gentleman might), I put up my hands like I was under arrest and said, *"No, no. It's fine, we'll let you have it."*

I acted like they owed me. They insisted we split the booth. And we split more than that.

Surviving Milwaukee's Summerfest Music Festival can be a feat. For a week you subsist on Miller High Life, fried cheese curds, and bratwurst. After I noticed that a burning hunk of love in the food line ahead of me didn't

order the most grotesque option on the menu, I called him out, *“What? Not going for the giant turkey leg?”*

As usual, the music festival’s beer line stretched nearly a quarter mile back. Just as my friend and I were getting close to the front, a cutie wandered up and squinted at the menu board.

“Trying to skip the line there, Buddy?” I insinuated playfully and with a smile. Of course he wasn’t skipping. He probably needed contacts. *“Oh sure, just trying to read the menu board. That was the last guy’s excuse.”*

The key: keep it light and flirtatious.

Advanced:

If you notice a cue that relates to a subject you know quite well, use that. Pop culture references, for example, make great openers. I consider this more advanced, because you’ll need to prove your knowledge on the subject. So if you really don’t know about the topic, don’t choose this type of opener. But if you do and the guy knows the reference, you’re kindred spirits.

In New Orleans at this great spot called R Bar, they have a projection screen where they show old movies. I glanced up and immediately was transported back to my childhood, camped out in front of the Betamax.

I tapped the royal stud beside me and said, *“Oh my God. They are not playing Never Ending Story right now?”* Here’s where you can quote a line to earn you props. *“Atreyu!”*

I was meeting some friends at a sports bar but arrived before them. A Packers/Vikings football game played on the TV. A sexy beast a few bar stools down was passively watching the game, donning neither teams' color.

I said to him, *“You so better not be a Vikings fan. I have a huge crush on Aaron Rogers.”*

Here, I demonstrated I knew something about football, since I knew the Packer's quarterback. Additionally, I divulged a secret, my Rogers crush. By sharing, I'm encouraging him to share as well. Also, a quarterback crush isn't a serious sports topic. There's little chance I'll trap myself in a weighty, jargon-filled football debate.

Remember how I made clumsy endearing in the self-assessment section? Laughing at yourself and admitting that you are not perfect makes you appear more approachable, genuine and real.

In this next example, I shared an embarrassing anecdote as my opener.

While walking down the back steps to the patio, I tripped and crashed into a series of garbage cans below. Nearly everyone at the party saw. Mortifying experience. I picked myself up, and as soon as I walked back inside the party I spotted an attractive guy. I brushed myself off and walked right up to him and asked:

“I'm not bleeding am I?”

Then I laughed and shared my embarrassing story. *“I just totally fell off the back patio into the garbage cans.”*

I used my fall to my advantage. He laughed with me. *“I heard the crash. That was you?”*

While eaves dropping in on other people's conversations at a local coffee shop, I'll burrow my head into a book. One time, a guy was telling his friend how he saw a cute girl at the same coffee shop we were sitting in. He thought of going up to her and starting a conversation, but she looked like she was busy working on her laptop, so he chickened out. I took this as my opportunity to pipe in with a female opinion. Basically proving that being on your laptop doesn't mean you're busy.

"You suck. You totally should have asked her out."

We ended up discussing male and female perspectives for a while, and when I said I needed to go, the cute guy asked for my phone number. Yay!

If a guy you want to meet is in a group, sometimes it can be especially hard to find an opening to insert yourself. A small white lie never hurt anyone.

Walk over to him, make deliberate eye contact or tap his shoulder and with a smile say, *"Hi,"* Then, scrunch your face up like you're scrutinizing him and wondering if you are correct in your assessment. *"I think we've met before. I'm not sure if you remember me, I'm Evie."*

First, you're acknowledging the fact that he might not remember you, which appears nice of you. He's going to instantly feel special that you remember him.

Here's the great thing: now you're on his mind. He's trying to place you and wondering where he met you.

Socially, it's kind of rude to admit he doesn't remember you. So usually guys go along with it and ask silly questions like 'How have you been?' which cues you to share an interesting experience you've recently had. (a good concert, a gallery show, etc.). I've used this opener on

a semi-famous rock musician and he never questioned me.

If for some reason a guy does ask how you met, say, you think it was at a party a while back. If he calls you out, you can always say: *“wow, sorry, then you really look like someone I met at a party a while back.”* You can even joke: *“Maybe you have a doppelganger?”*

Worst case scenario, he’ll feel bad and still talk to you. You can’t lose.

Outrageous:

Sometimes nothing is funnier than brutal honesty. Or elementary school bathroom humor. For example, while one of my friends had an emergency bathroom run, I went to the bar to distract myself. I walked right up beside a beautiful male specimen and announced:

“Well, my friend is taking a dump, I might as well get a beer to kill some time.”

I actually ended up dating the dude for several months. My friend wanted to murder me, but still jokes about it to this day.

A forward statement that doesn’t insinuate that you like him works well because you’re challenging him. I’ve walked up to a group of guys and baited the best looking one with:

“So where are all the hot guys in here?”

If he’s hot as hell he’s probably used to getting compliments, so in his mind he’s thinking: what about me?

This opener relies a lot on delivery. Keep your tone upbeat and smile throughout. You don’t want to come off as stuck up or snobby. Your goal is to be flirtatious and see

if he takes the bait. Despite your actual words, he should get an inkling of your intention because obviously you're approaching him.

The Survey:

Survey Openers are intriguing open-ended questions that encourage your target to elaborate and offer their opinion and insight.

To keep the conversation genuine, choose from recent topics of discussion you've actually had with your friends. The last thing you want is your question to come off as rehearsed.

For the Survey Question the basic setup is that you and your friend were having a debate 'over there.' 'Over there' could be another table across the room, or the other day. You are asking for some male input to sway the vote. He's the one to crown the victor.

By introducing yourself this way, you're showing a guy that you trust his judgment and value his opinion. You also appear open-minded. An open-ended question encourages a guy to elaborate and create an argument by offering facts that support his view point. He'll try and convince you, and in doing so he'll be seeking your approval. Also, sometimes the answers that guys give are unexpected and downright hilarious.

**Survey Openers
are intriguing
open-ended
questions that
encourage your
target to elaborate
and offer their
opinion and insight.**

This open quickly reveals if a guy has a sense of humor – something, I myself, look for in men.

Easy:

At bars when deciding on a drink I'll ask a fellow patron or handsome bartender for assistance:

“Which beer should I have next? I have an idea: surprise me. Choose one for me. Then after, tell me why you chose it.”

Guessing is fun for anyone. And you're giving up control and playing that damsel in distress role by asking for help from the handsome stranger, even if it is on something as trivial as a drink choice. I love hearing guy's justifications of why they chose a particular ale.

Best of all, if you hate it, you can send it back, and then tease him about it.

This same method can be used to ask for suggestions on restaurants, movies, books or hiking trails. Asking open-ended questions get men talking.

The Negative Jab:

I dub this twist on a survey question ‘discrediting’ because although I'm asking a guy's opinion, the playful doubting tone that use insinuates that I'm testing to see if he's a reliable source.

To do this: make a snap judgment while asking his opinion. Basically, you're teasing him in a way that says: ‘I'd ask for your help, but you seem more clueless than me.’

Don't go overboard on the jab, only make fun of something small or irrelevant. Make it seem like your random reason now completely discounts his entire opinion on the subject, yet still, you'll ask him. It's a playful jab, so keep your delivery light.

For example, I've never liked Fruit Loops. Bathe my cereal in chocolate, I'm sold. But anything remotely tasting like soggy strawberries? No f-in' way. While waiting in the checkout line at my local Shaw's grocers, I noticed a dimpled man-boy placing an unfortunate cereal choice on the conveyer belt. I pretended to be scanning the candy bar point of purchase display when I glanced over, made eye contact, and then scowled at his Fruit Loops in mock disdain. I opened with my jab:

"Fruit loops, huh? I was going to ask you your opinion on which candy bar I should get, but now that I see that you're a Fruit Loops lover, I'm not so sure anymore..."

I let the statement hang and waited for his response.

Here's what I did. First, I called him a Fruit Loops lover. I put him on the defense. He came back with all sorts of excuses (come on, you can't hate Fruit Loops. You must have loved them as a kid). After he opened up to me, he offered a solution to my candy bar dilemma. He didn't expect me to take his suggestion. But I actually surprised him and bought his pick (this instance, Wildberry Skittles. Of course he'd pick something fruity). But, hey, I'm open-minded like that.

Advanced:

The only difference between easy and advanced is

I've upped the creativity a little. Choose a topic from pop culture and approach a guy and begin the discussion with:

"Ok, help me out. My friends and I are debating..."

Here you can insert anything: why children's toys or TV shows suck nowadays compared to the ones of our childhood, what the best cartoon of the '80s was (my vote: *Ninja Turtles*), or who's the most influential musical group of all time (bonus points if you can deadpan something random in return like Flock of Seagulls).

You can also try: *"Do you remember the theme song from ____."*

Insert any show: *The Golden Girls*, *Save by the Bell*, *ALF*, *90201*, or *Thundercats*. It should be something that interests you but you genuinely forgot.

"Can you sing or hum it?" If they can't, suggest, *"Let's look it up on YouTube..."*

Outrageous:

If I'm going to ask a guy something a little out there, more personal, or sexual, I'll start by stating a time frame. This makes the conversation seem less planned and more spontaneous. It also lets them know that I'm not planning on talking to them all night. I'm just passing through.

"Hey, quick question and really random..."

Again I'll bring up my friends and our debate. *"So my friend and I are taking a survey."*

Here's a variety of attention grabbing topics:

"What's the craziest place you've had sex?"

"If you could change the age of your virginity would

you? And would it be older or younger and why?"

"Is there a difference between sex and making love?"

"Do you think David Bowie made the Labyrinth for the sole purpose of strutting around in a cod piece?"

Fun times.

The Unique Feature:

I tend to favor the Unique Feature opener.

This opener is essentially the reverse of the Unique Piece of Flair concept. Here, you're looking for a man's flair. The difference between the Unique Feature opener and Environmental opener is that for the Unique Feature opener you are not commenting on the situation but rather the guy himself.

This opener is great because it shows you're curious about him. It also gets him to talk about himself. And because my opening line is so individually tailored, it comes across as genuine.

I begin by scanning my target for distinguishing features that I could comment on. Check for clues in the way he dresses. Does he have any personal belongings that tell a story? I gather evidence to deduce what he's interested in.

At the same time, I'm looking for clues that I can relate to. Which feature I choose to comment on is based on my individual knowledge.

**You're looking for
a man's flair.**

**Unique Feature
Openers comment
not the situation,
but rather on the
guy himself.**

Personally, I don't know much about electronic gadgets like watches, phones or computers, so those aren't the things that I would decide to talk about because I'd be at a loss if asked to elaborate.

Although, I am quite versed in pop culture, cartoons, music, sports, sneakers, and art. So for me, these are the type of things I look for when assessing a guy I want to meet.

In a matter of seconds, I pick a Unique Feature, and thus, an opening discussion topic. I'll teach you how to do this with my following series of cartoon "hot men."

Easy:



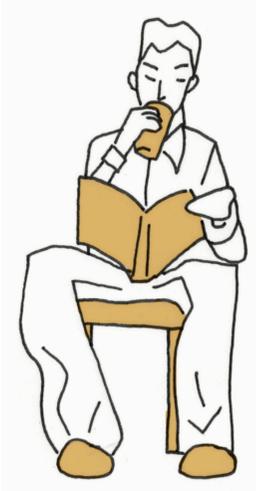
Man #1

This bad boy just parked his Ducati along the sidewalk. Guys love talking about their bikes.

Back in Wisconsin, I used to own a Kawasaki Ninja. I stored up lots of stories associated with my four months of ownership. Mainly that the cops kept pulling me over, not because I was speeding, but to talk to a chick on a bike. They'd make small talk, asking about the gas mileage, how long I'd been riding, etc. Whenever I rode I was always late; I could get nowhere with that thing.

So I open with:

"I really like your motorcycle. I used to ride a Ninja 250."



Man #2

I've read a lot of books, everything from Hemingway to David Sedaris and Sophie Kinsella. So when I saw this hot hipster reading a book at a café, I was curious and approached him with this easy opener:

*"What book are you reading?
Is it any good?"*

Now we can segue into our favorite authors and genres. I also like to write in my spare time. Maybe he does too?



Man #3

This stud was drawing at a table at a café. I could have commented on his tattoos or suspenders but I was more curious about what he was drawing. Is he an artist? Cartoonist? Does he do caricatures? Could he draw a caricature of me?

I sketch too so we could relate on that topic. I even had a few of my sketches on my cell phone if he asked to see some of my work. So I chose to open with:

*"You gotta let me see
what you're drawing."*

Man #4



My strategy went horribly awry at a bar called Birds in Los Angeles. I was there with my friend Ellen, demonstrating to her the finer points of this pick-up technique. As an example, I chose this cutie out of the bar. I'm a big baseball fan, so his Cubs shirt was an easy choice.

When he passed us, I opened with, "*Cubs! Are you from Chicago?*"

Looks can be deceiving. Turns out this guy Chad wasn't from Chicago or even a Cubs fan. Instead, whenever he visited a new city, he'd buy a team's shirt. So much for team loyalty.

Ellen, an avid democrat, shifted the conversation to the past election. Chad's face lit up. He described himself as not only ultra conservative, but a Mitt Romney nut. He flashed us his phone with a Romney screen saver. He flipped through pictures of his ROMNEY8 license plate. He bragged about attending every rally. Ellen wasn't exactly impressed.

Then, the final nail in the coffin – he told us what he did for a living. The conversation started with, "I'm a photographer."

"Oh, like photo shoots?" I guessed.

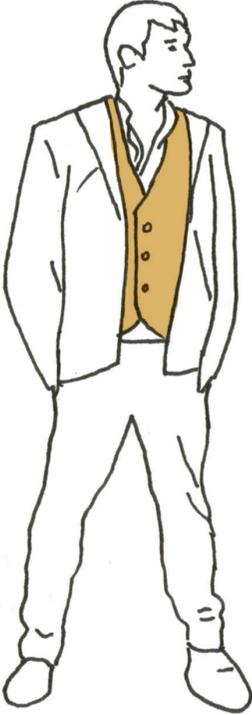
"Not like that. I take pictures from my van. You know? Outside the Ivy."

Ellen turned to me and groaned, "Great Evie, you have me picking up Republican paparazzi. This is a fantastic method."

I told her like I'll tell you: you never know what

you're going to get. But we did meet the guy in the Cubs shirt and we did find out a lot of time-saving information.

The Negative Jab:



Man #5

One Friday, I was at a neighborhood bar when I spotted this debonair dude in an expensive suit. The place touted stiff drinks, the jukebox wailed a sad Tom Waits song, and in the dark vinyl booths shined with grease. The next best-dressed clientele was wearing a wife beater. I wondered for a minute if this guy had stumbled in the wrong spot from a red carpet event.

I walked right up to him and scrunched up my face like I was scrutinizing why on earth he'd be so dressed up. My look gave him the impression that I, perhaps, wasn't impressed. I couldn't let on that I actually was. I delivered my opener sarcastically:

"Why are you wearing a suit?"

He shot back: "It's Friday night." Then gave me a devious grin in return, "Why the hell not?"

He was a charmer and I liked his style. Had I just said I liked his suit, he would have probably replied a simple, "Thank you." Because I added a challenging spin, he challenged me right back. I found out why he was dressed up too. Turns out he owned the bar.

Man #6

This quirky fellow is actually a friend of a friend, but I have to use this example because it illustrates my point perfectly.



I met him at a birthday party. To introduce myself I opened with a teasing literary reference:

“Who do you think you are? Hunter S. Thompson? You look like you jumped straight out of ‘Leaving Las Vegas.’”

Man #7

I used to work in the bicycle industry. I’ve dated my fair share of bike racers, single speed hipsters and bike shop mechanics. I now live in the number one hipster neighborhood in the nation. I can’t cross the street without being nearly run over by someone on a bike with no brakes and handlebars turned upside down for no reason. Yet when this lean, mean road bike warrior pulled up at my coffee shop on an expensive road bike, instead of telling him how I used to ride 50 miles to work and back, or



that I owned the same bike as Lance Armstrong, I decided to take a different route, and give him a little shit. Because flirting is teasing.

“So you’re a biker, huh.” I scrutinized him as though I didn’t believe it. Although it was blatantly obvious. He was wearing lycra and his bike cost as much as my car. *“How far do you ride?”*

He told me he just finished a 45-mile route. That is pretty darn impressive ride, especially since it was only 9am. Although I played coy and acted like I didn’t believe him.

“Hmm. Suuuure you did.”

Oh of course this made him smile and he started to defend himself, *“I did. I have an odometer...”*

After some back and forth, I finally told him about my bicycle connection and confessed I did believe him but I just wanted to give him shit because he looked like a very serious biker.



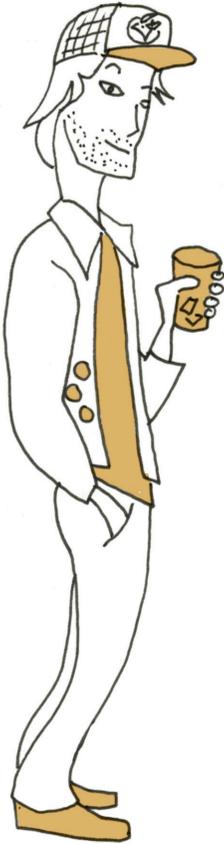
Advanced:

Man #8

The first thing I noticed about Mr. Nerdy Cute was his Star Wars t-shirt and I can do a lot with that. When my friend and I spotted this dude at a restaurant, Comic Con had just ended in San Diego. Asking him if he went to the convention could have been a good opener. But my love for the force goes a tad bit deeper. As we passed him and his friend

on the way out, I started the conversation with:

“Hey! Star Wars! I had the biggest crush on Darth Vader when I was six.”



Man #9

I noticed this handsome stranger’s Toronto Blue Jays hat. I’ve been a Blue Jays fan since I was a kid. I memorized the names of every player on the team. Earned my bragging rights after they won the World Series. And at the tender age of ten, had the biggest crush on their second baseman.

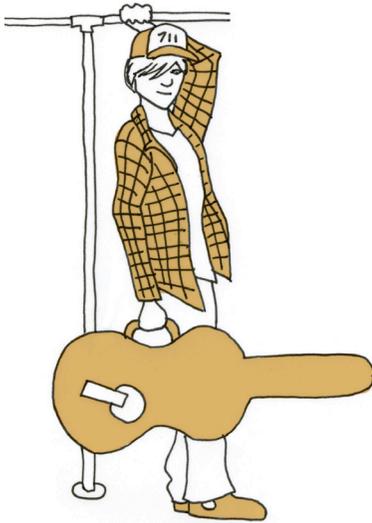
So when I saw this heavenly man standing in front of me at the bar I had to open with one of my embarrassing stories:

“No way! Blue Jays! Are you a Toronto fan? They were my favorite baseball team growing up. I used to sing Bryan Adam’s ‘Everything I do, I Do It for You’ to my Roberto Alomar rookie card.”

Yep, in a matter of twenty minutes we were grinding on a support beam and making out. Alomar’s career might have tanked after he spit on an umpire, but I was still reaping the benefits from my groupie status.

Unique Feature Opener Exercise:

Here's a few for you to try. List two features you could comment on for each guy and then come up with an opener. At the end, you can read my answers.



Hottie #1:

Unique Feature One:

Unique Feature Two:

Opener:



Manly Man #2:

Unique Feature One:

Unique Feature Two:

Opener:



Drool-worthy Dude #3:

Unique Feature One:

Unique Feature Two:

Opener:



Cutie Pie #4:

Unique Feature One:

Unique Feature Two:

Opener:

My Answers:

Hottie #1

Unique Feature One: *Guitar*

Unique Feature Two: *Flannel shirt*

Unique Feature Three: *711 hat*

Possible Opener, choosing Guitar as his unique feature: *“So when are you going to serenade me?”*

Manly Man #2

Unique Feature One: *small weights*

Unique Feature Two: *Trainer shirt*

Unique Feature Three: Possible Opener, playing off his small weights: *“Lifting some massive weights there, I see..”*

Drool-worthy Dude #3

Unique Feature One: *suit*

Unique Feature Two: *glasses*

Unique Feature Three: *brief case*

Unique Feature Three: *cell phone*

Possible Opener, playing off his suit and glasses: *“Hey, Clark Kent. Promise I’ll keep that whole Superman thing under wraps.”* or *“Hey, Clark Kent. So how’s that Superman gig working out? Keeping our streets clean. Save any damsels in distress today?”*

Cutie Pie #4

Unique Feature One: *miniature poodle wearing a spiked collar*

Unique Feature Two: *I ‘Heart’ NY shirt*

Unique Feature Three: *Smokey the Bear hat*

Unique Feature Three: *wooly beard*

Possible Opener, commenting on his hipster hat: *“Only you can prevent forest fires.”*

Possible Opener, commenting on his small dog: *“I hope the little fella is named something big and tough like Killer.”*

Contact:

For the Contact Opener, flirtatiously and physically assault your target. Usually this involves stealing an accessory from a guy or finding a way to ‘accidentally’ touch him. Use this type of opener in large crowd situations, especially sporting events and costume parties.

The immediate contact gets his attention. If you are stealing something, hold whatever it is for ransom for a few minutes and then return it to him.

For the Contact Opener, flirtatiously and physically assault your target. Usually this involves stealing an accessory from a guy or finding a way to ‘accidentally’ touch him.

Easy:

The simplest form is a cheers followed by a made-up reason for celebrating. Your act initiates a friendship and opens a conversation.

For example at Dodger’s Opening Day, I greeted a hot fan with a PBR bump and my super easy opener:

“Cheers! Happy Opening Day!”

Brushing up against a guy can work. Actually tripping onto his lap is even better. Just make sure you apologize right away, smile and laugh.

“Oh god, I’m sorry! I totally just fell on you!”

Cue a recap of my clumsy embarrassing moments.

Advanced:

I call this The Steal.

I’ll walk by a tall, handsome drink of water at a party and grab the hat off his head and shout back:

“I’m just borrowing this for a minute.”

Vegas is my favorite spot to use the Steal. At hotel pool parties, I’ll snatch a beach ball from a group of guys, wave my spoils in the air, and dare them:

“Come and get it.”

At a costume party, I’ll grab a guy’s sword, blinged-out necklace, or mullet wig.

“This is mine now!” I’ll call back, donning the necklace, sporting the wig, or thrusting the sword sky-high *Braveheart* style.

Usually, I return the items that I steal. You know, I do want to talk to the guy. On more than one occasion the guys have told me to keep my loot as souvenirs. So over the years I’ve amassed cowboy hats, Superman capes, Mardi Gras beads, Elvis sideburn sunglasses, more green St. Patricks Day paraphernalia than I can or care to remember. Oh, and a ukulele.

I met my boyfriend of seven years by stealing his food. At an outdoor Mexican restaurant in Madison, Wisconsin I shimmied a tortilla from his chip basket and took that thing for a death roll through his guacamole.

“You know I’m going to eat all your guacamole,” was my opener.

Years later when he’d complain that I should order my own dinner instead of taking all the food off his plate, I would reference our first meeting. I made it very clear from the get-go that we would be sharing.

If there’s a dart board in a mile radius, The Steal is my go-to move. In standard Cricket, a player has three darts. So if a cutie is shooting with one, obviously that leaves two for me to steal.

“Is it my turn?” I’ll ask as I snag the darts from his other hand.

The same method works for pool. Walk up to a guy who’s holding a pool cue. Say flirtatiously, *“Oh, it’s my turn,”* take the stick and your best shot.

The Negative Jab:

The negative jab works great at sporting events, especially on a fun-loving fan from the opposing team.

For example, I was at a Boston Red Sox Yankees game. I stole a hottie’s hat off his head, held it ransom, and said:

“Yankees?! You can’t be a Yankees fan!”

Direct:

I’ve organized this collection of pickups into one category although they are combinations from several other categories. What all these openers have in common is

that they leave little up to the imagination. Direct openers let a guy know that you like them. Mystery killed. Although these set of lines do get to the point and save time, especially if you're looking for a casual, one-night stand.

**Direct Openers
leave little up to
the imagination.
They let a guy
know that you
like them.**

Easy:

A few friends and I were entering a party just as two smoking hot men were leaving. I knew I had to make my move and make it quick.

“Where are you guys going? Can we come along?”

I was in New York waiting for a friend at the restaurant bar when I spotted a well-manicured man sitting all by himself at a corner table, scanning his phone. My friend would show up soon and maybe he had a date who would arrive at any moment, but for the time being we were both by ourselves and looking bored. So I took a chance, walked over to his table and sat down:

“Hey, why are you sitting all alone in the corner?”

In my fantasy world everything went swimmingly. We chatted for hours, caught dinner, a late movie, strolled in the warm summer night air talking till sunrise. We'd only been dating for a year when he'd decide we should move in together, buy a sweet, little place in Brooklyn, and make one of those adorable herb gardens on our fire escape.

But the fantasy was dashed when he told me he was waiting for someone. His mom. Cute? Yes. But it didn't lead

to the herb garden.

At a bar in the Valley, I spotted a swarthy stranger smoking on the sidewalk.

My guy friend saw me ogling him and excused me with a polite, “Will you just go already.”

I started with an easy opener, “*Do you have a cigarette?*”

When he actually pulled out his pack of Camels, I admitted the truth, “*I actually don’t smoke. I just wanted to have a reason to come talk to you.*”

His cheeks flushed as he smiled. We flirted for close to thirty minutes, alighting from art to advertising to our favorite childhood movies. Turns out he was a film director. Also turns out he was a film director who went peddle boating that past weekend.

Now, if you don’t recall from your youth, peddle boats are those human powered rafts whose speed might be slower than that of a lazy river. Somehow, I can’t imagine too many straight dudes going to their friends, “Yo, bro, so you wanna go peddle boat this weekend? Maybe catch that new Reese Witherspoon rom com after?”

Director had a girlfriend. Bummer.

Advanced:

I was back at the bar, Birds, when my guy friend spotted a bearded guy working on his laptop alone at one of the front booths.

“You should go hit on him,” my friend suggested.

I shrugged and I walked over and sat down in the guy’s booth. He wasn’t bad looking, sort of nerdy-cute.

By his jerk reaction as I slid into his booth, I gauged he was surprised.

I opened with an aggressive line: *“I think you’re really cute.”*

“You do?”

“Yes. Don’t girls tell you that?”

“No.”

I turned up my acting skills. *“You mean girls don’t just sit down at your table all the time?”*

“No. This is the first time.”

He looked around, probably waiting for the crew of ‘Punk’d’ to pop out.

“You’re really handsome, you should know that.”

He seemed a bit nervous, so I asked him what he was working on. He told me he was a comedian writing for a scripted show.

“I’ll let you get back to work, then.”

I slid out and stood up.

“Maybe we can hang out sometime?” he suggested, completely shutting his laptop.

I pretended to debate, and finally shrugged.

“Maybe?”

“Can I get your number, then?”

“I’m actually sitting over there with my guy friend.”

I pointed towards the bar. *“If you want my number come find me over there later.”*

Later didn’t take that long. Less than five minutes went by and he was at the bar to ask for my number.

I call Direct ‘accidental’ contact ‘drive-bys.’ Here’s one from a few years back when my friends and I were on vacation and staying at a bed and beverage in New Orleans’

Marigny neighborhood. I was running the pool table with a group of guys when I noticed a distinguished gentleman about to leave the bar. I rounded the pool table to intersect his path. Passing him, I stuck out my hand and ran it completely across his stomach, feeling his hard abdomen through his shirt. I kept walking forward, unable to look back.

One of my friends described his reaction to me later. At first, his expression showed surprise. Then he grinned a wide smug smile that seemed to say if I had wanted him I probably could have had him. But he kept walking out the double doors, and disappeared into the New Orleans dawn.

Darn. Next time.

The Negative Jab:

This story comes courtesy of my friend, Emily. Her and her friend Heather were sitting at a bar in New York when she spotted a mega hot man sitting with his girlfriend across the bar. Sex-On-A-Stick looked bored. Emily made eye contact with him and smiled. Instantly, Heartthrob smiled back.

“Should I?” Emily asked Heather.

“Go for it,” Heather encouraged.

Emily shot up from her bar stool and before she could turn back, walked around the bar so that she was standing next to the guy on the opposite side of his girlfriend. Emily gave the girlfriend a dismissive look.

“*Really?*” She said to the hottie. While his girlfriend looked on, she whispered into his ear, “*When you’re done being crazy, come talk to me.*”

Within five minutes Mr. Mega Hot had ditched his

girlfriend and asked Emily out.

Unfortunately the story didn't have the happiest of endings. The dude turned out to be kind of a douchebag. But, I mean, what can you expect from a guy who ditches his girlfriend for another women right in front of her?

Another one of my friends, we'll call her Molly, saw a good looking guy sitting at a restaurant with a very attractive blonde. Molly's a confident gal and a plus-sized model so after she and her friend finished their meals, she wrote down her phone number on a slip of paper, walked up to him and said, "*You can do better than her. Call me. You won't regret it.*" And handed him her number. Again, this type of boldness didn't end in holy matrimony. But she tells me the sex was outstanding.

Outrageous:

These next two stories come from my guy friend Brian's experiences. When I asked him for the best female pickups he ever encountered, he rehashed these two stories. "It's super hot when a girl knows what she wants and goes after it."

In the not so good parts of Cleveland, Brian was playing pool with a buddy. After his turn, he took a seat on a bench beside the pool table. As he was sipping his Bud Light, a very pretty girl sat down beside him, reached over, and grabbed the bulge in his jeans. She leaned in, kissed him, and once she pulled back, raised an eyebrow and said, "*I just had to do that.*" Then she released her grip on him and sashayed outside to the smoking patio.

“It was so fucking hot.” Brian told me, “That’s all she said and then left. I’m like...what? That’s it?”

Brian’s not stupid. Of course he trailed her outside. Within seconds, their tongues intertwined. He would have taken her home, only she had a boyfriend. And unfortunately her boyfriend and his friends were at the same bar, saw Brian sucking face with his girlfriend, and tried to jump Brian in the men’s bathroom shortly after their kiss. Luckily Brian knew the bar owners and they chased the guys out with a crowbar. Still, I applaud the girl’s ballsy move.

The second was a ‘drive-by’ at a club in Cincinnati. Brian gulped down a sip of his gin and tonic, while talking with his group of boys beside the dance floor. A gorgeous girl walked up behind him, discretely grabbed Brian’s ass, pressed her body against his and whispered, “*I really like your vibe. You should call me.*” She palmed Brian her number and disappeared into the crowd.

Brian confessed, “I really wanted to call her that night. But, I didn’t want to fuck it up, you know? So I waited to call her the next day.”

When she picked up the phone, she told him she was at the airport. “I live in California. You should have called me last night.”

Deciding the Opener

The best opener is the one that comes naturally. You shouldn’t have to think too hard. If you come up with something that could land you on *Saturday Night Live*, for heaven’s sake, use it. If not, don’t worry. A simple compliment or observation totally works. The worst thing

you can do is chicken out because you think you're opening line isn't good enough. Half the time, the guy isn't thinking: *Why is she telling me she loved Darth Vader when she was six?* No, he's thinking: *Wow! A hot girl is talking to me!*

Don't stress yourself out about thinking up the perfect line. In hindsight, you will always come up with a better opening line. Days later, all your friends will offer

up these oh, so witty one liners that you could have used.

An opener just needs to grab his attention. Anything is better than nothing. Something interesting is better than something mundane. And something personal is the best yet. When people ask me: how do you meet so many men? My answer is simple. I'm friendly. I go up to men. And then I say something. I open with a topic of conversation that I find interesting. Maybe it's something they can relate to. More importantly it's something that I can talk about. What's the worst that can happen? I don't like him? He doesn't like me? I fall off a barstool. All these scenarios have happened to me. Not every guy you approach is going to be cool. Not everyone is going to like you. And embarrassment happens. Accept that you might get rejected. But at the same time, isn't the risk worth it if you can meet someone awesome? Be optimistic. The more men you meet, the more amazing ones you'll meet.

An opener just needs to grab his attention. Anything is better than nothing. Something interesting is better than something mundane. And something personal is the best yet.



LEARN FROM THE LIONS, THE LONE GAZELLE ALWAYS GETS PICKED OFF FIRST

Like Simba and his lion buddies, men tend to use two types of hunting methods. Either they actively stalk their prey. (Men go out with the sole purpose of picking up women.) Or they belly up to a bar and wait for cute girls to congregate. This method is greatly preferred because guys can eat, drink, and watch sports while technically ‘hunting.’

But it has a major drawback. Men, while occupied with their friends are not actively looking around the bar for pretty girls. So it’s a lot harder to get noticed. On top of that, if they do notice a cute girl, approaching a group of girls can be intimidating. They might get rejected and humiliated in front of their friends. Also, chicken wings and beer can make men a bit sluggish.

I asked one good-looking guy at a singles bar if he’d approach a group of girls. I made up a scenario, “There’s

ten girls at a table and you think one is really cute. Do you approach her?”

“I dunno.” He scratched his head. “I just hang out. I don’t go out to pick up women.” This guy lies in the second camp. He’s going out to be social with his friends. Yet, he and his buddies are frequenting a popular singles bar. If they didn’t want to interact with women, they could have easily organized a poker night at one of their apartments.

“What if there’s only two girls?”

“Sure, yeah, I guess I’d go talk to them.”

Ok. So he’s an opportunist after easy prey. Isolate yourself from your protection (your large group of girlfriends) make yourself available, and a guy will plan his attack. “What about just one girl? She’s walked away from her group up to the bar?” He grinned, “I’m talking to you, aren’t I?”

Point taken.

The first thing I tell girls who want to meet men: make yourself an easy target by separating yourself from the group. The best way to do this is to go out by yourself. I realize it sounds scary, but take a seat at a bar, order yourself a drink, put your cell phone away, and relax. If it’s a sports bar, position yourself near a TV and take slight interest in the game. Or chat up the bartender about their whiskey or beer options. Linger by the jukebox and scroll through their hair band selection.

Separating yourself from the herd won’t go unnoticed. Guys like to pursue. If you’re visible and make yourself available, you are giving them the best possible opportunity to approach you.

Here’s an example from the first week after I moved to Los Angeles. I hadn’t made many new friends. This little

hiccup didn't stop me from going out and exploring.

I watched the TV, sipped my beer and munched on some peanuts as the Dodger's pitcher struck out another batter. Two guys pulled up bar stools beside me.

"Are you here by yourself?" the more muscular of the two interrupted.

First rule: never be ashamed to be out by yourself. Guys go to bars by themselves all the time. Don't assume that a guy will think you're a friendless leper. Instead, go in with a bad-ass attitude. Own your independence.

"Yep. I wanted a drink."

The brooding one with a dark tan and tortoiseshell glasses must have noticed I was watching the game. "Are you a Dodgers fan?"

"I just moved here." I flirted, taking a long sip of my Tecate, "Should I be?" His name was Edward, his friend was Mike.

"You're not a Dodgers fan yet. Give me your hand." Edward demanded.

I tucked my hands to my chest. "Why?"

"Just give me your hand."

I scrunched up my nose, sat up straighter on my bar stool, and reluctantly held out my palm. "Ok?"

Edward brandished a Sierra Nevada coaster. "Repeat after me."

"What am I doing? Swearing over a Sierra Nevada coaster?"

"Quit complaining and repeat after me: By the great state of California and the City of Los Angeles."

I played along. "By the great state of California and the City of Los Angeles."

"I am now a lifelong Dodgers fan."

"I am now a lifelong Dodgers fan." I waited a beat.

"That's it?"

"That's it, now you're a Dodgers fan."

I mocked him, "That was a pretty tough initiation."

"Oh, you want it to be tougher?"

"The Red Sox were a little harder on me." I joked.

Edward grinned, "Well, let's take shots then."

The logic is simple. A cute girl with her twenty nearest and dearest is intimidating. A cute girl sitting at the bar by herself is approachable. And intriguing because it says something about you if you can go out alone and look comfortable. You're an anomaly. Most girls don't have the courage to go out by themselves. Being comfortable with yourself shows you're self-confident and guys like self-confident girls.

I look at going out by myself this way: I want to go out, I'll go out. I like hanging out with me. Good chance new people will like hanging out with me too. And what's the worst that can happen? I get a drink and catch a quarter of a basketball game? I talk with a stranger and learn something new? Or like with Edward, you get a date with a twenty-three year old and an allegiance to a new sports team. Whatever the case, it's good practice. You could squirrel yourself away at home aiding your online shopping addiction or you could sit by yourself out in public, enjoy a refreshing beverage, and possibly meet someone cool.

If there's no way in hell you're going to be caught dead at a bar by yourself, I've got a modified version for you. Try arriving fifteen minutes before all your friends. Or when you're hanging out with friends, split off from the group for

a few minutes and take a lap. Make up an excuse like you're going to use the restroom. A friend will usually volunteer to come with you.

Girl code reminds us to stick together. This time abstain. Walk the perimeter by yourself. You can pretend you're looking for someone if you need an excuse. Leave the herd, exit the dark corner, and make yourself visible and available. Give a guy an opportunity to leave his beer, food and friends and meet you one-on-one.



HOW TO KEEP THE CONVERSATION ROLLING

“Hi, how are you?” I asked, approaching a stylish young fellow waiting in a throng of people at an English-style pub.

He acknowledged me with a curt nod. “Good.”

“You waiting to get a drink too?”

“Yeah.” He scowled towards the bar staff. Three strapping men in suspenders and feathered bowlers zipped around one another in a sort of ducking, shaking, twirling, stirring dance. “I put in my order but it’s taking a long time.”

“What did you get?”

“A Manhattan.”

“Oh.” For the life of me, I couldn’t remember what was in a Manhattan. “This is my first time here. Do you live in the neighborhood?”

“Yeah, a couple blocks over.”

“I like this neighborhood.” “It’s ok.”

“I’m in Silver Lake.”

Yawn. I'm falling asleep typing this. It's no wonder the guy walked away after getting his drink. As much as I like to share with you guys my success stories, there are lots of failures too.

It's easy to concoct rejection excuses. He probably had a girlfriend. Maybe he was gay? Maybe his goldfish just died and he's having a really hard time coming to terms with its passing?

But by now I think you know me well enough, so let's be brutally honest. Reading through my boring conversation, you could ask: did I even try?

You guessed right, I didn't try. Here's another example. Let's see if I do any better at LA's FYF music festival.

The band had ripped through their second song by the time my friends and I pushed through the crowd, careful not to spill our beers. Suddenly a spastic, bespectacled hipster bashed through our group.

"Watch out!" my friend Cindy yelled, yanking her beer away before it became a casualty.

"Come on, let's dance." The guy grinned beneath his scruffy beard and held out his hand to me.

I laughed and obliged. When we stopped to take a beer intermission, I asked him, "What do you do?"

"I'm in computers. Boring stuff."

I stood arms akimbo and jutted out my chin. "Computers, huh?"

"You like computers?"

No, I like typewriters. We're past the eighties, it's safe to say everyone likes computers.

"Yeah. What do you do with computers? Let me guess: you either fight hackers or you are a hacker."

“I’m definitely a hacker.”

“I hope you’re a super villain hacker. Super villains have the best toys.” I grinned mischievously. My eyes wandered to the bulge in his jeans, “I bet I’d like you’re toys.”

He bit his lip and clunked his forehead against mine, replying in a slow, suggestive voice, “Oh, you’d like my toys.”

“Noooo,” I smacked his arm playfully and pulled away. “Get your mind out of the gutter. I meant your super lasers. All super villains have lasers.”

“I like you. You’re funny.”

“You think I’m funny, do you?”

“I do.”

Please insert a giant make out session here where my friends and his friends have ganged up on us and are practically throwing money in a pool to get us a room.

“What do you do?” he asked me when we came up for air, “Besides being a good kisser.” I’m matter-of-fact.

“I’m a Big Foot hunter.”

“You’re what?”

“I’m constantly on the lookout for mythical creatures. Big foot. Unicorns. That talking Trix bunny that never gets to eat any cereal.”

“Ok, now I really like you.”

More kissing. Hey, he was cute and the band was really good and they were playing my favorite song, so sue me.

Post make-out he suggested, “Why don’t you come back to my place?” “

Now? Why? Are we going to watch The Never Ending Story?”

He laughed, "Awe, I don't have it."

"Well then, I can't go back with you."

His friends yelled over that they needed to go. They were missing a band at another stage.

Meanwhile my friend Cindy informed me, "He's only twenty-three."

My friend Ellen shouted, "Evie, stop being a slut." Rely on Ellen to keep me classy. My friend Kari fanned her hand across her throat. Time's up.

I stated the obvious. "I think our friends are impatient."

"Can I get your number?" He lifted his phone. "Crap. I forgot, my phone's dead."

"Well computer dork. You remember those old-fashioned things called pen and paper?"

Guess you're going to have to find them." "You don't have one?"

"Nope." I had a pen but wanted to see if he'd work for it.

On a mission, he returned in less than two minutes with a pen and his ticket stub. I squiggled my number on the ticket, signing only my first initial.

"You're going to have to remember my first name to call me."

Guess what? Guys tend to remember Big Foot hunters. What did I do differently? I didn't give straight answers. Instead, I joked around. He liked me because we had chemistry.

We also made out a lot. But that was the payoff for being funny and fun.

When researching for this book, I set out to find out

why some guys felt chemistry with certain girls and why those same guys didn't feel chemistry with other girls. I hoped to discover how a girl could create a more positive interaction. How she could create chemistry.

I started out by asking a variety of guys why they weren't interested in a girl when first meeting her and here were some of their answers:

"I don't know? I guess she was nice. Just nothing there."

"I met this chick that was really hot and I thought, cool, I think I could dig this girl. But then she started talking. All she did was complain about her apartment and her job and then her parents. I thought, my god: isn't this what therapists are for?"

"Man this girl was boring. All she talked about was her job. On and on. I get it. You work in digital strategy."

"It's cool that she snowboarded. But it was like she was my buddy. We could probably hang as friends, you know?"

What all these guys have in common is that they met girls they were initially attracted to, yet, within a few minutes they were disappointed because there was no chemistry. Bored, they ended the conversation, sans phone number or make out session.

In the process of meeting someone new, we save time by screening them. We make small snap judgments, assumptions of who we think they are. During these first moments is when attraction is formed. It's at this point we determine whether the conversation continues or someone takes a hike. If you bore a guy to tears in the first few minutes, he may

imagine your first date together – you jabbering on and on while he pinches his arm to prevent himself from falling into a narcoleptic stupor. No one wants to waste their time.

Attraction is caused by short, memorable moments.

Not by long, drawn out conversations. Creating chemistry with a guy only takes a few words and expressions. To hook a guy, keep things brief and direct, but fun.

So how can you do this?

Start by alternating serious questions with good mannered teasing. Teasing means reprimanding him, daring him, poking him, touching him, calling him nicknames and talking back. Basically, the same rules from middle school apply. If you like someone: you make fun of them. Go in with the attitude, “I’m watching you, Mister. I’m not letting you get away with anything.” Toss in some subtle body language. Flip the conversation from boring to sarcastic with the tone of your voice. Now you’re not just talking with a guy, you’re flirting.

So what’s flirting?

A Czech author named Milan Kundera has a great definition from his book *The Unbearable Lightness of*

Alternate serious questions with good mannered teasing.

"Flirting is a behavior leading another to believe that sexual intimacy is possible, while preventing that possibility from becoming a certainty."
-Milan Kundera

Being. “Flirting is a behavior leading another to believe that sexual intimacy is possible, while preventing that possibility from becoming a certainty. In other words, flirting is a promise of sexual intercourse without a guarantee.”

So how do you allude to Milan Kundera’s promise of sexual intercourse? How do you make a conversation fun? Here’s a few tips on how to use flirting to keep a conversation rolling.

Answer Standard Questions with a Playful Answer

If you live in LA, inevitably, you bring up the traffic. In Wisconsin, conversation revolves around the snow. In Massachusetts, they rely on the asshole drivers. New York, apartment rent. Small talk is a snooze. But we all fall into the trap when we first meet someone. So how do you balance the small talk and interview questions with humor successfully?

Think of famous comedians like Louis C.K., Jerry Seinfeld, or Larry David. Their material might be based on everyday activities but they make mundane things funny by doing or saying something unexpected. Use their technique. When the conversation stalls, inject a dose of playfulness, humor, or sarcasm.

A good time to start is when a guy asks the first standard get-to-know-you question. He’s lobbing the question your way, expecting a standard, ho-hum response. Let’s use my friend Sophia.

Here's Sophia's standard answers:

Him: *What's your name?* Sophia: *Sophia*
 Him: *Where do you live?* Sophia: *Los Angeles*
 Him: *What do you do?* Sophia: *I'm a web designer*

Yep. I'd make a quick break for it too. With answers like these there's not much to elaborate on. There's a small shot they might delve into some fascinating material about the new features on the latest Photoshop plug-in. Maybe transition into a riveting recap of the LA traffic patterns. Of course, he isn't going to feel any chemistry. Sophia has given him nothing to play off of.

Back-and-forth playful banter creates attraction. To create that zing we need to offer up something he can hit back into play. What if Sophia answered creatively and with a little humor? We're going to create what I call a conversational hook.

Him: *What's your name?* Sophia: *Trouble with a
capitol T*
 Him: *Where do you live?* Sophia: *Usually in the land of
make believe*
 Him: *What do you do?* Sophia: *I fall down a lot at very
inopportune times*
 Sophia: *I'm a part time
whiskey enthusiast*
 Sophia: *I dabble in puffy paint*

Alright, now we have something to work with.

More, your playful answers need a real anecdote behind them. For example, if Sophia used one of her endearing flaws, she's clumsy, she could transition into an embarrassing

story. Even with a short anecdote, she's already in far more interesting conversation territory.

I helped my friend Cindy with this exercise.

Cindy works as a digital project manager. All day she's hounding clients for assets, nagging web developers, assuring deadlines are met, and basically being the Xanax for a boss who refuses to take any.

Cindy's a successful gal but a digital project manager doesn't exactly prompt a series of titillating questions and spark rapt desire. After analyzing her hobbies and interests, I suggested she approach things at a different angle.

Recently, Cindy took up flying lessons. Now, flying takes guts. I associate flying with movies starring Tom Cruise. It comes down to the fact that flying isn't basket weaving. On her last lesson, her instructor cut the power, stalled the plane, and as they free fell to their ultimate demise, explained with the calmness of a monk how to regain control the plane. As one of those people who hold their breath at takeoff only relish flying for the free Bischoff crackers on Delta flights, this does not sound like how I'd choose to spend my Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

So when a hypothetical hot guy asks Cindy, "What do you do?"

I coached Cindy. "I'm a semi professional pilot, well, that is if I don't kill myself."

When you deliver a conversational hook, such as this one, with a hint of sarcasm, it gives the guy something to work with. To begin with, Cindy's introducing an interesting topic to lead off the conversation. Again, flying isn't coin collecting. A guy is bound to have a few inquiries. Secondly,

she's transformed herself from boring office drone to Amelia Earhart flying a frickin' propeller plane. Cindy can cover her daily grind later, once she and the hottie have established something between them. Third, she's made a joke and promoted a further explanation. When she said, "If I don't kill myself," she was admitting she's not very good yet at flying. You can bet your bootie a guy will want to know why. Intrigue a guy and he's going to want to know more. By throwing him for a loop with a conversational hook, she's gone from average to interesting and attractive.

Exercise:

Now you try:

Him: *What's your name?*

Your conversational hook:

Him: *Where do you live?*

Your conversational hook:

Him: *What do you do?*

Your conversational hook:

Next time a guy asks you one of these questions, try out one of these playful, offbeat answers. Judge his reaction.

Betcha, he'll flirt back. Keep track of which hooks work and which don't. Constantly rework your answers until you find the ones that give you the most success.

This strategy might sound fake or manufactured. But you're not lying. You're spinning true stories from your life to make them more interesting.

Mix Serious With Fun. Stir Until Combined.

When you meet a guy you like, you want to get to know him. There's a good chance you'll start asking him common questions about himself, his career, his life, his family.

EEEH! Wrong. Do not pass go. Do not collect \$100.

I call this trap the Comfort Zone. Sure, you might be getting to know a guy by talking about everyday stuff, but it's a trap because you're making yourself *less* interesting by acting predictable. Guys want to be with the girl who is laughing, having fun, and flirting. Not the one who's conducting a job interview.

I realize it's tempting to talk about these regular things because they feel safe. It's the way you're used to talking with your colleagues, friends, or family. But you're not talking with your brother here. You're creating a memorable connection with a cute guy. Such that you don't want to come off as normal. You want to stand out. Avoid the Comfort Zone by surprising him.

What are some ways we can surprise him?

First, don't accept compliments but instead say something that he can use and play back.

For example, when a guy tells me he likes my large X-shaped cocktail ring, I could reply, with a simple,

“Thanks!” Accepting the compliment, the topic dies a painful, boring death. Instead, I could add some spice. I could reply with, “Yeah, you better watch out, I like to brand guys with it,” and take my fist and lightly jab his arm like I am stamping the X symbol on his bicep. I’m flirting and creating sexual tension by using his compliment as a jumping off point for playful banter. This is another reason for wearing a Unique Piece of flair. If your flair has a story or an action associated with it, you can use it to playfully keep a conversation rolling.

Next, constantly challenge men. Remember my statement from earlier, “I’m not letting you get away with anything, Mister.” When you talk with a guy, repeat this statement in your head. It will put you in a fired up mood.

For instance, back to the twenty-three year I locked lips with at the music festival. He said, “*I’m in computers. Boring stuff.*” From the get-go he stated aloud that his career is boring and he doesn’t want to talk about it. I could have ignored his warning and leapt right in, asking what his job title is, where he works, which route through rush hour he takes to work...blah, blah, blah.

This kind of conversation is reserved for lunch with grandma.

I definitely didn’t want to be in grandma turf. I didn’t even want to be the girl he met last night. I wanted to be unique, one-of-a-kind. Memorable. Attractive. So I challenged him. My body language was confrontational. I stood arms akimbo and jutted out my chin. My tone dared him. “*Computers huh?*”

“*You like computers?*” His questioning intonation told me he was wondering if I’d contest.

My sarcastic internal monologue could have been

used in real conversation. *No, I like typewriters. We're past the eighties, it's safe to say everyone likes computers.*

Good thing I didn't answer politely with a real question. *"Yeah. What do you do with computers?"* That would have sent me on a one-way trip to the comfort zone.

I saved myself by reverting back to flirting. *"Let me guess: you either fight hackers or you are a hacker."*

I delved into interesting territory. I declared him a hero or a naughty villain.

"I'm definitely a hacker." he replied.

I added to the interesting fantasy role I created for him.

"I hope you're a super villain hacker."

By role-playing, I turned our conversation into a game. Sure, we could have talked the finer points of internet code. Rather, I transformed the boring computer geek into a super villain with lasers. And who wouldn't want to be a super villain with lasers, I ask you? Since he played along, our conversation knew no bounds.

Overall, to keep a man's interest, I don't let a conversation get too serious too soon. One way to do this is to alternate between real questions and playful ones.

Recall the rule from earlier, if you ask a boring question, you'll get a boring response.

To keep a man's interest, don't let a conversation get too serious too soon. Alternate between real questions and playful ones.

So here's a mix of challenging and fun questions guaranteed to NOT put him to sleep:

1. *When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?*
2. *If you could travel anywhere, right now, where would you go?*
3. *What's your strategy in case of a zombie apocalypse?*
4. *If you could have any super power what would it be?*
5. *What's the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to you?*
6. *What's the most daring thing you've ever done?*
7. *If you could be any animal, which animal would you be?*
8. *What were you like in middle school?*
9. *What's one thing you were teased about?*
10. *Who do you respect the most and why?*
11. *If you won the lottery, what's the first thing you'd do?*
12. *What would you name the autobiography of your life and why?*
13. *What was the last movie that made you cry or tear up?*
14. *Why don't they make bullet proof pants?*
15. *What's the best/worst gift you've ever received?*
16. *If I opened your fridge, what would I see?*
17. *If you could have any type of pet, what would it be?
(extra points if he says a fantasy creature like a dinosaur or zombie. Unicorn...boom.. you got me.)*
18. *If I was hanging over an active volcano, would you run in and save me?*

Questions like these allow a guy to open up. They smoothly blend the fun and flirty with the personal and intellectual stuff. Shaking together a concoction like this, you're

making yourself a cocktail of irresistibility.

One word of caution: while it's important to have fun with your questions, make sure you insert them naturally in a conversation. Pace your questions and focus on how you phrase them. You don't want to bombard him with a series of out of the blue inquiries. It will seem awkward if you're moving from discussing where you grew up to randomly planning for the eminent zombie take over.

Lastly, I lead a conversation towards unique topics. In the last section, I gave you some homework. I asked you to do one new activity each week. Here's your chance for your homework to pay off. Analyze these activities and see if there are any parts that you can use. Be proactive and prepare material before you go out. You want topics that generate quirky or thoughtful remarks. For example, a provocative art exhibit could segue into something flirtatious. If you attempted a new activity and failed, make fun of yourself with humorous narration.

Throw in a Sexual Innuendo (Or Two)

I flirtatiously told the good kisser at the music festival "*I bet I'd like you're toys.*" To make my statement even clearer I glanced to the bulge in his jeans. He got my sexual innuendo and flipped the script by saying, "*Oh, you'd like my toys.*" Next, I pretended to accuse him of having the dirty mind instead of me. He must have misconstrued my purely innocent statement. Sweet little old me would neeeeeever go there.

Peppering your conversations with subtle, sexual double entendres like my super villain toy example create sexual tension. Sexual innuendos assure a dude you're not

just being friendly, but that you're attracted to him. Remember our Czech friend Milan Kundera? With innuendos, we're demonstrating flirting. By using a play on words we're alluding to the possibility of sex, but not making it certain.

Convey Interest with Your Body Language

Guys are visual and constantly checking women out. Let's use this fact to our advantage and give them a little show, shall we?

Where you position your body and how you position your body says a lot about you. Let's make sure it says the right things. When talking with a drool-worthy dude, check that you have open, inviting body language. Avoid crossing your arms. Crossed arms conveys you're bored or uninterested. Stand up tall. Appear more alert and confident. Angle yourself towards him to indicate interest. Alternate between moving closer and farther from him to create a desire to get closer to you. (We'll touch on this more in the next section).

Demonstrate interest in what he's saying. Maintain eye contact. Nod along. Lean in closer to him while he's talking. Never check your phone. By all means smile.

Make physical contact throughout the conversation. Touching his arm signals attraction. Poke or push him to lightly to tease him. Ruffle his hair.

You know how some women have that sexual vibe? By tweaking a few subtle things in your body language, you'll come across as sexier and more feminine. Many women forget this: don't hide. Stand up if you are seated. Show some skin. If you're wearing a jacket, take it off. It might sound a little cheesy and a bit obvious, but do actions that are a bit sexual. If you are seated, crossing your legs

will make you seem more feminine. Play with the hem on your skirt to show more leg and draw a man's attention, um, down there. Linger when you suck from a straw. Lick your lips. Apply lip gloss slowly. Run your finger 'absentmindedly' across your collarbone. Again, with flirting you want to suggest sex. Your nonverbal language communicates your interest just as much as what you're saying.

Think you've got it? Here's one of my pickups. See if you can spot my flirting techniques from what we've learned:

The Troubadour's walls seemed to sway with the dancing bodies. On stage, the band's lead singer wailed into the microphone. Fans smashed against the balcony railings to get a better view. My heels teetered on the edge of the stairway as I tried to maintain my balance, still get a clear view and dance.

The singer clapped his hands, "Come on everyone. Clap along." Under the disco lights hundreds of hands rose towards the ceiling as the noise of slapping palms echoed around the small room.

A guy jostled in nearby, lifting his large camera to snap a picture. He squinted at the stage, pushed his thick mess of dark hair from his eyes, checked the screen, then lifted the camera up and shot again. My friend Ellen noticed the photographer and jabbed a finger into my back.

"Totally your type," she hissed.

"Already going for him." I mouthed back.

His dark eyebrows clenched together as he stared at the small viewing screen nestled in his left hand while I jockeyed my way in closer. Our forearms brushed. I clapped my hands to the music; he kept tap, tap, tapping his pointer

finger against his camera. I nudged him with my elbow and scolded, “Why aren’t you clapping?”

His index finger froze midair and his eyes grew wide like a deer in headlights.

On stage the lead singer crooned, “Don’t you think it’s time for me and you to make some history.”

A moment passed, a flicker of a smile crossed his face. Our eyes met and he fired back, “I’m taking photos.”

The chorus began, “I believe I can make you scream. Ooh Ooh Ooh. Ooh Ooh Ooh.”

“Are you one of those ‘real’ photographers?” For good measure, adding an incredulous smirk.

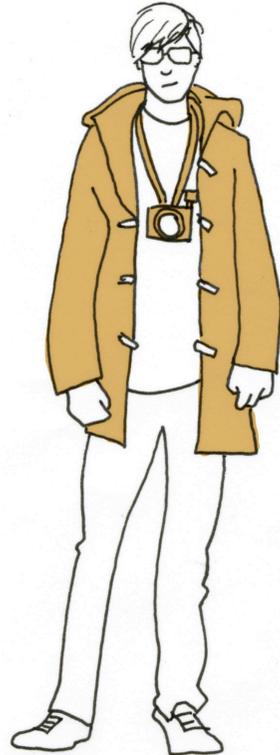
His cheeks flushed. His eyes darted from the stage to the static small screen and back to me. “Yes, I’m a real photographer.” He lowered his eyes to his camera and began to swipe through photos in rapid succession. “I photograph for a blog.”

“Oh a blog, huh.” I raised my arms higher and slapped my hands together as loud as I could. “Well, Mr. Photographer,” I insinuated in an overly dramatic, haughty, tone, “I think you can take pictures and clap.”

As the song finished he lowered the lens and explained he worked for a music blog. “What do you do?” he asked me.

“I roam the streets of Los Angeles looking to give photographers a hard time.”

He laughed and smiled. “No,



really?”

“Actually I’m a designer. I do some photography on the side.” I tilted my body back, attempting to snoop a glimpse of his camera’s viewing screen.

He tilted the camera away from me and chided, “Are you trying to sneak a peek?”

“Yes. Did you get anything good?”

He held the camera in front of us and clicked through a series of decent shots. “This one is good.” He stopped on another. “That one’s ok.”

I poked him on the next one, “That one’s blurry.”

“Hey!” He pawed me back. “They all can’t be good. Their lead singer is down there jumping around so much.”

“I guess you’re not too bad,” I raised my right eyebrow, “for a non-clapper. Although, I bet I can do better.”

“I dare you,” he taunted me.

“You have a bigger...lens.. it’s no fair.” I pouted.

Now it was his turn to smile coyly.

“Alright, you’re on.”

I snapped off a few rounds with my iPhone. There was no reason to tell him I art directed photo shoots at my past job. I’d just play dumb and impress him later.

“Aha!” I yelled, nailing a perfect shot of the lead singer jumping atop a speaker.

“Let’s see?” He waved his hand impatiently.

I handed him my iPhone. “Pretty good, huh?”

“But you weren’t clapping.” he said deadpan.

I smiled and snatched my phone back, stuffed it into my purse, and raised my head high.

“Well, it wasn’t a clapping moment.”

So let’s analyze. If you picked up on it, I chose a

Negative Jab Unique Feature opener. Everyone else was joining in and clapping and the cute photographer wasn't. So I teased him, already setting the tone for the conversation with, "*Why aren't you clapping?*" This type of accusatory criticism made it easy for him to play off my remark by arguing against me. It's also not too harsh, where he would be offended.

He did as I hoped and answered honestly but with a little bit of fight. "*I'm taking photos.*"

So I pressed for further details by continuing in a joking manner. "*Are you one of those real photographers,*" I said in a way that made it seem like I didn't believe the profession actually existed.

He blushed. "*Yes, I'm a real photographer. I photograph for a blog.*"

He was still being straight forward. He was working, but that's not necessarily an excuse. I needed to push him out of his comfort zone to get him to open up a bit.

"*Oh a blog, huh.*" I raised my arms higher and slapped my hands together as loud as I could. "*Well, Mr. Photographer,*" I insinuated in an overly dramatic, haughty, tone, "*I think you can take pictures and clap.*"

Yes! I challenged him. And I teased him with name calling, referring to him as Mr. Photographer.

A little while later, he restarted our conversation with a get-to-know-you question. "*What do you do?*"

Ok, so he was interested. The first question I should have answered humorously and I did.

"*I roam the streets of Los Angeles looking to give photographers a hard time.*"

He laughed and smiled. "*No really?*"

Alright, it worked. But he asked for a real answer so

I was serious and honest with him for a moment.

“Actually I’m a designer. I do some photography on the side.”

I pointed out what we had in common and why I think he’s special. Basically, why I approached him.

I tilted my body back, attempting to snoop a glimpse of his camera’s viewing screen.

I utilized my body language by leaning in to show interest. Our interaction was very much a game. He pulled his camera away and playfully called me out, scolding me like a kid caught with her hand in the cookie jar. *“Are you trying to sneak a peek?”*

Which, playing along, I admitted to. *“Yes. Did you get anything good?”* I demonstrated further interest by asking about his work.

He showed me his screen, clicking through a series of decent shots. “This one is good.” He stopped on another. “That one’s ok.”

I poked him on the next one, “That one’s blurry!”

And back to flirting! I teased him by poking him. And I made fun of his shot. But knowing that he had plenty of others and that he was a professional, I knew this wasn’t a big dig.

“Hey!” He pawed me back. “They all can’t be good. Their lead is down there jumping around so much.”

We were like middle schoolers on the playground, poking and prodding each other.

“I guess you’re not too bad,” I raised my right eyebrow, “for a non clapper. Although, I bet I can do better,” “I dare you,” he taunted me.

We fed off each other. I took what could have been a photography observation and spun it into a sexual innuendo

by pausing appropriately.

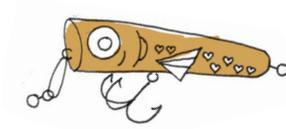
“You have a bigger...lens..it’s no fair.”

What do you say? Not too bad? I bet you can do it too.

Truth is, most women never leave the comfort zone. They show interest by asking everyday questions, acting sweet, and laughing at all a guy’s bad jokes. Consequently, these women are viewed as boring and predictable. Then there’s the few that try to act overtly sexual and seductive to the point of cringe worthy. Being over the top like this, they come off as easy and insincere. Guys don’t want easy or predictable.

One of the biggest advantages you have is leaving the comfort zone and standing out by challenging a man in a fun, playful, and unexpected way. Flirting is a very powerful weapon because it leaves a man wanting more.

Unique Unicorn, now’s your chance to shine.



GET HIM IN HOT PURSUIT

Hooking men and hooking fish use similar tactics. There's many factors that go into a catching a fish - weather, clarity of the water, time of day, the type of fish a sportsman's angling after, and his lure's attractiveness. Similarly, there's lots of factors that go into catching a good guy - mood, setting, time of day, the type of man a woman is after, and a woman's attractiveness. To get a fish in hot pursuit, to get a man in hot pursuit, use a lure that taps into the fellow's emotions. Just as there's more than one way to catch a fish, there's more than one way to catch a man. Some women shower men with attention; others play hard to get. For ages, fishermen have bickered with one another over whether it's better to use a plain ol' hook, bobber and bait, or a newfangled, fancy lure.

When bait and bobber fishing, the fisherman attaches a live critter, such as a worm, to a hook and bobber setup and casts his line into the water. While the hapless bait wiggles around, the fisherman passively watches the floating bob-

ber and waits to ensnare a fish. But more often than not, the sneaky bastard with fins nibbles away at the bait carefully enough not to chomp down on the hook. Once he's gotten what he wants and his belly is full, he swims away.

When lure fishing, the fisherman attaches artificial bait such as a spinner or spoon to his line. Instead of dropping the line into the water and passively waiting for a fish to chomp down on the bit, he plays a game of cat-and-mouse. Oscillating between quickly reeling in the line and abruptly stopping creates motion, vibration and flash, which incites the fish to chase after the lure. Each time the fisherman stops reeling, the fish thinks it's seconds away from a tasty lunch. But when he starts reeling again, it sends the fish into a frenzy of desire. Our desperate little swimmer darts through the water and recklessly chomps down on the lure.

If you're predictable and give a man all the attention he wants, you're bait fishing. All you're doing is feeding the fish. Once he's figured out you have no other tricks, he'll lose interest and move on to a newer, shinier model he can't quite figure out.

Yet if you play the unpredictable game of cat-and-mouse, you too can work a man into a frenzy of desire. Just like our desperate little swimmer, deprive a man and he will only want you more. By rewarding a man with a little attention and then unexpectedly pulling away, you create emotional tension and anxiety. You're intriguing; you become a more desirable catch. A man will wonder if he might lose you. If he's worried he might lose you, he'll see you as a bigger challenge. Men love challenges. Men respect women who are challenges. He'll pursue you with reckless abandon, and given the chance, strike hard. Falling hook, line and sinker.

In a moment I'll share with you several strategies that you can use to get men to chase you and lure their interest indefinitely.

First, here's an example we can analyze. Let's use my dating life, you know, just for the fun of it.

Sydney and her boyfriend met me at the Short Stop for Soul Night. We were kicking it old school under the twirling disco lights when two men cut through the crowd and headed towards us. The man with a jolly red beard and half-massed eyes towered over his boney, baby faced friend. Ok, so they might have danced over; but please in your mind make it a suave kind of dance over, not a choreographed jazz hands number out of a campy musical.

The impressive redhead interrupted the The Jackson Five song that was playing, "Have you met Rob?"

Um," I kept dancing.

Michael Jackson do-wapped, "Come on, come on, come on. Let me show you what it's all about!"

"No," I replied.

The small man's hand flopped about as he attempted a wave. He was Gumby if that claymation green blob were thrown into a seedy saloon past sundown.

"Evie," I offered.

"I'm Gavin," The ginger extended his hand as if he were royalty. I played along. I tilted my nose to the ceiling and returned his mock formality while at the same time showing off my spiked clutch and X knuckle ring. This tactical move didn't go unnoticed.

"Whoa, watch out! You could poke someone's eye out with that," Gavin exclaimed, pointing at my knockoff Alexander McQueen spiked clutch I'd gotten for \$29.99 down at

Silver Lake Fashion (buy now, they're going fast). A bit tipsy already, I playfully stabbed him with the bag's spiked handle and he feigned pain. He borrowed my purse and poked me back.

"Ow! I have a few scratches actually from accidentally stabbing myself with it," I laughed when he returned it to me.

"Wait," Gavin snapped up my hand to admire my costume jewelry. "Let me see that ring."

I laughed, "Yeah, watch out or I'll brand you."

"That's intense. You could seriously hurt someone."

"What can I say? I like my defensive accessories."

"Can I try it on?"

I clutched my hand to my chest and narrowed my eyes. "No. You cannot try it on. I don't know you. You might steal it."

Gavin stuck out his lower lip. "Promise I won't."

I eyed him, suspiciously. "I don't know, you look a little like a thief."

Now, this guy actually looked kind of goofy. His bushy red beard wasn't quite lumberjack, but far past five o'clock shadow. His too tight jeans put him at the boarder between gay or hipster. His plaid button down most likely came from a Goodwill bin over Barneys. Yet his humor tickled me. His piercing stare stirred me.

"Do you want a drink?" Gavin titled his head towards the bar, "We're going to get drinks."

The opening notes to Aretha's 'Respect' sent the crowd into a cheer and I raised my currently full vodka soda. "I'm good for now," I replied and let them walk off to the bar.

Sydney leaned away from her boyfriend and told me,

“That guy really likes you. He was staring over here forever until they came over.”

“Really? Which one?”

“The tall redhead.”

“Pfft!” I waved her off, as we boogied, “I think he’s gay. He introduced me to his friend first.”

A few minutes later, Sydney nudged me. “He’s still staring.” She nodded across the dance floor. “I don’t think he’s gay.”

I spied Gumby and my redheaded friend with fresh drinks. Gavin and I locked eyes. I quickly looked away. Whatever, I never like gingers.

Just past eleven, Sydney and her boyfriend retrieved their jackets. It was a Sunday after all and Sydney had an early morning meeting that she didn’t want to reek of whiskey for. Me, I was considering bottling the stench of booze as a fragrance.

I wasn’t ready to leave yet so I got daring and sauntered right up to where Gumby and Ginger Gavin were standing at the bar, acting like they owned the place.

“I’ll have that drink now,” I demanded.

Oh god, I must have really been drunk if that came out of my mouth.

“Oh really?” Ginger Gavin drew out the words and granted me a sly smile. Still, he promptly bought me the drink.

“So what is it that you do exactly?” I badgered him.

“I play in a band.”

Everyone in Los Angeles claims they play in a band, write screenplays, or act. While in reality they’re a waiter, bellboy, or coffee shop barista.

“Yeah, right, I’m suuure you play in a band.” I

mocked. *“What do you REALLY do?”*

“Well I play in a band AND I’m a comedian.”

“Sure you are.” I might have added an eye roll to prove my sincerity.

“No, I am. I’m pretty good.”

“Oh, you are, are you?” I’d said, folding my arms in front of my chest and waiting for him to impress me further.

“I’ve performed at the Laugh Factory.”

“I’ll bet.” I was letting this guy get away with nothing. “Are you even any good?”

Gavin talked a bit about his routine and then invited me outside with him and Gumby so he could smoke a cigarette.

“So, Comedian, are you going to write a sketch about me?”

“Why is it that everyone thinks they are important enough for material?”

I laughed. “Isn’t that what you do, use people for good stories?”

“What makes you think your story is any good?” Gavin replied flirtatiously.

“Isn’t it?” I deadpanned.

We continued on like this until we decided to take it out on the dance floor. As if possessed by the spirit of Jennifer Gray from Dirty Dancing, I performed moves I only wish I’d been able to execute back in my 6th grade jazz dance days. Gavin spun me. We trotted in tandem. Good God, we accomplished some complicated dip move.

As I lay splayed in his arms, I smiled and suggested, “I know you can go deeper.”

His lips curved into a devilish grin.

I blushed, “I meant lower.”

He hoisted me upright and ran his hand down my thigh. "You're a really good dancer."

I shimmied away from him, leaving his hand grasping open air. "Yeah, I might have to retire after this. I think tonight is the highlight of my career."

If we were in a competition, I'd imagine the judges giving us straight 10's. Maybe it's that wild imagination of mine, but somehow, if we attempted it, I bet we could do an air lift. Of course in reality we probably were a sloppy drunken mess, falling all over one another and stepping on each other's feet. But for a moment, let's bask in my paltry memory's hazy glory.

Just as I was deeming us the next winners of Dancing with the Stars, Gavin leaned in to kiss me.

"Whoa!" I jolted back and pushed him away. "You can't kiss me! We just met!" For some reason I took this as a cue to stalk away like one of those bat shit crazy girls that I usually hate.

Gavin hurried after me to the bar. "What did I do wrong?" He put his arm around my back, "Is this better?"

"Maybe? Yes," I'd nodded curtly, "much more like a gentlemen."

"Can I get you another drink? Not too early in our relationship for another drink?"

I hid my smile. "Yes, that's allowed." I acted aloof. "I suppose."

Drinking our drinks, Gavin complimented me, "You're the prettiest girl here."

I slurped my drink and refused to accept his praise. "I'm sure you say that all the time."

"No really, I like you."

"No. You don't like me. You hate me. All you've done

all night is argue with me.”

“I don’t hate you. When did I hate you?”

I got very dramatic at this moment. “You hate me. Face it, I won’t let you kiss me. Why don’t you go over there and hit on one of those girls?” I stabbed an index finger towards a girl in the crowd. “That one is cute. I bet she’d make out with you.”

“You’re crazy, you know that?”

Somehow this made me want to kiss him.

But as I leaned towards him, he moved away. “Hey, whoa there, we just met,” he mocked me, using my line from earlier.

“Awe, you won’t kiss me now? I thought it would have been fun to kiss.”

I frowned and pretended to walk away. He snagged my hand and pulled me back in, crazy and all, and we proceeded to make out against the bar rail.

At closing time, Gavin asked for my number and offered to walk me to my car. On the way out, one of the bouncers I knew asked if I was okay.

I have a spiked bag, an X ring, and a few good tactics; I’m not that defenseless.

Withholding Rewards

Naturally, guys feel rewarded when you give them attention. We’re all a little narcissistic, so who doesn’t like attention. You can reward men by laughing at their jokes, touching them, or teasing them. The problem is we tend to overdo it sometimes because we want a guy to like us. So we laugh at all the things he says, whether they are funny or not. We appear impressed by his stories, even if they get a

bit lengthy and dull. We're bubbly and excited, and in general, come across as overly eager. If we constantly give a guy more and more attention he knows he can have it from us whenever he wants it. We think we're winning him over. In reality, we're too easy to please and eventually he'll get bored. By rewarding men consistently we are being predictable at a time when it is crucial to be unpredictable.

Sporadically withholding rewards, in a sense punishing a guy, keeps him interested.

For example, a guy's gotten great feedback when he tells a certain story from his college heydays in Sigma Chi. It's clutch. Old faithful. Girls go gaga for the story. Let's say the story would have you rolling the aisles. But let's pretend that instead of laughing, you kept a straight face.

The story flops. The guy expected to gain points with you, but now is forced to rack his brain to concoct new and better material. Suddenly, he desperately wants to impress you, the girl that's hard to impress.

Let no good deed go unpunished. Try this: Next time a guy says something funny or interesting, no matter how extraordinary, do not laugh or act impressed. He's expecting a positive response so watch his reaction when he doesn't get it. He'll be confused and reeling to make a comeback. And he'll be more curious about you. Why didn't you laugh? Why didn't you fawn all over him like all the other girls he's used that line on. Suddenly you've become an unsure thing, a mystery, a bigger prize, the girl he has to work harder for.

**Sporadically
withholding
rewards, in a
sense punishing
a guy, keeps
him interested.**

In my story of Ginger Gavin, while most girls would have been impressed that he was a musician and a fairly successful comedian, I set myself apart by purposely acting difficult. Fighting back, I heated things up until the tension boiled. I teasingly denied his claims, saying things like *“I’m suuure you are,”* and challenging him with, *“are you any good?”* By not rewarding him, by rejecting his bragging rights, I made him work harder to prove himself and chase me.

Let’s take a look at our conversation that happened outside.

“Why is it that everyone thinks they are important enough for material?”

Here, I laughed, and rewarded him.

“Isn’t that what you do, use people for good stories?”

“What makes you think your story is so good?”

Gavin replied flirtatiously.

“It isn’t?” I deadpanned.

He had expected me to laugh again, but instead I took a stand against him.

Again, when he asked if he could get me another drink and made a good joke, I refused to laugh, hid my smile, and acted unimpressed.

“Can I get you another drink? Not too early in our relationship for another drink?”

I hid my smile. “Yes, that’s allowed.” I acted aloof. “I suppose.”

These actions made Gavin wonder whether I liked him or not, and made him work harder to impress me.

Push Pull

Taking what we learned by withholding rewards,

let's go a step further and use a rewarding sequence called Push Pull. Push Pull ratchets up a guy's interest. It sends men on an emotional roller coaster. It spurs the chase.

THE PUSH is when you physically or emotionally push a guy away from you. You make the guy think you are disinterested.

THE PULL is when you pull him back in. You give him signs that you are interested. You throw him a life line.

As women we use this technique all the time without realizing it. It's the same as telling a man, "I like you...I think. And we might get together...or not. It's not really a big deal. But maybe it'd be fun. But I'm not sure. Anyway, I'm calling the shots, so see if you can win me over."

Push Pull takes an existing attraction a man has for you and intensifies and expands it. With every push, you have an opportunity for a pull.

This back-and-forth teasing and flirting creates attraction, desire, intrigue and pursuit.

To get a better sense of the emotional spike we're

**Push-Pull is
whenever you
emotionally push
a man away from
you and, then,
emotionally pull
him back in.
Each Push creates
an emotional space
for each Pull.**

creating, think about an online shopping addiction. What if you decided to try to save money one month and not indulge by buying the pair of Louboutins you'd been ogling for weeks. I bet every day you'd go back to the website, sigh, and dream about those stilettos and what it would be like to wear them and how amazing they would look with your Alice and Olivia dress. There's a good chance that if you allowed yourself to buy those shoes after waiting a month, you'd value them more than if you'd simply thrown them on your VISA. Same goes with guys. By pushing a guy away, you're depriving him. After, the reward will be much sweeter.

In my tale of Ginger Gavin, I used Push Pull several times:

First, I let him borrow my purse and prod me playfully with the spiked handle. I touched him with my X ring, again rewarding him. But when he asked to try on my ring, I leaned away and guarded my hand. I indicated interest with the first two actions, and then indicated disinterest by pulling away and even taking that a step further by telling him that he looked untrustworthy, calling him a thief.

My Push Pull game continued on the dance floor. As we danced very close, I allowed him to put his hand on my leg.

Just as I was deeming us the next winners of Dancing with the Stars, Gavin leaned in to kiss me.

Again, he was getting closer.

"Whoa!" I jolted back, "You can't kiss me! We just met!" For some reason I took this as a cue to stalk away like one of those bat shit crazy girls that I usually hate.

I pulled back and physically walked away from him.

Gavin hurried after me to the bar.

Good boy, Gavin, he chased me.

“What did I do wrong?”

Notice, I confused Gavin. He thought he had me. But I forced him to work harder to get back to where we were on the dance floor.

He put his arm around my back, “Is this better?”

Yep, good job, Evie. I made him work for it.

“Maybe? Yes,” I’d nodded curtly, “much more like a gentlemen.”

“Can I get you another drink? Not too early in our relationship for another drink?”

More free beverages! Yay!

“Yes, that’s allowed.” I scooted closer to him so our sides touched. “I suppose.”

I pulled him back and rewarded him for the chase by showing interest again.

The Sexual Innuendo

Remember our old friend the sexual innuendo? The sexual innuendo pulls a guy closer. When you rebuke the statement by laughing it off or denying it, you’re pushing him away again. Get it. Push Pull. Reward him by letting him think sex is in the cards. Take sex away again. Reel him in, suddenly jerk the shiny lure away.

While I danced with Gavin I suggested, *“I know you can go deeper.”*

He smirked.

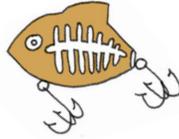
Aha! Made him think of sex! I’m rewarding him.

I blushed, “I meant lower!”

I acted innocent. I denied my sexual intension. But the comment is still out there, nagging him. He’ll continue

the pursuit knowing that I'm probably more than a little attracted to him.

To recap, remember, just as an unpredictable lure catches the fish, guys get hooked on girls they can't figure out. Creating emotional uncertainty by withholding rewards, pushing him away and pulling him back in, and tossing out a few sexual innuendos will keep him guessing and consequently, chasing you. To a guy, nothing is more interesting than a girl who isn't completely interested in him and he can't determine why.



MAKE MEETING YOU FUN (AND EASY), OR HOW I REPURPOSE MY HALLOWEEN COSTUMES

When I was a kid, I loved to play dress up. Pick a random Wednesday and you'd find me dressed up as Robin Hood, a Ninja Turtle, Arabian princess, The Baroness from *G.I. Joe*, or an extra from *The Warriors*. I dreaded the gravity of adulthood. When you had to grow up. Where you couldn't wear a princess gown whenever you felt like it.

But then college arrived and I came to a startling conclusion: you never completely grow up and you can still wear a princess gown if you feel like it. Lo and behold, I discovered fraternity row. A magical place where the Humpty Dance took on a new personal meaning and more importantly every Saturday night hosted a trip back to the '80s, Greece, or wherever it is that Pimps and Hoe's regu-

larly reside. College football, hockey and basketball games sanctioned fitted jerseys, ass hugging shorts, striped knee socks, war paint, and Mardi Gras beads. Holidays like St. Patrick's Day warranted boas, beer mug shaped sunglasses, and shirts with Irish sexual innuendos. Cinco de Mayo you became Mexican! Mardi Gras topless and slutty! New Years *The Great Gatsby* met disco and I usually ended up losing half my costume accessories along with my car keys and friends in a dramatic, sloppy stupor. I started running triathlons dressed as Supergirl. My friend Stacy and I competed in an urban obstacle course dressed as Team Cinderella, biking twenty miles in poofy, candy blue princess gowns and mullet wigs while the '80s hair band's music blasted from the boom boxes mounted to our cruisers. My homemade daisy dukes, snakeskin cowboy boots and skills throwing Blue Steel with a Wyatt Erp pistol awarded me Best Dressed two years running at my friend's annual up north camping parties. For a make-your-own swimsuit contest, my bare all painted on 'suit' paid off and sent me and my best friend packing on an all-expenses paid trip to Cancun. Halloween, every Britney Spears' getup promised free drinks. My Blink 182 nurse outfit got me laid.

If you can't tell, I still love playing dress up. Costumes are a free pass to be wild. An excuse to play make-believe and star as Laura Croft in the sack.

If you recall from earlier, a unique piece of flair is a way to stand out in a flashy way. With flair, we're spoon feeding men an opening line – be it a straight-forward compliment or witty remark. A costume is a glorified piece of flair. It snaps up men's attention immediately. A costume screams you're ready for a good time. And everyone wants a reason to party.

Costumes attract positive attention. If it's not Halloween, men are curious why you are wearing a costume. A guy wants to talk to the girl that isn't afraid to be daring and different because that translates to being gutsy in other parts of her life as well.

Hold up. So I'm not advocating you trade your skinny jeans for a Sexy Nurse outfit every Saturday night. You'd be a weirdo. Or look like an off duty stripper.

Rather, once in a while, find small reasons to celebrate that aren't obvious. Everyone dresses up at Halloween, so it isn't as unusual or attention grabbing. Don't wait until a bachelorette party or birthday either to decide to take the party up a notch. Think creativity and make up your own themed holiday. I have anniversaries for all sorts of random milestones. Get a group together, decide on a theme, and commence a bar crawl. Throw a costume theme party. Or brainstorm inventive ways to take fan fair to the next level.

Here's an example from my college days in Wisconsin.

In all honesty, my friend Donna and I didn't go to Badger football games to watch football. We went down to Regent Street to tailgate and meet hot men.

We were apathetic when we first spotted it, the discovery that would change the direction of that season. The giant Ziploc bag was just lying there, abandoned on the wet table, beside the empty Miller Lite bottles, strings of red and white beads, and overflowing ashtrays, begging to be adopted.

We debated a moment. "Why would anyone just leave a full bag of peanuts?"

"The peanuts could be poisoned?"

“Who knows who’s grubby hands were in the bag?”

Donna pointed out.

We took a chance and hijacked the nuts.

At the next bar, cute boys were in line for beer in front of us.

“Want a nut?” I tried as an opening line, hoisting the Ziploc onto the bar.

“Sure!” said one dude, digging in.

“Thanks!” said the other, “You guys want a beer?”

As we wandered out to the bar’s patio with our free beverages, Donna spotted another good-looking guy. She took the bag and held it out for him. “Would you like a nut from our sack, Sir?”

He dug in. “Hell yeah.” He chewed. “Smart move bringing these.”

“Oh they aren’t ours. We just found them on the street.”

He paused mid-chew.

“If you die, then we’ll know they’re poisoned.” I told him.

“Kidding,” said Donna.

Actually, we really couldn’t be sure, so to be on the safe side we handed them all out until the bag was empty.

The next Badger home game, we bought two Fisher’s peanut sacks at the grocery store for \$2.99.

“Peanut?” We offered a hot bartender.

“Got nuts?” I traded a guy for flair.

Men stopped us. “Why are you giving away peanuts?”

I was drunk and I wasn’t shy. “I like nut sacks.”

Within ten minutes I was making out with the guy in a bar booth.

Bacardi has the scantily clad girls. Jaeger stepped it up with a German variety. Fisher's peanuts got Donna and me. We were onto something. We'd found a niche.

By the third home game, Donna and I had assembled a small fan base. I added a cowboy hat and rocker wristbands to my sporty look. Donna tossed a team headband into her t-shirt and skirt ensemble.

The bouncer at the first bar didn't card us, and instead smiled, "The nut girls are back!"

"Just doing our duty. One nut at a time."

"Hey! It's the peanut girls!" Our bartender popped two complimentary tall boys.

At the end of the day we'd made our way through five sports bars, were drunk, and fresh out of nuts. I'd made out with the bartender; Donna scored a sexy Communications major; and we'd handed out on average two phone numbers per bar.

For Homecoming, we determined with some planning we could step it up a notch. A quick tutorial in Illustrator and I'd designed us commemorative tank tops. The back read: 'GOT NUTS?', the front, "LET US HELP YOU BUST YOUR NUT" accompanied by my third grade cartoon of a peanut. Our calves covered in red and white striped athletic socks, our chests draped in beads, we rounded out our new uniforms with custom booty shorts. Donna wanted the pair printed with the letter N. I snatched up the pair that had the letter U.

All we needed was someone to wear the T. Not just anyone could have rounded out our team. Sheila had big boobs and an Irish drinking sensibility. She won out the competition as our third Nut Girl.

As soon as we got to the bars men were asking:

“What are you guys?”

“Are you on the volleyball team?”

“Are you sponsored by Planter’s?”

By this point, we had a slew of openers:

“We’re the official Nut Girls.”

“We help you bust your nuts.”

“I’m looking for a good set of nuts.”

“I’ll crack your nut.”

“I’ll show you my nut sack if you show me yours.”

“I’m looking for two big nuts. Can you help me?”

The list went on.

Girls, guys, alumni, parents, even the crowd control police officers wanted pictures with the girls dressed in costume. We would turn around and shake our asses that together spelled: N- U-T. All our drinks were free. A buff fraternity boy offered me a piggyback ride around one bar, tossing out peanuts like I was the Homecoming Queen on parade. To create a further spectacle, we convinced the cops to handcuff us. Halfway through the day I made out with a guy behind the port-a-johns. In a men’s restroom, Donna saw a dude’s nuts and a little more. We lost our T, Sheila, twice (at least NU when put together was close to a word).

“You guys will be back next year, right?” A hottie stopped us on the street as we were stumbling home. In the distance the sun was setting and the party was winding down after the Badgers win. “You’re famous.” He told us. “You’re the nut girls. You’re school mascots now.”

Choosing a Costume

An indecisive friend of mine could never decide on a costume, so Meg always bought two. A few days before

Halloween she told me how she determined which costume she'd wear.

“So last night I brought home this guy. I dressed up as Batgirl and had sex with him. He seemed to like the Batgirl one. I think I'll try the Sexy Sailor one tonight. You gotta test them out first and see which one works better for you.”

In the end, the first guy was the better lay. That year Meg went as Batgirl.

Your choice of costume makes a difference. Store bought never tops homemade. Get out your hot glue gun, sewing kit and Duct Tape and deviate from the norm.

For example, for a Wisconsin Badger's hockey game against the Colorado College Tigers, my best friend and I decided against the requisite cute college tees and tight black pants. Instead, we streaked black war paint across our cheeks and forearms, toted fake plastic knives, and wrapped thin stripped fur fabric around our chests like the Flintstones. On our bare midriffs, we scribbled the words TIGER HUNTERS. Certainly, it helped that our seats were located directly behind the goal. Instantly, we bonded with a group of fraternity boys in striped overalls and firefighter helmets. After the game, at the bar with our new boyfriends, the Madison evening news broadcast the win accompanied by a shot of the fan sensations: my friend and I, The Madison Tiger Hunters. We even made the season highlight reel. What can I say? Dedication doesn't go unnoticed.

Before you start pegging me as the next Martha Stewart, I'll let you in on a little secret - I suck at sewing. I failed Home Ec in the seventh grade. My pillow person could have passed as Frankenstein, a tangled mess of thread, abandoned knots, crooked stitching, and poor pattern planning. Although I've never let my shoddy craftsmanship deter

me from my creative endeavors. I'm an absolute whiz with electrical tape. Give me a glue gun, hacksaw, safety pin, or pipe cleaner, and I'll go all MacGyver on your ass. And Bob Ross has nothing on my 'happy tree' painting skills. The point is, you don't have to be a seamstress or spend a lot of money to make a great outfit. As long as you can fasten the thing to you, you'll reap the benefits.

Props

I'll find any excuse to add a prop. A prop is also a piece of flair.

At music festivals, concert goers carry homemade flags. For instance, at Outside Lands in San Francisco I asked for a picture with a girl who had the cut out face of Zach Galifianakis tacked to the top of an elm branch. I can't imagine how many men she met. Coachella, girls don Indian headdresses and flower crowns.

On my thirtieth birthday, I bought all my friends ugly pairs of sunglasses.

Another group of friends started Cat Night, where everyone wears cat ears out to the club.

A coonskin cap matched the Redneck theme for my New Orleans swamp tour.

My Cincinnati Bengals mini helmet from Baskin Robbins is a go-to conversation starter on football game days.

It's a fact, you'll appear more fun with a prop. Props make for easy openers and create a fun bonding experience. They are also cheap and disposable. Let a guy try on your Kanye sunglasses. Lend out your cowboy hat. Pass off a super hero cape. Paste holiday stickers on cute boys backs.

Divvy out Sweetheart candy.

I'll leave you with one of my favorite prop examples from my days studying abroad:

The five foot tall T Rex stood at the entrance to the news stand at Heathrow. Running late for our flight to Switzerland my friends and I nearly didn't stop. No one needs a giant blowup dinosaur. Yet, fifteen Euros seemed a real steal.

Arriving past midnight at our Swiss chalet, my two friends and I quickly discovered the snowboarding competition we'd come to attend was over twenty miles away. The next morning, we blew up our new dino friend, bundled up in our ski gear and waited patiently by the bus stop. After less than five minutes, a car pulled up.

The driver said something that sounded like he was gargling potatoes.

In turn, we acted like we were playing charades while shouting out, "Mountain! Ski! Snowboard! Bus!"

The man motioned us into his car.

At first, we hesitated, remembering those third grade videos on 'stranger danger'. Yet, the guy was driving a clown car. We were in Europe after all where nothing bad ever happens, and besides, who's abducting the girls with the five foot blowup.

We stuffed our dinosaur in first, and squeezed into the remaining space. As he dropped us off at the mountain we tried to hand him some Swiss Francs, but he waved them away, speaking again in tongues while waving at our T-Rex manically.

At the rental hut, we were greeted by a very suave Casanova named Marco who offered to watch our dinosaur while we took the lift to the summit. Returning back after a

long day of falling on our asses, we barely recognized our new friend. Our dinosaur was outfitted in all the latest ski gear. All he needed was a badge and he'd have been hired alongside Marco. Instantly we named our dinosaur Marco, after his handsome caregiver.

After that, our Marco went everywhere with us. At dinner, we propped a tiny fork in his pudgy, two pronged hand and he ate fondu. At breakfast, he served as an alibi for my stolen packets of Nutella. "Not for me," I assured our proprietor, as she seemed to be quite stingy with the chocolate hazelnut spread. "For Marco."

Ditching the bus completely, we met all sorts of characters hitchhiking to the mountain: a ninety-year-old geologist, a ski instructor with a bad mullet, and the local strip club owner. Everyone braked for Marco. No one could resist his toothy permagrin and silly charm.

The following weekend my friend Lori and I whisked Marco off for a romantic weekend in Florence. After a dinner of gnocchi, we strolled past the Duomo arm with dinosaur arm to an American bar. On stage, a man was strumming out a John Mayer hit.

We were just complaining how we'd come all the way to Europe for this, when two handsome Italians approached us. One wore a bowler hat and blue button down with suspenders. A cigarette dangled from the other guy's lips and he had on tight leather pants and a loose pirate shirt opened to his shaved chest.

Pirate Shirt motioned to Marco and said in an accent that made me orgasm, "Can we get your friend a drink?"

My cheeks reddened, but I tried to act coy. "His name is Marco," I introduced our dinosaur. "He might like a cigarette? We could use drinks."

Pirate shirt passed over his cigarette and I balanced it in Marco's left hand while the men fetched our vodka beverages. Returning, they pulled up chairs to our table, we clinked glasses and I ashed Marco's menthol, so he wouldn't burn himself.

"Ah, Marco, where would your life have taken you had we not adopted you in Heathrow? We're a bad influence. We're corrupting you." I mused.

A little while later, Bowler hat informed us, "We are up on stage next."

"Does your T-Rex want to join us?" Pirate Shirt asked us.

I pouted. "Only our T-Rex?"

"Well, you two could come up too. You are American. You probably sing the songs better than us."

"Depends on what you're singing." Lori said.

"Do you like Bon Jovi?" asked Pirate shirt. He'd said the magic words. "We are a Bon Jovi cover band."

I smiled and shook my head. "Of course you are."

A half-hour later, Marco was singing backup. I made out with Pirate Shirt, Lori with Bowler Hat. After the show, the guys bought us roses from a vendor in the square. We kissed beside the fountains. Lingered in doorways like in all the romantic comedies. Then Marco, Lori and I bid our Italian lovers arrivederci.

At the time, we couldn't have been happier. We didn't know that two days later in Rome, Marco would suffer a fatal puncture wound to the tail. A cocky American from our exchange program jumped him in the hotel lobby and wrestled him to the floor. The definitive pop signaled his passing. Back up in our hotel room, after the incident, Lori and I each presented a eulogy. We spoke of his zest for life, knack for

hitching, and natural talent as a wingman. We left him laid out flat for the maid to dispose of. The two roses rested on his deflated chest. All the best live fast and die young.



A GOOD WINGWOMAN

Wingmen aren't just for *Top Gun* (spoiler alert: Goose dies).

On a mission, I need skilled and dependable backup. Of course the missions rotate depending on which one of my friends has the most recent crush. Or in my case, if I need to rally the troops because a certain rockstar crush is back in town.

As a rule, I don't go out with twenty of my closest friends. I'd be buried in the herd. I like to keep my pack lean and a little mean. Three women are ideal. With two, when you meet a guy, someone is inevitably left out, gets bored, and wants to go home. Leaving you with two options: stay by yourself or go home early. With three girls, everyone is entertained. The small group makes decisions quicker and maneuvers easier. A group of ten is hard to congregate and convince to move onto the next bar when Samantha just got a drink, Dannie is making out with a dude in the photo booth, Samantha's favorite Madonna song just came on, and

Kylie is missing in action (yet again). Three is the best pack number. And guys tend to travel in twos and threes so it's also a good group matchup.

Now you don't want Kylie or Dannie or Samantha ogling the same men as you. I know you can't choose your friends, but when going out hoping to meet men, choose wingwomen who have different tastes in men than you. My best friend Hannah goes for rugged outdoorsy types. My friend Rebecca is into beefy firemen. If they are shy, artistic, and brooding, they are Sonya's type. Ellen likes those tall, rich Alpha Males who drive Ferraris. Michelle likes the skinny single speed bikers hopped up on designer coffee. Cindy prefers her slightly portly foreigners. Emily is into tall, athletic black men. I go for musicians or short Jewish hipsters. Let's sum it up to say my friends usually question my taste. Ok, and they wonder how I pull off heels when more than half the guys I date are nearly my same height. The important thing is none of us ever compete with another.

Now, there's good solid wingwomen, and then there's girls you invite to drink with you on a Tuesday, eat boatloads of Indian curry and discuss how hot Eric Northman is in *True Blood*. These aren't the women I'm talking about.

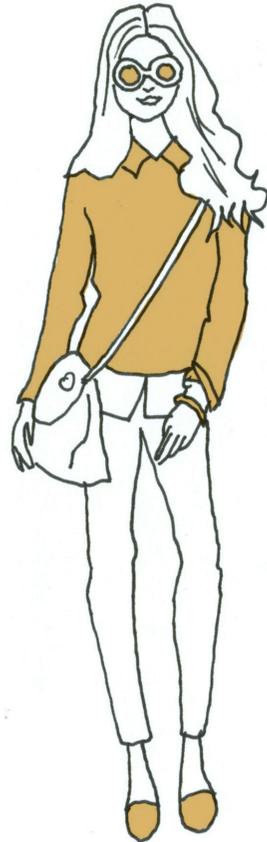
A wingwoman always has your back. They'll keep a keen lookout, help you plan your approach, push you to be aggressive, buffer competitors, entertain the friends, compliment you to build male interest, create alibis, and prompt a quick getaway. That's a lot to ask of anyone. My top wingwomen are all these things for me, and equally, I extend the same to them. I've given up evenings, weekends, and countless vacations for my wingwomen and again, they're right there when I need them most. Wingwomen are my partners in crime and my confidants. They're up for an adventure. We

stick together. We take action now, and ask questions later. Prisoners are definitely taken. On any given night we might succeed, we might fail, but with the right wingwoman a mission never goes unattempted.

Every wingwomen has a specialty. Let me introduce to you to three of my hall of fame partners in crime:

Wingwoman Hannah

My best friend Hannah is Little Red Riding Hood packing a 45 in her whicker picnic basket. Men incorrectly mistake Hannah for lost. Her careers run the gamut from cruise ship custodian to scone baker, spiritual healer to geologist. Men line up to swoop in, adopt a Golden Retriever rescue with her, and father her 2.5 kids. Hannah does like Golden Retrievers. Although kids and boundaries, even if they are white picketed, aren't her thing. She gets where she needs to go all on her own, thank you very much. In other words, as my wingwoman, she's game for whatever hair-brained scheme I'm calling my latest mission. Her greatest strength lies in diversion, granting me free range to execute my move.



In college, Hannah and I hosted dinner parties at our one bedroom apartment. These weren't taco nights or some burnt cheese blob made with a Boboli crust. I'm talking elaborate six course meals. Baked brie and figs, garlic po-

lenta, arugula fontina salad, and porcini mushroom bruschetta served as starters. Main courses consisted of herbed provincial rabbit or tomato leek tarts with garlic basil crusts. For dessert, we'd present fluffy soufflé or thick chocolate mousse or something else French and impossible to pronounce, garnished with unnecessary edible marigolds, or candied orange peels we'd painstakingly made from scratch. I'll admit, the rabbit was a bit over the top. The edible flowers questioned as poisonous. Our dinner guests were fraternity boys who were used to eating cold pizza they found abandoned under their bed from the night before. Eight to twelve men might have been invited, but all the preparations were purposefully prepared for one man and one man only - my crush. The other seven to eleven men were buffers. At the party, while I cornered my target, the buffers Hannah handled. By dessert, half the men had fallen for Hannah and my crush and I, with a stolen bottle of two buck Chuck, would be making out on the fire escape.

Don't worry, I paid Hannah back with countless excursions to Mexico after she fell for a young and lovely hotel entertainer named Carlos. Let's use entertainer loosely. He was the guy who dressed up in a hula costume during the all-inclusive luau buffet. He wrote her love letters saying he hoped to bathe her, wash her feet, and raise their three beautiful children. He might have had a food fetish. He may have been vying for a green card. But as a wingwoman, I was always supportive.

Wingwoman Ellen

Ellen is a rabid pit bull with fuchsia lipstick and a sick manicure. She looks good but if threatened, people

know to keep their distance. There were many times in my life that I wished Ellen was there to tell it like it is. While I'm too nice, she takes no shit. Which means she will let *me* get away with nothing either. If I'm slacking on my pickup she'll be the first to notice and give me a good bite in the ass. With her cracking the whip, giving up isn't an option. Remember my Ten Second Approach rule? If by second nine I haven't budged, Ellen is the one snarling and shoving me forward.

She's done this while I was chatting with a lifeguard on the Fourth of July.

"I'm changing up here, but you can come up," the lifeguard had told me before he disappeared into his lifeguard hut and was supposedly getting naked.

Ellen's fingers gripped my shoulders and she tossed me towards the ramp that led up to the hut. "Go!" It wasn't a suggestion. "Get up there Evie! Now!"

She's done this after my rockstar crush walked into a ramen restaurant while I was breezily doing laundry next door.

I clutched my cell, so excited to tell her about my sighting that my words came out garbled together in one long run-on, "He-went-in-the-ramen-place.What-do-I-do?"

"You go and get some ramen."

"But I'm not hungry. I just ate."

"Well, I don't care. You're going to go eat again."

"Can I get take out?"

"No. You're going to sit down at a table near him. And you're going to eat ramen." Ellen was right. That's what sucks.

Ellen is always right. I knew all along what I had to do. Getting the courage to do it is another thing. Get a good

wingwoman to guard you against turning back. There's no way out except forward.

She's also the one to inform you when the gig is up. She can be my best bodyguard. One time I was making out with a cute Canadian musician named Calvin at bar time. He tried to climb into my cab with me, and drunk, I'd let it happen. Calvin made up a silly excuse about sharing the cab although he'd told me minutes earlier he lived in the opposite direction.

Ellen mustered super human strength, lunged into the cab and dragged him out by his shirt collar. "Nope buddy. You aren't going home with her," she snapped and tossed Calvin to the curb. Her lipstick never smudged. Not a single French tipped nail chipped.

Wingwoman Emily

Emily's the girl that picked up a professional soccer player at a taco stand in Venice Beach while intermittently screaming at him drunkenly and discussing the finer points of carne asada. The girl has no clue the words 'shame,' 'ridiculous,' or 'inappropriate' exist in the English language.

On top of that, her energy level rivals that of one of those '80s Disney bears downing a flask of liquid speed. Spunk is a key ingredient in a good wingwoman. Emily's my party girl. Unpretentious. Good humored. Versatile. Enthusiastic.



For example:

Me: “Do you want to go to the Dodgers game?”

Emily: “Ooooh! Can we dress up in embarrassing costumes?”

Me: “Can’t see why the hell not?”

Me: “Do you want to come to this house party?”

Emily: “I’m guessing there’s going to be all hipsters there.”

Me: (pausing as I have to let her down that no one resembling a basketball player will be in attendance and there’s a good possibility of someone busting out a banjo)
“Probably...”

Emily: “Ok. I’m in!”

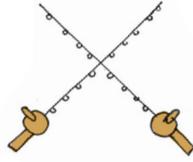
Me: “You want to be my date to my company Christmas party?”

Emily: “Is that creepy married guy going to hit on me like last year?”

Me: “Perhaps?”

Emily: Single shrug. “Sure!”

Good wingwomen steer you on the right track. Those darn emotions tend to cloud your better judgment. Emily’s the girl looping her hand in an impatient circle on the sidelines. My cue when I’m lingering too long. My excuse to the guy as to why I need to leave so soon. My aid to propel him into action if he wants to see me again. Emily reminds me that men must work hard to earn my affections. Maybe it’s all the *Love & Hip Hop* she watches, but Emily’s a sly strategist.



SOCIAL VIOLATION, AND, GIVING YOUR COMPETITION ENOUGH ROPE TO HANG THEMSELVES

At a party I met Jessica Biel's doppelgänger. On top of being stunning, Amanda aptly discussed the works of Helmut Newton, since she had curated the exhibition that was on display at a Los Angeles art museum. No doubt, I banked on this girl having a boyfriend. One that probably rivaled JT.

"No. I'm totally single." She let out a long exhale, "I'll meet a guy I'm attracted to, we'll be talking art, culture and completely hitting it off and then another girl will swoop right in. Girls here are so aggressive. I'm not aggressive like that. I can't compete."

Jessica Biel can't compete? What hope does that leave for the rest of us?

“So what do you do?” I asked her.

“What am I going to do? I give up. I walk away.”

“How can you just walk away?”

“If a guy likes me enough he should come find me,” she rationalized. Then admitted, “But none of them do. There are so many of these girls, guys don’t have to even try.”

“Sure, there’s going to be competition, but you can’t just leave. That’s letting all those other girls win.”

“I feel stupid waiting around.”

“Who feels more stupid?” I asked her. “You? Or the intruder?” I pointed out. “Remember how much courage it takes you to approach this guy. Well, by walking away you’re only making it easier for this new girl. And if you like him, why should you make it easy? Stick around. Claim your territory.”

“But how? What do I say to her?”

“You don’t have to say much of anything. They’ll screw it up all on their own. If you give them enough rope, they’ll hang themselves.”

I explained to Amanda the concept of social violation and now I’ll explain it to you.

Let’s pretend that a creepy guy comes up to you and your friends. Most likely, what are the first words out of your mouth? Probably something steeped in offense like: “Excuse me, but we are having a conversation here.” Instantly the creeper feels stupid. And he should, he’s being rude. He’s breaking social code. He’s socially violating.

Similarly, when a competitor approaches you and your future boyfriend, all you have to do is make this newcomer break social etiquette. You are the one talking with the guy first. You are the one with the superior position. Never assume that a new person to the conversation has more

to offer. If this guy is talking with you and you are hitting it off, there's a good chance he's interested in you. She's interrupting your conversation, so she's already acting disrespectful.

First, when a competitor approaches, do absolutely nothing. Usually all on her own a girl will open with an awkward or boring opener to try to weasel her way into the conversation. Or try some idiotic stunt to switch the guy's attention to her. Let her make an attempt. See where it gets her. More than half the time, she's going to fall flat on her

face and end up making a fool of herself. She'll sense the awkwardness and walk away feeling embarrassed. You've given her enough leeway, but little time and nothing to go with, so she'll socially violate all on her own.

I know! Doing nothing is hard when jealousy is crippling you, like a sharp shiv to your gut. Again, I'm going to suggest you remain civil. Don't give her any ammunition that she can use against you.

Once she's laid out her opener, if she hasn't broken social code with a lame or off color remark, you can build a case around her 'rude' behavior.

One of the nicest ways is to smile, "Oh, hi, who are you?" Followed up by pointing out to her and the guy how

Never assume that a new person to the conversation has more to offer. If a guy is talking with you and you are hitting it off, there's a good chance he's interested in you. Your competitor is interrupting your conversation, so she's already acting disrespectful.

random her sudden appearance is: “You just... came out of nowhere, didn’t you?” Throughout all this, smile serenely. You are the one in control. You’re pointing out that it’s impolite to interrupt. Although aimed at her, this is for the guy’s benefit.

Alternatively an easy, breezy, backhanded compliment can make her self-conscious and throw off her game. To a girl wearing a cropped black tank top and black boots, I’ve said, “I like your look. Are you trying to be Tomb Raider? Going as Lara Croft?” Sure, it’s a compliment, Angelina is hot, but I am making her feel dumb and embarrassed that the outfit she is so proud of looks more like a Halloween costume. This, as we learned in the last chapter, would be fine if a costume was her intention. But I’m guessing it’s not. Also, if you make your reference light and humorous, you might get a laugh out of the guy, which can score you further points with him and bring you closer later. Just be cautious, because YOU don’t want to come off as rude or bitchy yourself. Be aware that YOU don’t socially violate.

The best strategy is to not worry about the competition, stay in the situation, and use her to bond further with the guy. The newcomer might be aggressive, but she doesn’t matter. The guy is your focus. So put your energy on your relationship with him. Remember, you were having an awesome time before she arrived. If you and a guy have built up any rapport at all, use this to your advantage.

What’s the best way to make her seem like an outsider? Don’t allow her introduction to be smooth. Hold your ground and make it an awkward, tense moment for her. Pretend you and this new guy are in cahoots. Because, well, you want to be, don’t you? So why not start now as a team.

Exchanging a simple ‘yikes’ cringe between you and

your guy can nonverbally express the rudeness of her intrusion. Because let's face it: butting in or pushing you out of the way is downright barbaric. If she's dressed like a porn star, don't hide your expression. Look a tad bit shocked. Mouth what appears like an involuntary 'wow' as you assess her outfit.

If there is something off about her, commiserate with the guy about her. That means acting a little like you feel sorry for him that such a train wreck is trying to pick him up. For instance, it's easy to make a newcomer an inside joke if she stumbles up drunkenly, reeking of booze. "Uh, oh, a few too many PBRs for this one," you can whisper as she's halfway through her soliloquy. Even if your competitor is hot, he'll recognize that she's acting foolish. Even better, if she looks sketchy, assume she's sketchy, give him a pitying look, and whisper, "Do you need me to save you?" She's a nuisance. Poor guy, so good looking he has to put up with girls like her.

Ok, let's review. Never walk away. Don't act jealous or bitchy. Stick around, appear polite and unfazed. If she fumbles, which she probably will, subtly point out her mistake. Ultimately, don't give anyone a chance to be more interesting than you.

If you execute the situation correctly, a competitor can actually make you look better in the eyes of a guy. First, you're the cool and confident girl who isn't saying cheesy lines or doing outrageous things for attention. Secondly, sharing an awkward experience creates a connection between you and a guy. Now you have a story you can laugh about later. So not only have you thwarted the competition, but you've made yourself more attractive.

Here's an example for you. You know it, I'm back at

the Short Stop bar in Los Angeles's Echo Park.

That Sunday night the line snaked out the door. The DJ pumped out soul jams. Clusters of girls and guys danced on opposite ends of the dance floor, like we were back in sixth grade, daring each other to make a move first. Maybe after a few more drinks to loosen them up they'd make their move. On this train of thought I broke away from my friends and elbowed my way to the bar to order a stiff drink.

"Evie?" My friend Nick bowled me over with his embrace. "Hey! What are you doing here!" Nick's energy rivaled that of the Kool-Aid mascot that had a bad habit of bursting through walls.

Nick turned back to his friend I hadn't noticed earlier, as prior I was struggling for air. His friend was gazing off towards the dance floor, slugging back a can of PBR. By his shaggy mop of brown hair, untucked plaid shirt, and patchy stubble, I guessed he wasn't here to pickup girls, he was here for the two buck beer and maybe the soul music.

"This is John," Nick introduced us. "John, Evie. You guys must have met before? Maybe at Chad's party?"

If I'd met John, I would have definitely remembered him. I could picture him strumming an acoustic Gibson on stage, which means he was just my type.

"No, I don't think so. Are you a regular at Footsies too?" I asked John, referencing the bar I usually ran into Nick at, as we both had affinities to dark bars with stiff drinks in bad neighborhoods.

"No. I go to the Blue Room mostly."

At the time I was new LA and only there temporarily, so I asked, "What's the Blue Room?"

"It's blue." John deadpanned.

“Really. It’s blue, is it?” I rolled my eyes teasingly. “That explains a lot.”

John grinned, getting my sarcasm. “It’s a dive. I go there so much they started giving me free drink tokens.”

“The prospect of free drinks, maybe I’ll have to give it a go sometime.”

“The tokens are only for the regulars.”

“Oh. Well, maybe I’ll have to go with a regular, then?” I hinted.

As a Temptations song came on, Nick took off to the dance floor, and John asked if I wanted to move outside with him while he smoked. The conversation turned to music and quickly became a debate. John liked country. I could see why. Easily, he had the demeanor of Johnny Cash, brooding, artistic and cool because he acted like he didn’t really give a shit. When I brought up that I liked country too, naming off a few current acts I’d caught on the radio, he immediately dissed my list.

“All that new stuff’s crap.”

Suddenly I felt stupid trying to impress him. I wasn’t used to guys fighting back. Many assimilated, because, let’s face it, a girl was talking to them.

But John was having none of it. He was like Yosemite Sam, if Yosemite Sam was cute. All fight, going out with cowboy boots and guns blazing. I was in awe, defenseless.

As our sparring continued, we found we had a lot in common. We’d both went to art school. We were both from the Midwest. We both loved cartoons. I couldn’t believe my luck. I stepped in closer. The next time we laughed, I strategically touched his shoulder. I was in. This was it!

Suddenly a buxom blonde butted in. “Can I bum a cigarette?” she asked John.

I patiently stood by while she waited for John to reach into his jeans pocket, and pull out his pack of Camels. When he handed her the cigarette, his eyes traveled from her cleavage down to the hem of her short, floral dress. Sure, her hair could have used a wash and a blowout, but overall she was pretty. And she was a smoker. John was a smoker. I was the cougher, inhaling second hand smoke for the sole benefit of hitting on a cute boy.

“Excuse me,” I said politely, maneuvering around her to position myself at John’s side.

John must have noticed that she was loitering. “Do you need something else?” he asked her after she didn’t light the cigarette.

“Do you have a lighter?” she asked.

“A lighter too?” I joked, but it wasn’t a joke. This girl needed to move on, ASAP. Couldn’t she see John was mine?

John smirked at my comment. “Yeah, you’re asking for everything tonight, aren’t you?”

“I forgot mine. Pleeeeeeaaasse.” She batted her eyelashes. I’m guessing this move usually worked.

Although I doubt she had met a guy like John. John and I made eye contact. I rolled my eyes and he rolled his back. He handed his lighter over to her.

“Thanks.” She lit her cigarette, and parked herself on the other side of John. “So I overheard you’re from Ohio.”

On top of cleverly inserting herself in our conversation, I watched as she slipped John’s lighter discreetly into her bag. Rude! Who did this girl think she was?

“Yeah, I’m from Cleveland.” John answered, leaning on his heels, finishing his cigarette.

She shifted over, strategically blocking me out again. Sneaky bitch! I suddenly was out of the conversation. She was going on with, "I've never been to Cleveland. I've never been anywhere in the middle of the U.S. There isn't much there though, is there? You have to live on one of the coasts. You like LA now, don't you? LA's the best."

At first, my heart dropped. One option, I could just walk away and accept my losses. I mean, she's in a dress that shows off substantial cleavage. She's got kitten heels on. I'm in skinny jeans, a t-shirt, a leather jacket, and rocker boots. Style-wise I hadn't come prepared.

She blathered on, "You said you went to art school. What are you? A painter?"

It wasn't fair. Our conversation was going so well until she arrived. I had to fight for this. A Johnny Cash slash Yosemite Sam doesn't come along every day.

"I'm Courtney," She introduced herself to John.

That's it, I'd tell this Courtney character that I was having a conversation until she cut me off. But maybe John liked talking with her? Maybe he was just biding time with me until a girl like Courtney came along?

"I love soul night here. We should go and dance inside-"

Oh, that's it! Punching her suddenly became an option. I was wearing my big defensive jewelry. Although, I kind of liked the bar and didn't want to get kicked out.

"Are you going to give me my lighter back or are you just going to steal it?" John asked.

Aha!

John must have noticed too that she pocketed his BIC during her monologue.

Courtney giggled like this was extremely funny and

flirtatiously moved in with, "I'm not stealing it."

John scowled. Because obviously she was.

"I'm borrowing it. See? You can have it back." She placed the BIC in his palm and held his hand while she leaned into him. "So do you want to go inside?"

I mouthed to John, 'Did she just try to make off with your lighter?'

John cringed and I noticed he was holding her hand so lightly it was as if she had cooties.

"No, that's okay." He told her. "Why don't you go steal someone else's stuff."

He got it! Woo hoo! He didn't like her!

John walked around her and whispered urgently in my ear. "Get her away from me."

Then he grabbed my hand firmly and led me inside.

We were talking on the edge of the dance floor when of all people who should reappear, but Courtney. She bounced in between us and tried to dance with John. Again, I calmly waited it out, but didn't back away.

John skirted around her the first chance he got and gripped both my hands urgently, "Dance with me." We locked eyes. "Now!"

"What? I don't know this song."

"We'll make it up then."

It was really cute, actually. While we invented our own dance, from the outskirts, Courtney glowered and circled like a goddamn hyena.

He twirled me out and pulled me back in, so I was leaning against his chest. "What's wrong with her. She won't leave me alone."

We both broke out in a fit of laughter.

"You sure you don't want to dance with her?" I joked.

“Come on, she’s kind of cute in her flowery dress.”

“No way. Keep her away from me. She’s nuts.”

“Ha. Ha. You have a stalker.” I teased in a sing-song voice.

He pouted playfully, “It’s not funny.”

We danced all night, shared drinks, and concocted crazy ways that his stalker would ambush us.

At bar time, John and I were splitting a tamale out on the sidewalk when my favorite female approached us.

“Hey, John. It was really nice meeting you. What are you doing now?”

Somehow she missed the tamale we were feeding each other. “Eating,” I answered through a mouthful. “The tamales are really good.”

She ignored me and addressed John. “We should exchange phone numbers. Hang out sometime.”

“I think we’re okay,” I broke it to her, “You’ve kind of bothered us enough tonight, don’t you think?”

As she finally took the hint, John let out a laugh, adding to our running bet, “Told you she’d come back.”

“She was really aggressive this time.”

John laughed. “You think?”

Sure, Courtney was desperate. But she was also an easy lay. She would have slept with John that night. Hell, why was John not choosing her? I liked him but I wasn’t going home with him. Truthfully, I hadn’t even made my intentions that clear. The closest we got to exchanging saliva was splitting a beer and a tamale. Courtney lingered for a bit, eyeing me up bitterly, but defeated, finally left.

I found my friends and said goodbye. Nick reappeared, drenched in sweat, raving about a dance party in the VIP room he’d stumbled upon. As I hugged Nick goodbye,

John insisted he walk me to my car. On the walk, we mused about going to the Blue Room together, scoring free drink chips, and introducing me to good country music. There was the possibility of a kiss as we approached my car.

But I broke our spell, and confessed something I hadn't told him. Hours before, it hadn't seemed important, but now, suddenly faced with actually liking him, wanting to date him, it did. "I'm leaving LA soon," I told him.

"No," His face fell, "How soon is soon?"

"A few weeks."

"A few weeks? You can't leave."

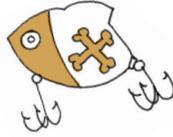
I shrugged. "I hope I can stay." Truthfully, since the moment I met him the only thing I wanted to do was stay. "If I get a job here, I'll stay."

As I climbed into my car, the Johnny Cash in him gave me a cool nod, a gentlemanly gesture. The Yosemite Sam in him didn't give a damn, took a stab, and asked when he could see me again.

Had I let her, Courtney could have built rapport with John too. Instead, she made herself a nuisance with her lame remarks, lighter thievery, and stalker tendencies. She wanted attention but my presence created a sense of urgency and forced her to be much bolder than she probably would have otherwise. She might have been a good-looking girl but her persistence made her look desperate. All I needed to do was stay in the situation and remain calm. I refrained from resorting to jealousy, anger or desperation myself. At one point, I even suggested that John dance with her. To which he was horrified. Honestly, she brought us closer together. We bonded over our common 'enemy'.

If you want to know, I did move to LA permanently

two months after that night. I hoped to see John again, but, alas, it never worked out. Not to say I didn't try. But that's a whole other unrelated story.



“I REALLY LIKE YOU,” AND WHAT OTHER THINGS NOT TO SAY.

The last thing a guy wants to hear is that your star signs are compatible.

That he’s The One.

Or that you’ve already named your kids Max and Madison and picked out a house in Topanga Canyon.

There are certain topics that you will want to avoid when first meeting a guy. The last thing you want to do is raise red flags or appear to be saying, “I’m chasing you because I desperately want you.” Guys want that challenge, remember, so even if you really like a guy, don’t show all your cards.

Your intention is to create interest, so he asks you out again. If he brings up some of these red flag topics, you’ll need to be prepared and strategically find ways to avoid answering them directly. Don’t be dishonest. Instead, present yourself in the best light. As a laid back, fun and flirtatious

girl. A cool girl so to speak.

Kelly met a guy at a bar.

He complimented her dress and then said, "You look beautiful. Do you have a boyfriend?"

Kelly had just gone through a horrible breakup and moved to Atlanta to start over. She was honest, "No." She paused. "Definitely no." she clarified, flattered first that this gorgeous guy was hitting on her and two, wanting to make it very clear that she was available.

"Why do you say that?" he asked.

She opened up to him. "I was dating a guy, but he broke up with me."

A few minutes later he made up a lame excuse, ended the conversation and left without asking for her number.

Kelly wanted to know what she did wrong.

"He didn't need to know that you got dumped." I told her.

"I was just being honest. He wanted to know if I was single."

I advised her, "You don't have to answer every question thrown your way. Instead, you could have dodged the question and said, 'I haven't met the right person yet' or 'I just moved to Atlanta, so I'm really new here.'"

Check Your Baggage

Meeting someone new isn't the time to air all your baggage. Or regale a guy with your heartbreaking memoir. When I'm nervous I have a tendency to talk a lot and have to consciously stop myself. A guy doesn't need to know I

hate my roommate, or that I just got disengaged (that's the opposite of engaged, by the way, if you're wondering). Instead, make a point to pay attention to what a guy is talking about and use your newfound knowledge to ask thoughtful questions that matter to him. The last thing you want to do is sound damaged, desperate, self-absorbed; or dominate the conversation and bore him with a long-winded saga.

Watch Your Attitude

Don't be rude. One of my guy friends told a girl he owned an expensive car and she replied with, "Thank God, because I don't do poverty." Another friend told me about a girl who referred to the bartenders as 'the help.' Watch what you say, even if you are attempting to be funny or sarcastic. First impressions like these send up the warning flags. Men don't want to date a mean, gold digger.

Also, having a pessimistic or cynical attitude sets a negative tone from the get go. Think about it: what guy wants to ask a girl out who is already whining, "this city sucks," or complaining that "all men want is sex?"

Keep Your Past in the Past

This means no ex talk. Everything from brief mentions to full on antidotes. Keep words like "we" and "our" out of the conversation. Watch for incidental references like, "When WE went on vacation to Hawaii last summer." No guy wants to conjure images of someone's ex on an exotic locale screwing her brains out.

Don't use stories of hooking up with lots of men either to make you appear more desirable. Your Florida Spring Break extravaganza might be interesting but no guy inter-

ested in you wants to think about you sleeping with loads of men after a foam party.

Don't mention ex's in explanations or in comparisons either. For example, I'm a huge Cincinnati Bengals fan because of my ex-boyfriend. Strategically I've learned to leave this tidbit of information out of explanations. For instance, if a guy inquires, "You're from Wisconsin, how are you a Bengals fan?" I could answer, "My ex-boyfriend is from Cincinnati and got me really into them." Rather, I omit the ex from the equation and tackle this one from a different angle. I happen to have a childhood story that puts my fandom in a better light. I'll say, "I became a Bengals fan back in third grade. Do you remember those sundae helmets at Baskin Robbins? I chose a Bengals one. I mean, it was the coolest helmet. Tiger stripes? Duh. I made all my stuffed animals wear it. Now it fits perfectly on a beer pint glass."

Remember, You're Not a Couple Yet

Future-talk is the kiss of death. Not only are you completely giving yourself away and killing all the mystery, but you're rushing ahead with a false assumption that this guy even wants to go out with you.

"We'd have the cutest kids."

"Gemini and Libra is a perfect match."

"Hi, are you my soul mate?"

Statements like these will send him running for the hills screaming. Shy away from any topic an astrologer might cover. Don't bring up relationships, kids or marriage. Not even to ask him what type of relationship he wants. Or if he just got out of a breakup. Nope. Too early. Get him interested first.

This next story demonstrates what I call the 'We Syndrome'. When you're in a relationship, everything goes from 'I' to 'we.' Sometimes when we get out of relationships, we're still left using the residual 'we.' Also, as girls, when we get excited we sometimes like to jump ahead. You know what I'm talking about, those little fantasies that pop up in your head. But don't start planning cute movie and meatloaf night just yet. Come on back to reality.

Remember, even though the conversation is going well, you just met. In his head, he's not wondering if you're The One, he's still deciding whether he wants to ask you out. Don't scare him away by assuming that since you hit it off, you will have future plans. By doing this, you're acting interested. Make him WONDER if he'll have future plans. Make him wonder if you're really that interested in him. Then he'll work to get you.

I've told you I've made mistakes. Here's a train wreck you can learn from:

I met Andy gambling at the horse track for a Maker's Mark Kentucky

Derby party. My friends went for the booze. My motivation was the Great Gatsby costume theme. What can I say? I look pretty stellar in a beaded flapper dress and hacking my virgin lungs out on a borrowed Camel placed ever so daintily in one of those Audrey Hepburn-style cigarette holders.

**Make a guy
WONDER if he'll
have future plans.
Make him wonder
if you're really
that interested in
him. Then he'll
work to get you.**

A week prior, I ended things with a band manager who said 'I love you' on our first date and mapped out our future together in Topanga Canyon, complete with an all-glass house, twins, dog and mid-century modern furniture.

So sue me for having a skewed view of coupledness when I met Andy.

Andy's suit looked like it belonged to a pastor and his sunglasses were eighties wayfarers. I doubt he quite grasped the Gatsby era, yet it helped that he owned his own Maker's Mark barrel and with the barrel came a stack of nifty Maker's Mark business cards with just his name and the words 'Maker's Mark Ambassador' printed on them.

Andy handed me one of these special cards upon meeting me. The next words out of my mouth were something like, "Badass." I instantly liked him.

Our conversation began around the Derby but took a detour when a plate of finger food passed and he told me about an infomercial he'd seen the night before.

"It's the most genius invention." He pulled up the gadget's sales video on his cell phone.

Trongs was a small tripod that you gripped with your index finger, middle finger and thumb. The infomercial showcased a table of dowdy Midwesterners ranging from age eight to eighty at a rundown Chuck E. Cheese enjoying a mountain of buffalo hot wings together. 'Chopsticks on Steroids' was the tagline. Your fingers stay clean was their gimmick.

Andy exclaimed, "It's totally a reverse way of thinking."

"They could use a better name," I critiqued.

"I could totally see them at restaurants."

"Yeah. It could be a new trend. Imagine them in a

sushi restaurant. Oh my God! Let's open our own sushi restaurant around Trongs. We could get them in really cool colors like silver. Not that horrible bright red color" I motioned towards the red Trongs advertised on his phone's screen. "Everything else in the restaurant could be sparse. Or wait, maybe we have trees and wood benches. Add some natural tones." I was on a role. "Where would we open it? Maybe downtown? Or Hollywood? The Atwater neighborhood could be cool. There's not a lot of sushi spots there."

The horse race started, saving me from myself. After the race, Andy told me about his job working as an animation project manager for Disney.

"I love Disney. I used to stalk the guy dressed up as Robin Hood around Disney World." Then I asked, "What's your all-time favorite cartoon?"

"Looney Tunes for sure. I love the Roadrunner Wiley Coyote stuff."

"Oh my God! Me too!"

"I always wanted the coyote to win," Andy said.

"Yes! Exactly! I hated the Roadrunner. And what was up with Wiley using all that ACNE stuff? You'd think he would have switched brands since ACNE was so faulty."

"I always thought it would be funny to make posters of the Roadrunner losing and hang them up around town. None of my friends will do it with me."

"Let's do it together! Let's go late at night and wheat paste posters up! We'll be partners in crime."

Andy grinned. "We'd so get busted."

"Even if we get busted it would be hilarious. Okay, so we're opening the sushi place and now we're hanging wheat posters. Where do you live? Where should we hang the posters?"

"I have a condo in Echo Park."

"That's cool, a condo. Lucky. I'm in Silver Lake. We're neighbors. Do you ever go to that bar The Gold Room?"

"Sometimes."

"I feel like it has to be the second bar of the night. You have to be drunk enough to not detect the piss smell. You know what? We should hang out in our neighborhood sometime. Maybe go to the Gold Room? We should exchange numbers."

"Yeah, sure."

"I can't do anything this next week though. I'm going to New Orleans for my birthday."

"What day is your birthday?"

"May 11th."

"What?" Andy's face contorted. "No."

"Yeah, May 11th, what's wrong with that?"

"We have the same birthday." He shook his head in disbelief. "I've never met anyone with the same birthday."

"I've only met one other person and he was my doctor but he only blinked half the amount compared to a normal person. I'm not sure why I said that. That's not relevant."

"This is just crazy. What are the chances?"

"This is like fate! Wait, how old are you going to be?"

"Twenty-four."

"Oh boy."

"Why, how old are you going to be?"

"Um, ah, thirty-four."

"No way! I thought you were like twenty-five."

"Yeah, I'm a, ah, little bit older. That's ok with you"

though, right? That's not too old. I usually date younger guys, but I just got out of a relationship with a guy who was a band manager who was thirty-nine."

Here not only did I 'we' poor Andy, but I mentioned my ex-boyfriend, and alluded to our meeting as fate. Yikes.

Don't Give Yourself Away

When you first meet, never ask a guy if he likes you. Got that?

And absolutely never tell him that you like him.

Both these statements make you appear too interested. Guys might tell you they don't want to play games. The truth is, you need to play hard to get. After meeting you, a guy needs to still wonder if he's got a chance. If you lay all your cards on the table, you are no longer a challenge. Guys lose interest in anything too easy. If you want him to work for you, keep your feelings unknown.

Don't Get Too Opinionated

Lastly, avoid absolute statements. Anything that makes you seem judgmental or uncompromising like: I would never move to New York, I would never give up my last name, I hate animals, I hate reggae, or I hate the beach. These are opinions you can share later when you actually get to know one another.

I'll leave you with two stories.

Drunk after a rodeo, my friend Rebecca hooked up with a bull rider. His tasseled leather jacket was bedazzled. His jeans looked painted on. She rode him all night like a

cowgirl.

Awaking the next morning, she nuzzled into his chest and mumbled, "You're so hot. Thank God you don't have any tattoos. They're so tacky."

He hoisted himself up, revealing in the morning light his rippling abs, broad chest, and muscular arms scrawled in ink.

"Whelp, guess I won't see you again," Rebecca groaned, yanked the covers over her head, rolled over, and went back to sleep.

I had yet to be invited upstairs at their fraternity and now Frank, the fraternity president, was inviting me upstairs to see his room. We stepped over girls and guys lounging with Silo cups on the stairwell. On the third floor, you could still hear the cheers and thumping of the bass from the basement party. Downstairs my sorority sisters were dancing in the lake of beer and guzzling spiked wop while they screamed out the lyrics to Salt N' Pepper.

Upstairs, I teetered down the hall and Frank grabbed my hand to steer me into his bedroom. He shut his door behind us. Taped to the back of the door was a Goo Goo Dolls poster. The boy named Goo smiled back at me. Glancing around his room, Frank's single bed wasn't visible under the heap of dirty clothing. He had enough tuna and Raisin Bran to last till the end of the semester. His electric guitar was dusty, but his Green Bay Packers chair worn in.

He took a seat in the Packers chair, reclined back, and yanked my hand. I tripped on a rug and ended up in his lap. This prompted a make out session.

Creeping open my eyes, that darn little Goo stared at me from the poster across the room. "I used to love the Goo

Goo Dolls." I commented, trying to find common ground.

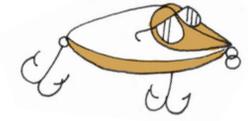
Frank asked, "What type of music do you like?"

Still at the point in my life when I was seeking male validation, I groped for a profound, cool fact to impress him. Although my Walkman currently rotated between Britney Spears and Aqua.

Yet, I surmised, anything was better than AC/DC played at ear piercing volume on repeat. My poor best friend Hannah and I had been subjected to her roommate's latest rock obsession for the past three weeks. Every time I was in their room, all I heard was 'Thunderstruck.' On top of that, Hannah's room always stank because her roommate stored her hockey equipment under her bed and her dinner of cheese whiz and crackers had gathered quite the colony of fruit flies. Hannah escaped to my room. My roommate giving 'back massages' to her boyfriend in her bunk was much preferred to AC/DC's screeching vocals.

"I like everything." I told Frank now, adding my new opinion with conviction, "Except AC/DC. I HATE AC/DC."

That's when I finally glanced up to Frank's ceiling. There wasn't a spec of ceiling visible as the entire thing was pasted over with AC/DC posters.



MEN WANT TO HAVE SEX: ONE-NIGHT STANDS MADE EASY

Men want to have sex. They want to have sex all the time. It is far easier than you think to hook up with a guy. Guys are the ones that have to worry if they are getting laid. As a girl, if you want to have sex tonight, you can have it. Sometimes women forget this, but we are the ones with the power. We control who gets sex and who doesn't.

It might be easy to get a guy into bed. But it's a whole lot harder to get a relationship out of a guy who you've had a one-night stand with.

Let's reiterate this: A one-night stand isn't going to become a relationship.

Just because you sleep with a man, doesn't mean he cares about you. Even mind-blowing sex isn't going to make him have deeper emotional feelings towards you. Men sep-

arate physical and intellectual attraction. A man can be physically attracted to you, have amazingly passionate sex with you, without ever having any emotional intentions.

Now I know you're going to argue that some friend of a friend's sister met a guy, they hooked up the first night they met, fell madly in love, had a big wedding, the dog, the kids, the house with mid-century modern furniture, and everything worked out peachy. Sure, these stories exist. But, apparently, so does Big Foot.

I've asked a lot of men, I've listened to radio talk shows hosted by Ryan Seacrest and read boatloads of dating books on the subject.

I've reanalyzed my own series of one-night encounters to try argue the counter point. Still my conclusion remains the same.

Men don't respect a woman as much if she has a one-night-stand with him.

First, he's wondering if this woman does this kind of thing all the time. He's categorizing you as the kind of girl

Even mind-blowing sex isn't going to make a guy have deeper emotional feelings towards you. Men separate physical and intellectual attraction. A man can be physically attracted to you, have amazingly passionate sex with you, without ever having any emotional intentions.

he can put on his 'good time' list. Not a girl he'd consider seriously.

If a man is going to consider you seriously, he wants to know that you are considering him seriously, that you have really pinpointed what about him is special. Men like to believe that you selected them out of all the others because of the qualities that make them unique. After a one-time encounter, you can hardly know anyone. So obviously he can deduce it's not really about him.

Mostly, a one-night stand kills the pursuit. To a man, there is nothing more prized than something he has to work for, wait for, and struggle to get it. If you jump into the sack right away, you're too easy a catch, you aren't even requiring him to date you. There's no struggle, therefore, no chase. You're no longer a challenge to him, so you're no longer as interesting.

If a man really likes you and sees you as something long-term, he will be willing to wait. That being said, if you want something long-term, I suggest making a man wait for sex. (Sorry, fellas.)

Don't get me wrong, I'm one-hundred percent behind the fun fling. If that's what you want. All I'm saying is, evaluate what you want beforehand. Look at the way a guy might perceive you before you jump into bed. No matter what smooth lines he's feeding you, if he's leaping in without knowing you and the things that make you special, he's ONLY physically attracted to you, so be warned.

No Strings Attached

Alrighty then, now that the after school special has come to a close, if you aren't looking for a relationship, just

want to have some fun, play the field, or even take up a fuck buddy, go for it. I couldn't talk about meeting men without talking about passionate adventures with handsome mysterious strangers.

I think it's a good time to share my friend Tricia's pickup story.

Tricia's story begins after a great date with a guy she really liked named Dev. On their way back to her apartment, she practically broke into a skip. Wine was chilling in the refrigerator. She'd cued up Marvin Gaye. Even the massage oil was discretely hidden at her bedside.

They drank no wine. Marvin couldn't get past the first notes of 'Sexual Healing' before Dev slapped on a condom and tackled her onto the bed. Dev probably had never seen massage oil or used the word lovemaking. Tricia blinked at him, but went along with it.

He pinned her down. Her headboard slammed against the wall in rapid succession. Boom, boom, boom, boom, sounding like rounds of a machine gun going off. It was a race to get his sperm inside her.

"Can we slow it up a bit," she tried.

"Sure." He gave her a two second remission before ramming her harder without looking at her in the face.

Her high hopes for a sensual romantic evening chipped away like the paint of her bedroom wall.

When Dev was through, he collapsed with a groan, rolled over, and started snoring loudly. Tricia glanced at him a few times. He didn't move so she hoisted herself up, padded to the bathroom and masturbated. Still not quite satisfied, she plunked back down on her side of the bed. Dev continued to snore. She yanked the covers out from under him so she'd

have her fair share. With a little grunt, she settled in for a sleepless night.

The next morning Tricia didn't put on a pot of coffee. There was no talk of breakfast. Or round two for that matter. Tricia held the door open at eight in the morning and waited as Dev stumbled out. She had the door closed before he could say goodbye.

All day her anger rose. She'd put so much stock into this Dev guy. He'd been so handsome, smart, funny, and taken her on proper dates to nice restaurants. Yet he had no clue what she wanted, and seemed too set on rabbit fucking to ask.

By evening the situation had swirled around her head so many times she needed a drink to calm her down. At the bar where her friend Ian worked, she sneered over her pity beer at the happy couples on dates.

"Bet they don't have machine gun sex," she grumbled to Ian.

"The date went that well, huh?" Ian joked.

The beer had helped only slightly. The remaining depression made her insides clench.

Something needed to change. "That's it." Tricia declared and stabbed her index finger at Ian. "Next guy. The next guy that walks in through that door;" She pointed to the bar's entrance, "I'm going to fuck. I have to erase last night's bad sex."

At that moment, a tall man walked through the door. His head was shaved. His t-shirt fit so snug she could make out his great pecs.

Tricia's eyes bulged. Her body spasmed with desire. God, she needed good sex and lucky for her, the next guy happened to be quite good looking, very good looking. Sex

god status.

As the guy passed her, their eyes met. Her face flushed. He looked away first, smiled shyly and stepped into an opening at the bar to wait for Ian to serve him.

*Ian's back was turned as he poured beer at the tap-
per. Tricia took the opportunity. She bolted from her seat and
walked up beside the guy.*

*She scanned the menu board for a millisecond be-
fore commenting boldly, "You should get the Baying Hounds
Brown Cascadian."*

*The guy turned around, his eyebrows pinched. "Oh,
should I?" he asked, "Why's that?"*

*"Because that's what I'm having." Tricia lifted her
beer and drained it in one gulp.*

The guy laughed. "Do you want another?" he offered.

*"No." She motioned her glass in Ian's direction.
"I'm getting them for free from Ian."*

"Maybe you could help me get a drink from Ian?"

*"Maybe?" she said, then yelled to Ian, "Hey, can you
help this guy next and get me another Brown Cascadian."*

*With that she flashed him one last smile before spin-
ning around and returning to her bar stool. The guy stood
bewildered, staring at her, like he'd never seen a girl what?
Approach him and walk away? Order Brown Cascadian?*

*The spell broke when Ian interrupted, "What are you
having, man?"*

*With his Brown Cascadian, Tricia noticed he took a
seat at a booth in back with two other guys. When he got up to
use the restroom a half hour later, Tricia followed him. Two
long lines filed out of the single stalled Ladies' and Mens'.
The ATM located between the two bathrooms had been out
of order for the past few weeks. Using this knowledge to her*

advantage, she played dumb.

She swiped her card although the screen was blank.

“Come on,” she whined, loud enough so he could hear.

By her third attempt the cute guy remarked, “I don’t think it’s working.”

“Yeah, I actually knew that.”

His nose crinkled and his lips edged upwards. “What?”

Her heart beat quickly. She clenched her sweaty palms. Would this work?

“I didn’t need money. I just wanted an excuse to come talk with you.”

He bit his lip and smiled. “Really? Well, I’m Ben.”

“I’m Tricia, the girl that had really bad sex last night.”

He’d taken a sip of his beer and spit it out. “What?” He stepped out of line, intrigued.

“Wait. What do you mean, really bad sex?”

“The guy I slept with had no clue what he was doing. He fucked me like a machine gun.”

The guy was grinning in amusement but shaking his head in bewilderment.

“I need to have good sex and now.” Tricia told him. “You look like the kind of guy who could help me. Are you any good?”

He smiled. “I’m definitely good.”

“I don’t know. The guy last night thought he was good and look what happened. I have to be sure. I can’t have what happened last night happen again.”

“I can assure you, you’ll be satisfied.”

She twisted her lips and acted as if she were debating

this. "I don't know. Only if you're positive. I'm willing to test this out in the bathroom. Maybe have a quickie to make sure you're up to my standards."

"You can't be serious."

"I'm always serious when it comes to good sex. So do we need a test run?"

"I don't think that's necessary." He took a step closer to her. "I promise, you won't regret it."

"Oh and just so you know, if you agree, this is all about me. After the horrible sex I had last night, you'll have to make it up by giving me everything I want and I won't give you anything in return. I won't go down on you, just so you know. But you'll have go down on me. Got that? Are you okay with that?"

"I'm okay with that."

"So you're willing to do this with me?"

"Let's do it." He hesitated a second, "So, should I buy you a drink first?"

"I don't need a drink, do you?"

He chugged the remainder of his beer, slammed it down on a nearby table, forgoing the bathroom. "Let's go," and they walked out of the bar together.

I don't know about you, but I'm completely envious of Tricia's story. So much I might even have to steal Tricia's 'bad sex excuse.'

What can we learn from Tricia? First, she was very confident in her entire approach. Her opener was a bit mundane: they talked about beer. But she brought some sass with her decisiveness. He could assume she was a little dominant and feisty, which are both qualities of a confident woman. She also approached him first, but then walked away. Re-

member Push Pull, she created sexual tension. Just when Ben thought she liked him, she walked away. Had she stuck around she could have looked clingy. Instead, she was unpredictable. When he offered to buy her a drink, she turned him down. Upon first meeting, he was definitely a bit intrigued by her.

I love that Tricia's proposition challenged Ben's bedroom skills. Guys are very competitive. They all think they are sex gods whether they actually are or not. Tricia made it very clear that Ben was being pitted against her date last night. She knew no guy was going to admit to being shitty in bed. Ben's ego made him want to prove himself to Tricia. He wanted to 'win' the competition. By doing this, Tricia was able to turn the tables. Although she begun the chase, in the end, Ben was pursuing her. He was trying to convince Tricia that he was up to her standards. She now had the power to select him or not.

I love Tricia's approach because it's direct, but also flirtatious. She wasn't asking the guy straight out 'go home with me.' She was asking if he could solve her problem. If he was up to the task of making her evening.

Even better, she established herself as a girl with her own life and own agenda. She wasn't going to be a needy girl that fawned all over him. She was laying down the groundwork from the get-go. The one-night stand was going to be all about her. If he signed up, he had to adhere to her rules. I'll let you in on a little secret: sometimes nothing is hotter to men than a woman in control.

Ben didn't lie, the sex was unbelievable. Tricia even went down on him. You know, just as a tiny thank you. Tricia was shocked to later learn that Ben was dating a girl at that time. But for a guy, propositions like Tricia's don't come

along every day. *Carpe Diem*, Ben seized the day.

Point being, asking for a one-night stand shouldn't be a scary task. The guy is almost always going to say yes. I mean, a no-strings-attached night of passion? You're making a guy's day. Depending on the guy's track record, maybe his year. He'll probably question if what's happening is even real, just like Ben did when he asked Tricia if she was serious.

He won't be able to believe his luck. A dude will be blown away with your boldness, and at the same time flattered and excited that you chose him over all of the others. Not many women are brave, voice what they want, and go after it. As payback, he'll bring his A-game to the bedroom. Like Tricia's man, he can't be lazy, he's got to justify that you chose right in selecting him.

One-night stands also give you the freedom to be adventurous and kinky, whereas you might be more reserved and hesitant if you're in a serious relationship. With one-night stands you don't have to worry what a guy will think of you the next morning. You won't be there that long. And you can be a little selfish if you want to. Remember, the dude thinks he's won the jackpot.

Fuck Buddies

Fuck buddies take one-night stands to the next level. In a fuck buddy arrangement, no one asks for anything more out of each other than in a physical sense. Fuck buddies are magical and I'll tell you why.

A fuck buddy boosts your energy, self-confidence, and optimism after a dry spell. Want to feel instantly sexy and like you can take on the world? Have a guy on speed

dial that blows your mind. Sated, you won't walk around in a sex crazed haze. Which will allow you to go out in the world with a clear (non desperate, non needy) head and find a man you really want to date.

Recovering from a breakup, a fuck buddy speeds the healing process. Between mowing down pints of ice cream and sobbing through *The Notebook*, until you're ready to go out to dinner in something other than you're pajamas, a fuck buddy is your saving grace. You need to get that fuck-wit ex-boyfriend out of your head. You need to be reminded what an awesome, passionate, sexy individual you are.

With a fuck buddy, you can explore your sexuality. If you're ex felt uncomfortable trying new things, ask your fuck buddy to give it whirl. You want a guy to choke you? Spank you? Dominate you? Wear a funny costume (Dude, I don't know what floats your boat?)? Go for it!

Sex with a fuck buddy is pure passion because there are no feelings involved. And after sex with a fuck buddy, you can peacefully go about your day. None of that pesky drama, wondering if he'll call. No overanalyzing with girlfriends over tapas. The point is, you can get what you want and try things because that's what this person is for, fantasy sex.

The problem is, most women get attached to the men they sleep with. Blame it on hormones or biology, but it's just the way we are programmed. Instinctually we're looking for a mate, and as the nurturing one of the two sexes, we tend to get emotionally invested. So before you charge off to find a fuck buddy at your local bar, truck stop, or DQ, let's take a pause. I'm sorry, I promised the warnings were done, and now I'm going to break that promise. I'm getting attached to you guys, so I don't want to see you get hurt.

In order for a fuck buddy situation to work, neither one of you can become attached emotionally.

Got that? Feelings? Nada. Future? Nothing beyond multiple orgasms.

You cannot develop a crush on the handsome, sex god you are sexting, sleeping with, talking dirty with, kissing for hours on end, giving blow jobs and God knows else what. Nope, you cannot fall for this guy. Even if he's really good in bed. Even if he's a

In order for a fuck buddy situation to work, neither one of you can become attached emotionally.

dead ringer for Channing Tatum. Even if after sex you laugh and have amazing pillow talk. And equally, this guy can't fall for you. If there are any feelings exchanged either way, the arrangement falls apart. Someone gets attached and invites the other person to a movie, or dinner, or a wedding, while the other person is still writing texts like: "Can I come over and fuck you." Someone ends up eating Ben and Jerry's and watching *The Notebook* (or...*Rudy*).

A fuck buddy isn't your boyfriend. They are not even someone you're dating. They are someone you use to get off. But the arrangement is equal. They are using you too. Not to say, they are not you're 'friend.' You talk about things in your lives as a part of foreplay, you cuddle after sex and play the game of 'make believe.' You might pick up some random facts about their lives, like they're from Texas and have a brother. But none of this intimacy matters. You aren't creating a connection. The deal ends when the condom comes off.

If you're comfortable with this arrangement, proceed.

I've had one long term fuck buddy Richard that worked out spectacularly, that is until I realized he was getting attached. The cues emerged slowly. First, he showed up at my birthday party. Then he wanted me to meet his friends. Why on earth would I need to meet his friends? Next, he wanted me to take interest in his budding DJ career. Not exactly my thing and made more awkward since his DJ name was DJ Diamond Dick. The last straw was a call at ten on a Saturday morning to meet him outside his bedroom and in broad daylight to drink coffee and eat bean and cheese pupusas at the farmer's market. I actually met him, ordered an iced coffee, but abstained from the surely gassy after effects the pupusas would induce. I had high hopes that the pupusa excursion was just a ruse for a midday romp. Alas, as soon as he started reciting facts about my family I'd told him months earlier (to my defense, only to fill time during pillow talk), I realized it was time to end it. He thought we were a real couple on a real date.

Richard was some of the best sex in my life. A truly talented and gifted man for his small stature. The first time I saw the dude's cock, I flinched. My eyes bulged and in my head I was repeating, *Evie, don't react. Don't react. Pretend you've seen one this big.*

Still, as amazing as the sex was, there comes a time when you need to move on. Orgasm after orgasm, Richard helped me get over my ex. Although, I knew I wanted more than what our arrangement could offer me. Sex alone can only leave a girl feeling so satisfied. I wanted an emotional connection. According to my breakup timeline, I was ready for the next step, for a date, maybe an Italian dinner, possibly a boyfriend. I had to 'dump' Diamond Dick. But not before one last romp...

The background is a vibrant cyan blue. It is populated with several stylized, cartoonish illustrations of men in various poses, suggesting dancing or social interaction. The men are dressed in a variety of styles: one in a yellow hoodie and sunglasses, another in a yellow and black plaid shirt, one in a yellow jacket and tie, one in a yellow jacket holding a boombox, and one who is shirtless. The illustrations are scattered across the page, with some appearing to be cut off at the edges, creating a sense of a larger scene. The overall aesthetic is retro and energetic.

SECTION THREE:
Where to Meet Men



HASSLE YOUR LOCALS

The other day my college friend Kristin raised a plausible concern. “Yeah, it’s easy for you to go out and meet men. You live in a city. But I’m in bum fuck Iowa. In the suburbs.”

Kristin has got a point. Besides the appetizer specials, it’s not like her local TGI Fridays is bumping on a Friday night. Cruising her local dive, the fat, ex-high school quarterback isn’t exactly what she’d call an ‘option.’ In the last chapter, we discussed how to approach men. Let’s see how you can apply these skills even in a remote town populated with few male prospects such as the one Kristin lives.

If you aren’t sitting on your couch at home reading *Fifty Shades of Grey* and mouth-kissing your cat, you’re out some place you can meet men. If you live in a place with less obvious opportunities, you might have to get a bit more creative. I’ve lived in small towns in Wisconsin, medium-sized cities, and large metropolises. Sure, I meet some men while traveling. But I meet most of them within a ten-mile radius

of my home.

Here's a few:

I picked up a vegan cashier at Urban Outfitters.

I met a personal trainer at my gym. Unfortunately, he hadn't eaten a cookie in five years and I kind of like sugar.

I became quite familiar with a beautiful specimen with impeccable cheekbones folding his boxers at the laundry mat.

There's been more than a dozen waiters. Yes, even one that wore over twenty pieces of flair and served at TGI Fridays. That didn't end well though. Once I found a box of polaroids with over fifty different girls in compromising positions, I started the pros/cons list. He lived in a not so nice part of Milwaukee famous for its fried chicken and high crime. The first time I visited his apartment, a thicket of police tape wrapped around the whole complex. I made a mental note: if I ever return to this fine establishment, remember to bring a cleaver. When college put the kibosh on this bad boy becoming my future wife beater husband, he continued to stalk me and years later still called my parent's house. Free orders of loaded potato skins weren't worth the harassment.

I picked up a delivery guy unloading Bacardi. I never got any free rum out of the deal. But he did splurge and take me on a lovely dinner to the Olive Garden to eat unlimited soup and breadsticks with him and his mom.

There were a few joggers on my running route.

A pretentious whippersnapper that drank double shots of espresso at Starbucks.

Several times, I hit up the neighbors. In LA, I cornered the chipper fashion designer who rented the place below me. In Wisconsin, after a few late-night run-ins at our local market, I chatted up the Nordic DJ who lived next door. In New York, I befriended the gym rat graffiti artist a few doors down.

Wooin a sailboat owner and scoring a boat ride sounds like a gold digger's wet dream. A hot summer afternoon on campus, my friend Hannah and I walked down to the lake smelling like coconut tanning oil, dressed in two pieces and painted on jean shorts.

A blonde coifed man loitered on the dock beside a sailboat painted with cow spots. His skin glowed, his teeth shined, and his collared shirt sported one of those little alligators. We made a beeline for him. After chit chatting on sailing – something we knew nothing about – he invited us to join him and friends for an afternoon on the lake.

Really? Ding dong! We imagined sunning ourselves on the deck, the boys spinning wild sailing tales while we sipped mimosas. Little did we know we were in for a treat.

As soon as the boat left the safety of the dock, our prim host corralled the entire group at the center of the boat, commanded we close our eyes, and then commenced a full on sailing lesson. He grilled us on which direction the wind came from. Made us fiddle with ropes and ties. Taught us terms like 'port' and 'starboard.' Which he actually

tested us on.

Just when I thought he'd ease up and whip out the orange juice and champagne, he put me to work as the boat's 'grinder.' Despite this job's title, it failed to utilize any of my experience I picked up at the clubs on Spring Break. Instead, I had to crank a wheel with grunting force, which proved quite difficult in my flimsy bikini.

When a coast guard boat passed and the shirtless men aboard waved, Hannah and I eyed each other. We seriously considered jumping overboard and making a break for it.

Once, I picked up my eclectic car mechanic. I chose the car place solely for his attractive originality. I appreciated a man peddling about in a stately bowler hat, cropped slacks, and suspenders. For our date, he took me out to dinner. Over the salad course, he mentioned lackadaisically, "The air is poison." Let's just say that was the tip of the iceberg and the date went downhill after that. Naturally, I had to find a new car place.

Don't discount your local doctor or dentist office. Studs get sick and need their teeth cleaned too. I'd probably steer clear of the free clinics though.

Pet stores are amazing if you own a dog, cat or fire-bellied newt. Or even if you don't. You might own a squirrely little bugga some day? There's no reason not to troll the pet isle to see what your future 'best friend' might need. Or find a handsome pet owner who could also be your new best friend.

Transverse the grocery store aisles after work. Trader Joe's is packed with health-conscious, hip men who drink cheap wine and micro-brewed beer. Whole Foods is crawling with grade-A sausages with feet who have enough money to afford the outrageously priced organic kale and know what brie en croute is.

One time, my friend Hannah and I approached two strapping lads in the pasta aisle. We opened by asking them for recommendations on which tomato sauce they preferred. Soon our banter moved past pasta. A master of stealth, in aisle three I dumped a boatload of Magnum condoms in their cart. Hannah discretely added Depends in aisle eight. They caught us. By the produce section, we conducted cart races. A Thanksgiving turkey lent itself nicely to a game of keep-a-way.

The excursion ended with a duel make out session in the back parking lot while all our ice cream melted in our car's trunk.

Hannah and I dated the two friends for several months, until my guy broke down and started balling during sex. Although he had good taste in pasta sauce and a great Turkey throwing arm, he had some intimacy issues.

The plastic badge pinned to his chest filled me in on his name, but besides our conversations revolving around the items I purchased at Whole Foods (let's be honest, mainly wine), I knew little else about the bashful cashier with the nest of dark hair and firm biceps. I'd been purposely checking out in Ruxin's lane for two weeks before mustering the courage to finally ask him out.

Whole Foods carries these big, fat, buttery choco-

late chip cookies. I bought one and wrapped it up in a separate paper bag. Before entering Ruxin's lane, I scribbled my name and phone number on the bag. After he scanned my items, I handed him the bag with the cookie.

"This is for you, actually." I said.

His cheeks flushed crimson and he scrunched his face up. "What? You're kidding."

"No." I smiled, and raised an eyebrow. "You should call me sometime."

And then I gathered my groceries and walked out.

Ruxin called the very next day. My friends creatively nicknamed him 'Cookie Boy.'

On our first date, we watched my DVD of Sideways. For a seemingly shy boy, we only got past the opening credits before he tackled me on my bed.

I can't remember exactly why things ended. All I know is he borrowed my copy of Sideways at the end of that first date and never returned it. Bastard. Maybe I was too much of a giver?

One of the best recommendations I can give you is to tour your neighborhood. Forgo the headphones and go for a stroll. Borrow a friend's dog as an excuse.

When I first moved to LA, I strapped a leash to my roommate's pit bull mix Bubba and trekked up and down the hilly side streets. Bubba benefited; he lost close to twenty pounds with all the exercise. I benefited; no guy could resist a big boy like Bubba outfitted with a badass spiked collar. Don't worry, Bubba was a lover. And so was his temporary walker.



SHOULD I ASK OUT MY INSTAGRAM FOLLOWER?

“Is it weird if I ask out one of my Instagram followers?” This was the question I posed to my friends on a Monday evening.

I’d reached a low point. A full week passed with no word from a guy Scott I had started seeing. At a Dodger game I threw myself at my rockstar crush. “

You’re very handsome,” I blurted out.

“You’re too kind,” he politely nodded.

Desperate times had arrived.

Transientthoughts was an unknown follower of mine on Instagram, the social media photo-sharing site. Usually my random followers were spam bots and easy to spot. No, I didn’t have a friend named BigBoobs22 who wore skanky skirts like we were partying on Spring Break, thank you very much.

Transientthoughts seemed way more legit than Big-Boobs22. I didn’t know his personal opinion on slutty beach wear, but at the very least he seemed like a real person. He

began following me online right after my rockstar crush's band began touring, and being the groupie that I am, I'd traveled across the country to document their performances for all eight people that probably cared. Lo and behold, after each post, there was Transientthoughts. A little heart marked his presence in my life as he 'liked' a picture.

As 'curious' only begins to describe my personality, seconds after my 'stalker' first approved a picture, of course I clicked to his profile. Unfortunately Instagram employs an annoying privacy setting and Transientthoughts, although all eager-beaver to voyeur everyone else's whereabouts, wasn't granting access to his life as easily.

Squinting hard at his tiny profile photo, I gathered he was in his 30's. His meticulously gelled dark hair matched his brooding eyes. A skinny red tie stood in stark contrast against his pressed dress shirt. He either toiled in the financial district or worshipped American Psycho's Patrick Bateman. Below his picture he'd listed a link to his Facebook page and his real name, Rob Hendricks.

I paused for a moment, feeling myself getting sucked in. My head spun with the possibilities of who lied behind the private curtain. In the end I hesitated too long, shook my head, and clicked away.

It took me ten months to revisit his profile. By this point, he'd liked over twenty of my pictures online. He'd even gone so far as to write comments on a few of my photos that sounded like rhetorical passages from poetry books I'd been forced to read in college. Easily, my friends mistook this stranger for one of my quirky, more pretentious acquaintances.

To me, my finger hovering over the button that would request access to his profile, he was alluring. Rob could be

anyone: an artist, a musician, a friend of my favorite band...a serial killer?

Ready to solve a good mystery, I took the dare and clicked the 'follow' button.

Within forty-eight hours Rob granted me access to his life online. Considering his picky taste in photography, artistically, he lacked any sense of composition. Angles and lighting didn't come into play when shooting his take-out Lo Mein. A blurry image of a pug failed to showcase his mastery of basic camera skills.

While in my selfies, I smiled and posed with friends to prove I was not an ugly loner, Rob utilized the Edward Cullen Twilight approach. His deep stare drew me in and his taunting smirk reminded me of my weakness for the moody, goth boys of my youth.

From his portfolio of photos I gathered he lived in a complex in Los Angeles with a modest pool and generic layout, he owned an ornery pug, we both liked the same music, he lost twenty pounds over the last year since moving from Chicago to LA, and, the awesome, but slightly unsettling bit, he liked to bake. A lot.

And I'm not talking about baking a crappy Betty Crocker box mix after getting baked. This guy stamped out Christmas cookies in shapes of wreaths and trees, slathered them with food coloring dyed green frosting, and topped them with rainbow sprinkles. Imagine homemade pies, chocolate mousses, and elaborate peanut butter cookies with dollops of frosting that only could have come from owning a frosting gun. I have to say, I was starting to wonder if we both weren't chasing my rockstar crush.

Calling our interaction a relationship would certify my spot in the looney bin. We didn't know each other. We'd

never met me.

Yet, our connection, invisible as the data floating through air caressed me deeply. His approval validated my life since I'd first moved to Los Angeles. Perhaps I'd found the male version of me, a kindred spirit, a superfan?

Once I established we lived in the same city, he was decently attractive, and we were obviously compatible (I mean we both had an affinity towards baked goods and dark soulful music), I decided to take our interaction to the next level. The biggest question boiled down to how I was going to go about meeting Rob in person.

My friends threw out advice that ranged the gamut. A guy friend suggested taking a sexy picture of myself holding a sign reading: '@Transientthoughts will you go out with me???' and posting it for all the world to see on the social media site. On the other end of the spectrum, my more conservative friend Ellen advised waiting until he liked something else of mine, which could take weeks, then biding an additional week after that to friend him on Facebook, and finally, maybe within the year, asking him out.

I'm certainly not that patient or that crazy, so I went for a more modest, but immediately gratifying approach. I messaged him the next day on Facebook:

Hi fellow band fan!

I figured I'd write you on here versus Instagram. Wanted to see if you'd like to grab a drink sometime since we both live in the same city!

Evie

Surely, I figured, he would be flattered. I mean, I was way less work than Match.com. And let's be honest, I'm fair-

ly decent looking and asking him for a drink out of the blue – how bad could that be?

Luckily, I didn't have to wait a year, only a half hour until Transientthoughts replied.

Hi Evie,

Were you at any of the band's shows? I saw both nights at the Fonda, and I saw when they were on Jimmy Kimmel Live and at Bootsy Bellows, or whatever that ridiculous place is called on Sunset.

I moved from Chicago last year in March, so I'm always looking for new friends out here with good taste in music. Do you like the Veils? They are playing at The Echo and I'm going with a bunch of friends. They are one of my favorite current bands and are really underrated and amazing live if you haven't seen them. If you aren't aware of them, my favorite album is *Nux Vomica* by them which is produced by Nick Launay who also produces Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds but all of their stuff is on Spotify...

This weekend I just saw Clint Mansell which was unbelievable. *Requiem for a Dream* is what inspired me to really want to do music scoring for film/TV as you can get away with being much more dramatic than you can in the confines of a pop song.

What do you do for work?

Hope you are well and having a good week.

Rob

Within seconds, I snatched up two tickets to the Veils show. I didn't know who would go with me, I hadn't even heard of the band, but I knew I had to meet this mysterious man who composed musical scores, who was as much a

superfan as me, and baked holiday themed confections. I gave myself a pat on the back for a job well done.

But I spoke too soon.

That night I sat down at my laptop to compose the perfect, smart and funny reply. I figured a few glasses of Sauvignon blanc would ease the tension and my wit would just flow out of me in wonderfully crafted sentences.

In my wine impaired mind, Rob's three paragraphs gave me license to write a small novel. I touched on my love of the band, music, my career over the past decade, and childhood growing up in Wisconsin. Endlessly I praised composers I'd never heard of. I researched the Veils, Nick Cave, and Morrissey and crafted what I felt at the time was a music review worthy of Rolling Stone.

The next day, I didn't get a reply.

Or the day after that.

The night of the Veils concert arrived and still my message was stuck there in my Facebook message cue, a nagging reminder that I'd been a little too eager. Honestly, I'd given him a lot of reading homework. Surely, that took time. And knowing my atrocious grammar (only made worse by the bottle of wine), I didn't have to guess why I never got a reply.

Arriving at the venue with my friend Ellen, I immediately recognized my Instagram follower. Not too many men gussied up in suits in the hipster neighborhood of Echo park. He stood by the bar, and at over six feet tall, towered over a tiny Asian girl beside him dressed in pleather.

I poked Ellen and motioned in his direction.

Ellen raised an eyebrow. Maybe noticing too the girl's cleavage spilling from her top. "Are you sure?"

"Positive." I nodded. "I'm going to go talk to him."

Ellen, ever the good wingwoman, reminded me, “You gotta show some skin. Jacket?” She held out her hand while I slipped off my coat, to reveal my sexy dress and high hold up stockings.

I made a beeline for Transientthoughts. “Rob?”

His face lit up in surprise. “Evie?”

I kept my conversation flirtatious and brief, wherein I gathered Rob was dating the Asian girl in pleather. Honestly, I couldn't remember her name after Rob introduced her and she might have spoken one word throughout the entire exchange. His back was turned to her as he spoke to me. She kept asking who Rob's favorite band was. Obviously, they must have had great rapport as a couple. But maybe the main thing they had in common was her largely exposed cleavage.

When I excused myself to get back to my friend, Rob insisted I stay and talk longer. But I reminded myself he hadn't replied to my message and simply ended the conversation with a smile and, “It was nice to meet you in person.”

After the show, Rob stalked me down. Pleather girl was lagging shortly behind. While she stood by mutely, Rob lamented about the band and reiterated how good it was to meet me.

“You're way better than her,” Ellen whispered to me after they left. “And too good for him.”

“He wasn't so bad.”

She deadpanned. “He looked like a serial killer.”

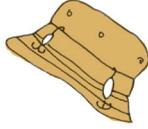
That's Ellen for you, always got my back.

The next morning, guess who got a message from Rob Hendricks at eight in the morning?

“Yep, now I bet you're wishing you took me up on that drink, huh, buddy.” I said to myself with a satisfied grin.

To my dismay, Rob and Pleather Girl are currently living their version of happily ever after with his pug named Clint, stuffing their faces with baked goods in his posh, swimming pool-adorned complex.

Rob and I remain friends, social media followers and fellow superfans. His Facebook posts continually supply me with the perfect, midday, off-color commentary. We reunited when the Veils returned to the Troubadour. He still 'likes' my artsy photography. This fall, we'll share beers and liner notes when our favorite band goes on the tour.



THE YES RULE

I don't know about you, but my friends have some pretty strange hobbies lurking under their seemingly normal exteriors. Because of this, I get some pretty oddball invitations at times. You can imagine the kind. I'll be sitting in my cube at work minding my own business, taking quizzes on BuzzFeed, when my co-worker Mary stops by and asks me if I'd be interested in going to a whale watching festival in a town hours away. She'll throw in the lure of a craft fair, as if this little kernel might sway my vote.

When I receive these bizarre invitations, I'll blink twice, thinking, why me? I don't see Mary asking Bill in accounting? Does Mary think I have some sort of whale fetish? Mary asks me because she knows I have a propensity for saying yes. She also knows I don't judge (Whale watching? Mary, you freak). OK, but only a little.

The reason I accept these invitations is the opportunity to meet new people in an otherwise untapped locale. The point is to leave your comfort zone. You've run through the pool of eligible bachelors. You've reluctantly started eyeing up the mediocre prospects (hmm, would I date a guy who

had a mole there?), when an opportunity to get out of Dodge and test your skills on an unsuspecting audience is magically thrown in your lap. I don't care if you have plans to watch 'Weekend at Bernie's' in your pajamas or dinner reservations at that trendy, new Asian fusion small plate spot with your gay best friend. Those normal activities can wait. You don't turn down the most obscure thing that (thank heavens) has come your way.

At first, I thought too that everyone at one of these events would be crazies, obviously obsessed with whatever thing we are going to see, like my friend. But for the most part, everyone I meet at these thingamajigs is just like me. A tagalong who got dragged to something like a lawn and garden show. They are doing their duty as a good friend too. We're there for moral support and easily distracted. "Oh, is that a beer tent over there behind the garden gnome stand? Come on, let's go check that out."

I've made saying 'yes' a way of life. I call it my YES Rule. Every time someone invites me to a new activity or event, the odder the better, I force myself to say yes. You can imagine my initial hesitation over attending a Declaration of Independence reading, signing up for line dancing lessons, and anything hosted at a venue without a Foursquare check-in. Or at the VFW community hall. According to my rule though, I cannot turn down the offer.

It isn't about the event being cool. Actually, it works to your advantage if your friend schlepps you to a completely uncool hoopla. Or cult cool extravaganza. Off-color activities offer the best stories. Right off the bat, there's the people watching. Have you ever been to a Renaissance Fair? A comic book convention? Ho! It's a conversation starter gold mine at those things. Approaching a guy in full Darth Vader

getup is a piece of cake. And seriously, who wants their meet cute to be at a boring place like Applebee's when you could kiss Darth in front of a cardboard Death Star whilst a slew of costumed Ewok fanatics mill about taking photos. That's making some memories, people.

Most of the events I attend are less extreme. My friends convince me to go to poetry readings, amateur comedy shows, book signings, mexican wrestling bouts, acoustic guitar performances, cooking classes, roller derby tournaments, days at the zoo, fashion shows, and panel discussions for TV programs I've never heard of. The cheesy Hollywood Star Tours in LA are a hoot. I put away more lobster rolls than I care to remember at the opening of Balcony Season in Portsmouth, Maine. I've been to a boat load of art gallery openings. And risked the warehouse part of the town for those underground DJ shindigs. In college, my friends coerced me into joining a Dodgeball league where I met and made out with a cute and funny guy who my friends nicknamed 'Frodo' (hmm, I think I might have had some judgey friends at the time).

The point is to put yourself in a new situation where you can meet new people that you wouldn't meet otherwise. Roadhouse concerts, just say yes. Old movies shown in cemetaries, again, say yes. A ferry that transports you to a remote island? Please take the ferry. Go watch your friend compete in a bike race, marathon or triathlon. The men are athletic and into quirky things like European football, cooking with organic produce, and designer coffee. Cumberland, Wisconsin's Rutabaga Fest is as if they corralled all the tanned and muscular men wearing plaid shirts and cowboy boots in the neighboring three counties. Come to think of it, attach a random season, nationality, animal, or vegetable with the word

‘fest’ and it is guaranteed to be good times. If it involves a lick of polka or people in lederhosen, it’s a don’t miss.

When planning a friend’s bachelorette party, another friend happened across something called the Firefighters Challenge. So instead of the average mani-pedi routine, our group of girls donned child-sized plastic firemen’s hats and watched as teams of handsome, suited up firemen competed in a heated, head-to-head relay which involved climbing a five-story tower, hoisting, chopping, dragging hoses and rescuing a ‘victim.’ A dynamic duo from Cincinnati calling themselves Shake ‘N Bake won the competition. Just as we were planning on leaving, I split off from our group and waltzed over to the winner’s tent to congratulate them. After dropping a bit of knowledge on the Cincinnati Bengals, the tall, strapping Shake was asking for my number. That evening the entire Cincinnati station joined our bachelorette bar crawl. Bake tossed the bachelorette over his shoulder like a rescue mission and carried her down Milwaukee’s Water Street. Let’s just say by bar two my tall drink of water was happily rewarded for the day’s bravery and valor.

When I think of carnivals and fairs I’m reminded of ‘80s bands I never realized warranted a reunion, 4H students making me feel bad about my meager childhood accomplishments, everything stinking of cow manure, and puking on the Graviton. I’ve also met a ton of guys who were great kissers and could win me Beta fish that died in about the same time as our passionate romance behind the Tilt-A-Whirl. Still, this hasn’t stopped me.

Camping is a goody that sounds like you’ll be riddled with bug bites, sleeping on stabby stones, going for days without showering, and reeking like burnt wood and bug spray. Wait. That’s exactly what it is. But you also might

meet a group of cute male campers at the neighboring site.

For an easy opener, you can always happen by their cluster of tents, wave “howdy-ho,” bat those doe eyes of yours, and ask to borrow their hatchet.

Male campers make willing, easy targets. You’re at an advantage as most of the other camp sites house rednecks in flowered muumuus who catch and eat their own dinner, or clueless city dwellers akin to Jon and Kate plus their brood of eight.

Male campers also tend to bring booze. And they have a tendency to think that in a forest setting, real world rules don’t apply. To them, stripping down naked and streaking through the forest drunk has no consequences. This is a fallacy. The ranger will arrive and kick them out.

Additionally, be wary if your male camping neighbors have just returned from a stint in the African Peace Core and begin shaking uncontrollably in the summer heat. They have malaria. For your information, I did not pity-make-out with malaria boy. Although, I did make out with one of the streakers. Come on, I have some standards. Let’s be honest, he had a sense of adventure.

It’s only subsequent awesomeness that at the same time you are meeting men, your friends are thankful that you are attending these events with them.

“Oh, God, I was so scared I was going to have to go alone. I didn’t think anyone would want to go with me to this.”

Because of their gratefulness, they will be extra giving. “Can I buy you a drink? I feel so bad making you come with me. You must be so bored.”

Bored? Are you kidding me? This place is crawling with hot, new prospects who won’t see it coming when I

tell them about my first job as a puppeteer at the library. It's like performing at a new venue for a fresh audience. And reversely, to all the regulars at the VFW, I am the shiny, new kid on the block. And we all know how men like to chase what's shiny and new.

Besides meeting a fresh crop of men, by saying yes to all new and strange activities that come your way, you're broadening yourself culturally. So the next time you meet an eligible bachelor, you can tell him about that whale watching festival. Just be sure to sway the conversation towards your stop at the beer tent. You don't want him to think you're some sort of whale nut.



BUYING A TICKET FOR THE DATE I WANT

Ryan and I had purchased tickets to the Bad Religion show weeks ago. The concert at the Echo would be the first before the release of their latest album. The Echo held maybe a few hundred people. Front row we'd be chanting and head banging as Greg Graffin belted out hits like 'American Jesus.'

But Ryan didn't get to head bang. He got called in for a last minute bartending shift.

For a moment, I debated forfeiting the tickets. It was a chilly Tuesday evening after all and I could cut my losses and just stay home. Subject myself to some of that Fifty Shades trilogy. Maybe cook up some frozen fish.

As good as the salmon sounded and curling up with that little prude Anastasia Steele, I bolstered up some courage and went to the show alone. At the very least, I could stay through the first set.

Like you have to ask where I started the evening? At a bar a regular tried to pick me up.

He palmed me a sweaty card. "I'm in the bizz."

The card missed my purse and ended up on the floor.

During a conversation with the bartender, I mentioned the show.

The regular breathed down my neck and showed off his metal grill. "Do you have an extra ticket?" he butted in.

One of his eyes focused on me. The other wandered up to the dusty selection of bottled beers. I clutched Ryan's ticket in my bag.

I got a neck cramp from shaking my head. "Nope." Going alone seemed the better option.

Arriving at the Echo just as the opening band finished, I maneuvered through a herd of people.

"Is this the line to get in?" I asked someone.

"No, we're hoping for tickets."

"Wow." Close to fifty punks and skaters were milling about outside.

I walked to the front of the line and spotted a blonde skater boy that surely Avril Lavigne would have sunk her talons in.

"Do you need a ticket?" I asked him.

"Oh my God. You have one?"

"Yeah, you want it?"

A large uncute fellow interrupted, "I'll take it for \$100."

"I'll take it for \$500!" Another guy shouted.

"Whoa. No. I actually was just going to give it to this guy." I turned back to the cute skater. "For free."

"Really?" The guy's face lit up.

I shrugged. "Yeah. My friend was supposed to go, but couldn't. I would have just ate the cost otherwise."

“No way. I’ve been waiting here all day. The only ticket I’ve seen was going for \$1000.”

My mouth fell open. “Are you kidding me?”

“My sister almost bought it for me.”

“That’s crazy. You can have this for free. I’m just glad someone can use it.”

“Well, thanks.” He held out his hand. “I’m Jason.”

I shook his hand. “I’m Evie. Here,” I handed him the ticket.

“You really don’t know what this means,” Jason said, as we ducked under the rope and the bouncer scanned our tickets. “All your drinks are on me tonight.”

“No. You don’t have to.” I told him.

As soon as we entered The Echo’s small main room, I expected him to bolt.

One guy patted him on the back as we squeezed through the crowd. “You made it in, man.”

Jason smiled at me and he had the cutest dimples.

“Yeah, she helped me out.”

As we reached the bar he asked me, “So what are you drinking?” I’d planned on drinking my two little drinks at the first bar and cutting myself off by the time I reached the Echo. Sipping the vodka tonic Jason bought me, I realized sometimes you have to just go with what the night offers you.

Three drinks later, we were screaming front row with Bad Religion. Between sets Jason filled me in on the band’s history, and then his own.

Unknowingly I’d stumbled across Bad Religion’s ultimate super fan who also happened to be a graphic designer and owner of an independent t-shirt company. Throughout the show punk kids kept coming up to him, saying things like, “I love your shirts, man.”

I nudged him after one of these compliments. “You’re famous?” I joked.

“Not really.” He blushed.

I usually don’t go for the curly haired blondes, but this one was growing on me.

As the show ended, Jason asked, “Do you want anything at the merch booth? A record? A t-shirt?”

“No. Don’t be silly. The drinks were more than enough.”

Jason bought a record and as we walked out, I turned in the direction of my car. “So, my car is this way. It was nice meeting you. Awesome time at the show.”

“Wait? Are you hungry? Want to get some tacos?”

To be honest, I could use a taco to soak up all the booze.

“Sure.” I shrugged. “Why not?”

“So, thanks,” I told him, finishing the last bite of my carne asada taco and dumping the greasy plate in a garbage can.

“You want to get a drink?” Jason suggested.

I was having a great time, but honestly, I’d figured on an early night. Now I was on my way with a cute skater boy back to the bar I’d started the evening at.

“So I want your phone number,” Jason asked me on the walk over. “We could be concert buddies.”

I nudged him and smiled, “Concert buddies, huh?”

He pushed me against a building, leaned in and kissed me. “Maybe other buddies too.”

I’ve replicated this strategy at sporting events and other concerts. Here’s the key. Ahead of time, scout out shows and events that you know will sell out. Small venues

work best because it limits the amount of people the guy will know once inside the show. Buy two tickets in advance and then go down to the venue right before the headliner. For the Bad Religion concert, I arrived ten minutes before the band went on. You don't want to show up too early. The last thing you want to do is give your extra ticket to a cute guy and then have him walk away because he's got hours to kill. It's paramount to enter the venue together.

When you arrive outside the venue, begin by scoping the line for any potential prospects. Worst case scenario: you can scalp both tickets.

If you see a guy you like, ready your little white lie:

"Do you need a ticket? My friend couldn't make it. I have an extra one."

Here's one a little more presumptuous and direct than what I told Jason:

"I have an extra ticket? My friend couldn't go. Want to be my concert buddy?"

By mentioning your friend, the exchange sounds casual and unplanned. It also indicates that you will be at the show by yourself. Do not feel bad for going alone. I go to concerts by myself all the time. It's not like all your friends have the same taste in music or the time or money to go see every gig. A guy digs a chick who goes to a show for the music. There's no need to let that same guy in on your devious, little secret: that you're there to meet him.

In a sense, I'm buying a ticket for the date I want. Chances are, any guy who's willing to camp out at a venue is really into the band or event. Patience and dedication are never bad qualities in a man. Your little act of kindness won't go unnoticed either. You are making a guy's night. Do you know how lucky a guy is going to feel? Do you know

how cool he will think you are?

With this strategy, you manufacture a memorable experience. Later, he'll brag to all his friends, "Dude! So I didn't think I'd get in until at the last minute this hot chick came up to me and handed me a ticket. Unreal!" These are the scenarios of romantic comedies, not real life. Make your life what you want it to be. At the very least, your new guy will be chivalrous, buy you your first drink, and give you a chance to chat him up. Pick a place with some dark corners and you and your new friend might even miss half the show.



HOT SPOT: YOUR LOCAL STRIPPING ESTABLISHMENT

Try not to judge me. But picking up men at strip clubs is just too easy. I realize what I do could be considered cruel. Not to the men, but the dancers. Up there on stage is a girl coated in oil, giving her thighs pole burns, her feet bunions from those shoes; revealing her who-ha for all the world to see; and hoping to get a few males riled up, so she can feed her two kids and maybe make this month's rent. And here I am, swooping in at the last second to mooch off all her hard work. In my defense, it's not my fault that men prefer not to pay for sex.

I'm not going to pickup the strip club regular. I go for the tag along friend. You know the guy. The strip club should at least appear to be a novelty to him. He'll act like he cares about the girls dancing and call the whole act 'kind of demeaning.' He'll jokingly make fun of the strippers outfits. Yet, still, he is there at the strip club. Usually this guy is more broke than his friend who is the regular. At a point in the night, the regular disappears to the back room for an

overpriced blowjob from a girl named Candy, leaving our prime piece of broke beef alone. This guy bobs his head to Guns 'N Roses, killing time with his warm Bud Light. This lackadaisical lion is the prize I'm after.

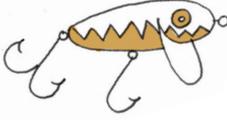
I'm at a strip club, so first off, as a non-performing female, I'm a novelty. Yet since it is a strip club, most guys initially think I'm one of the working girls. The obvious seediness of the establishment is a great place to open a conversation. Discuss a stripper's song choice. Rate a dancer's moves. Debate the best costume or lingerie.

Once I confess I'm not a dancer, men feel like they can trust me and the floodgates open. Suddenly, they're justifying to me why they are good guys. They're concocting grand stories of how they ironically ended up at the club. They're regaling me with wild tales of their friend, the regular. We're voting on strippers. And speculating what really is in the back room. These strip club spectators can be good guys. Sometimes they really are just being a supportive friend.

The other group that frequents this locale is the bachelor party. For men, the strip club is almost a rite of passage before getting hitched. The majority of the guys in bachelor parties are upstanding gentlemen out for a last night of debauchery with their friend, the future groom. They want to give their friend a memorable night with girls. If they can only get strippers, they will take strippers. But if there's other better options on the table...

You see where I'm going with this.

And bonus: take some notes while you're at the club. The pole is like fashion week for lingerie design. And some of those acrobatic moves translate pretty nicely to the bedroom.



INTERNET DATING IN THE LAND OF MAKE BELIEVE

My friend Michelle joined Tinder, an addictive app similar to 'Hot or Not.' Her first match was with a guy named Mike. Mike watched The Newsroom. He guzzled designer coffee. A bulldog lapped at his face in his profile picture.

A Jeff Daniels fan, coffee addict and dog owner herself, Michelle opened the conversation with, "Cute dog! What's his name?"

Mike wrote back: "Bradley. He's dead."

Internet dating is a numbers game. Good if you are diligent, flexible, noncommittal, and patient. Easy if you've got time to run through your fair share of Mikes.

Unfortunately for me, my dating style closely parallels my gambling game. At the roulette table in Vegas, I'm the girl that puts a hundred bucks on black, so I can get to the club faster. I pick what I like and focus my attention there, rather than spreading the wealth and putting smaller

amounts on a wider range of less desirable things. My mom has an old-fashioned expression for this. “You’re putting all your eggs in one basket,” she’ll warn me. When I do this, I’m in for a really big win, or more than likely, a whole lot of hurt.

This same expression applies to my experiences with internet dating. For instance, on Match.com, Kevin from Venice will message me one word, “Hi.”

This single greeting will spur a chain of events. I’ll drool over Kevin’s four, grainy photographs, memorize his profile like there might be a final exam tomorrow (He loves raindrops on kittens! By golly, so do I?), and the next three hours will be spent crafting the perfect, interesting and witty, yet still brief reply. Making certain to touch on key topics like my penchant for hiking, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and squirrels up to no good.

So proud of my handiwork, I’ll get no response from Kevin. Ever. The thought that will needle me late at night is: He messaged me first! I’ll come to the conclusion Kevin doesn’t like squirrels. Because obviously, who doesn’t love PB&J?

Many people have great luck with internet dating. Heck, one of my really good friends married a guy she chatted up on EHarmony. My friend Rebecca fell madly in love with a guy she met on Match. Internet dating is a great alternative if you are shy or don’t have access to meeting a wide range of people outside your local Applebee’s. It’s definitely worth a shot.

If you decide to give it a whirl, the same techniques we’ve learned for meeting men, work for meeting men on the internet.

First, guys are visual. They are also lazy and don’t

like to read. Let a few flattering photographs speak for you.

Follow my Unicorn Theory by writing a couple interesting facts about yourself. Toil away on that personal memoir another time; keep your profile brief, easy and breezy.

Lastly, when you see someone you are interested in, write them. Don't wait for the Kevins of this world.

The harsh truth of internet dating is that many guys email hundreds of women at once. Seriously, I'm not kidding. So while you're replying to your dude Kevin, thinking Kevin handpicked your profile because you were cute and special, in reality, most likely, thoughtful Kevin has sent that same 'Hi' to hundreds of women in one fallow swoop. 'Raindrops on kittens' Kevin is seeing how many girls will fall for the bait. He's being smart. He's spreading his wealth. He's playing the numbers game.

Personally, I don't want to be just a number. Despite my mom's pesky expression, I actually like that I know what I want and go after it with full-blown passion and gusto.

Still, for curiosities sake, I had to try. So I gave love online a go:

Last Fall I broke down and joined OKCupid for three days.

The whole online dating experience started out well. I posted my posed, cropped, expertly Photoshopped black and white headshot, requisite 'fun' picture that proved I had friends, one with an animal that no one would know was not mine, and another that showed I wasn't a 300 pound whale and that I indeed traveled beyond my living room. I jotted down a few lines about myself and my interests, and afterward, patted myself on the back for my scintillating, distinctive prose.

I alighted on topics sure to catch a potential mate's attention. First, my love of old cartoons and video games. Meaning, that I'm not a prissy, girly-girl who wouldn't get a He-Man or Zelda reference. To show off my endearing side, I highlighted my knack for singing pop ballads in the car despite no musical training whatsoever. Next, I touched on my affinity of dive bars. Hinting to a potential date that he wouldn't have to waste his good shoes on me, free popcorn counted as a meal, and best of all, he wouldn't have to fork over twenty bucks for my cocktail with salad floating in it. I ended my profile with my pinnacle selling point: I baked a mean carrot cake.

A few minutes in, my inbox was flooded with messages from eager suitors. After deleting the crazies, gang members, and guys who could fall under the 'creepy uncle' category, I'd begun a conversation with a tall, blonde surfer named Adam.

The first warning alarm sounded when Adam informed me he lived in Compton. Now, Snoop Dogg taught me that Compton wasn't the boutique and artisan coffee shop lined streets of Silver Lake. Compton I imagined with less Priuses, more low-rider Cadis, men accessorized not with suspenders and newsboy caps, but with gold chains and Charlotte Hornets Starter jackets. As I didn't want to end up on the next episode of COPS, I hinted to Adam that we rendezvous somewhere between Compton and Silver Lake, most likely closer to Silver Lake and those artisan coffees and tasty whiskey drinks. I'd pegged Compton as a Colt 45, brown bagging it kind of neighborhood.

Adam, not catching my drift at all suggested, "Why don't you come over to my apartment? I can make drinks. We can play video games. I have Contra."

Damn, that ironic Nintendo Contra reference I'd advertised. It was meant to add depth and versatility to my character. I didn't really want to play circa-1980s Nintendo on some dude's couch on a Friday night. Even with that unlimited lives code (at eighty I bet you anything I won't remember a lick of my twenties, but I'll still be able to recite that damn code).

If you haven't guessed, I didn't sign up for Contra with Compton Adam. Somehow, as riveting as that game can be, I didn't think he was asking me to be an innocent second player. And unlike the game, my lives weren't exactly unlimited.

Hoping he'd just made an error, and would change his mind and whisk me off to a magical evening at the Chateau, I wrote. "Sorry. I don't go to random guys houses on first dates."

Oh, Adam, bless his heart for still trying. He quickly shot back, "I don't like first dates. They're awkward. So that's why I skip to third dates."

Idiot. I know what date three entails and that's sex. So basically you want to breeze past taking me out in public all together. There will be no dinner. No conversation. You don't want to buy me at the very least a brown bagged Colt 45. Once at your apartment, there's a good chance I'd barely swig down half a roofied beverage, less of a chance we'd get past level one in Contra, before you'd make your move. One thing was clear; Adam wasn't going anywhere passed his Compton couch. But I mean how could I blame him? From all those rap songs the streets did sound a bit sketchy.

With Adam a bust, I cut my losses and moved onto a dark and handsome prospect named Eric who had messaged me. Now Eric seemed pretty cool. He lived downtown. We

had a similar taste in music. He mentioned he liked to ski.

Me, I was eager to rush to a bar, throw on a pair of skies, whatever, to finally be face-to-face with one of these guys.

But then Eric rattled off: "Tell me the most adventurous thing you've done. Tell me your most embarrassing moment. What's your most annoying habit? Name your favorite food and least favorite food."

Jeez. Rescanning my profile, I didn't realize I omitted these apparent Blue Book essay questions that were required before I qualified for an in-person meeting. These types of questions I considered fun anecdotes that surely I could retell with fervor over a nice cold brew. Yet, sadly, Eric The Question Nazi demanded my answers in writing beforehand.

I'm not exactly unadventurous if you can gather, so picking one adventurous moment was a bit of a conundrum. I settled on my tale of beating out a stripper in a make-your-own swimsuit competition to win a week-long trip for two to Cancun. I also wrote a decent bit on my repulsion towards pork rinds. I mean, how can anyone like those? Hairy, fried pig skin? Ah, no.

After forty minutes of crafting my honest but still mysterious, yet slightly humorous essays, I pressed send, slapped my hands together, sure that a dinner and drink invitation would zap back my way any minute.

Ok. The next twenty minutes then?

Any hour now?

It wasn't until the next day, day three on OKCupid, another inquiry arrived from Eric.

This one must be important, I thought. The clincher, the deal breaker, the information that would either send him running for the hills or seal the deal. With the right an-

swer, he'd be unable to resist dragging me to the nearest dive bar.

Let's be honest, it's not like I was looking for matrimony here.

"If you had to pick one..."

Oh, good God, Eric, my palms were sweating with anticipation. What dying question did he have to ask me that would be imperative on us being seen in public together?

"...would you rather have a pet dinosaur, OR," insert dramatic pause here, "vacation to the moon? And why?"

Crinkling my nose, I stared at the words on the screen.

Huh. Did either of those choices matter? Dinosaurs were extinct. No one besides Richard Branson will vacation on the moon in my lifetime. Especially with the measly attention our country has paid to the space program.

I didn't spend forty minutes on my answer. Of course, my answer was a pet Velociraptor. Those cute and lethal little guys with their gimpy arms always stole my heart.

But Eric wasn't going to get the satisfaction of knowing that. Nope. I deleted his message. Then I deleted the next four messages from the four Creepy Uncles that had just come in.

I quit. I was done with online dating. I am so good in person, I deemed. I'm outgoing, I'm attractive, I don't need this. I can meet plenty of guys on my own. I'm not desperate enough sit alone in my dark, cramped apartment, wiling away hours writing about my pet Velociraptor Pete and the adorable, spiked collar I'd buy him. Nope, not wasting my time. Not gonna happen.

Eric could have asked me to a bar like The Roost and we could have had a hearty laugh while I regaled him of

Pete's unfortunate habit of eating the neighbor's dogs. Over stale yet still buttery free bar popcorn. I could have learned that he wanted a Brontosaurus. Yes, I would have called him lame for picking such a docile and dumb dinosaur that my utterly cool pet would have devoured in seconds. Still Eric, if we actually went out, we could have SHARED that... TOGETHER.

Honestly, I don't know the correct answer that Eric was looking for with his little test. Had I picked a certain choice, would it have indicated that I was better in bed? I'd already spilled on the whole make-your-own swimsuit getup, where I was basically topless, so the chances of my nun-like virginity were already waging on slim.

While at a bar the next Sunday, I told one of my girlfriends why I'd quit OKCupid. I backed the Question Nazi story up with Compton Adam's winning sex proposal. Basically, no one was asking me out on anything close to resembling a real date.

My friend threw her hands up. "Well that's 'cause you're doing it all wrong," she informed me. According to her, I was missing a key element to my dateability.

"But my profile is funny and cute. The 60 year olds all think it's witty," I argued. All of a sudden those Creepy Uncles I usually dismissed had merit.

"I had no one asking me out either," she told me. "Then I wrote at the end of my profile, on the very last line: 'Oh, and I love to cook.' Now I have a date every night if I want it. I had three back-to-back just this afternoon."

"Three!"

"Yep. Three. All because I added 'I love to cook.'"

"I wrote that I bake a mean carrot cake?"

"Too specific."

“But I love to bake.”

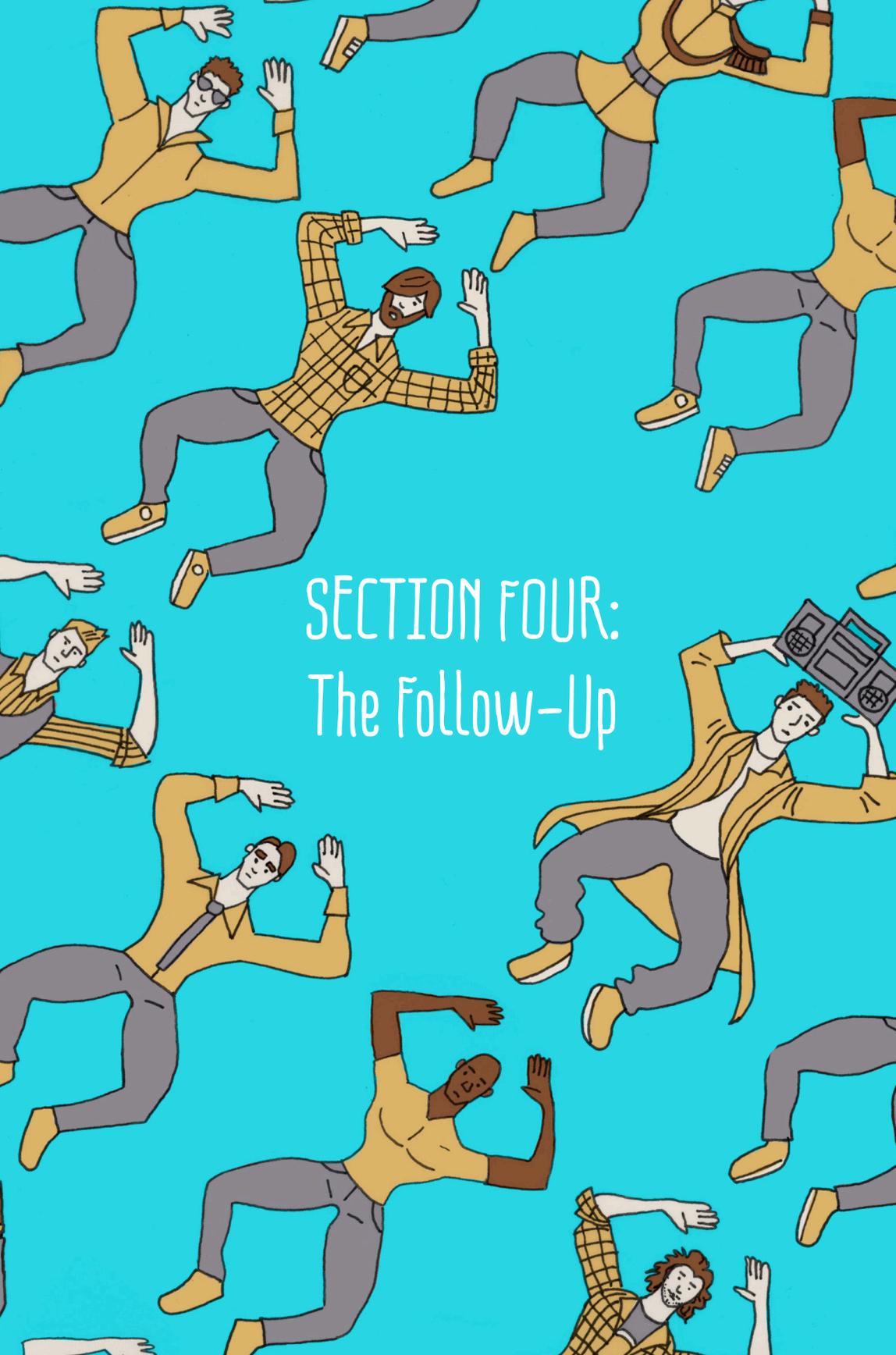
“You have to say you love to cook.”

“I like to cook. But I don’t loooooove to cook.”

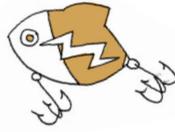
My friend slurped down her premixed Skinnygirl margarita, “Who cares? Men, they ask out a women who saaaaays she loves to cook.”

Was my friend right? Was the trick all about changing to fit an expectation? Playing make believe? Adopting a pet dinosaur? Jetting to the moon next Thanksgiving? Beating Contra in a one bedroom one-bedroom apartment in Compton? Hey, it’s all possible.

Maybe in this town reality doesn’t exist. I guess reality is over rated. Seemingly, so is homemade carrot cake.



SECTION FOUR:
The Follow-Up



CLOSING AND WHY A GUY'S PHONE NUMBER IS NO REASON FOR CELEBRATION

Back in college, before the time of cell phones, I kept a shoe box filled with guy's phone numbers on little slips of paper, bar napkins, matchbooks, or odd business cards. Shutting my eyes tight, shaking the box, and pulling out a number was the equivalent of a man lottery. Although, it wasn't until years later that I discovered why I wasn't so lucky.

This epiphany happened a few years back while I was telling my then-boyfriend Parker how I had helped one of my friends pick up a guy at a bar the night before. My friend had taken a shining to a dapper lad in a sport coat and t-shirt and I, being a good wingwoman, struck up an introduction. I explained to Parker how their conversation went really well and at the end of the night, the guy offered my

friend his phone number and told her to call him.

Parker crinkled his nose and cocked his head. “I don’t get it?”

“She got his number. Now she can call him,” I cheered. “It’s a good thing.” His expression failed to change. “Come on, you’ve given out your number to girls.”

Bewildered, Parker raised his palms and shook his head. “I’ve never given a girl my phone number.”

Now it was my turn to be shocked. “You haven’t? Never?”

The shoe box popped in my head. I imagined the pile of numbers my friends and I had accumulated over the years. The slew of men we’d phoned and asked to meet us out on ‘dates.’ We considered ourselves bold and proactive. We were the *Sex and the City* Samantha’s of the world – or so we thought.

Parker dashed my grand illusion. “I’ve never given out my number. Why would I do that? If I like a girl I’ll ask for her phone number.”

Skeptical, I probed further, “So you think this guy didn’t like my friend? Why would he give her his number then?”

Parker broke it to me, “He was probably just being nice. If he liked her, he wouldn’t leave without getting her number.” His lips curled into a smile as he reminisced on our meeting, “Just like I didn’t leave without getting your number.”

All those ‘dates’ from years ago replayed in my head. All those guys might have been flattered that my friends and I were asking them out. We easily filled in as plan B when nothing better panned out on a Friday night. But Parker’s disheartening discernment explained why none of those

‘dates’ materialized into something more. Why the guys always failed to put in the needed effort past our first meet up. Why most of those ‘dates’ ended with me or one of my friends patiently waiting by a phone on a Saturday night and the guy never calling. Parker’s lesson was clear: it’s not worth chasing a man who was never that interested to begin with.

Here’s the takeaway: if a guy likes a girl he isn’t going to leave meeting again up to chance. He’ll take control. He’ll ask how he can get in touch with her. Simply stated, the guys that handed out the phone numbers weren’t that into us. A guy’s phone number was

Initiate all you like, but if you want to gauge a guy’s interest level, he needs to make the closing move and ask to see you again. The more energy a man invests in you, the more likely he is to

**If a guy likes a girl
he isn’t going to
leave meeting again
up to chance.**

follow through on future commitments. Even though you are the approacher, the more you make a guy put forth the energy to pursue you, the more he will imagine it is him who is the aggressor all along. What will often do the trick here is to give the guy the sense that you are a challenge.

It’s like dangling a tasty treat before a man’s eyes, yet delaying gratification. A man will want you more than ever because he’s unsure whether he can have you. In Robert Greene’s book, *The Art of Seduction*, he outlines temptation as a two-part process. First, you must be flirtatious and provide an intriguing diversion from ordinary life. Like a siren of the sea, you must draw a man off course and

lure him under your spell by hinting at the adventure, thrills, and fantasy to come. But at the same time you make it clear that he cannot have you right away. Temptation feeds on a guy's curiosity and imagination. A vague promise allows a man's mind to run wild with possibilities. Something he cannot have for certain excites him. Fashion yourself the tantalizing treat and he will follow you.

To create temptation, I'll keep my conversations light, funny and flirtatious, but also more importantly, short. I don't linger. I don't allow the conversation to grow stale and take a turn to the mundane. I aim to bewitch. Dazzle. Tease. Give a guy just a taste of what's to come if we continued our conversation. Then I pull away any certainty by making up an excuse of why I need to dash off.

Push Pull like this builds tension. By being the first person to pull away you create space for a guy to chase you. When you push, you engage him, laugh at his jokes, touch his arm, show interest - pile on the attention. Leaving, pulling away, you swipe that attention away and create a sense of loss, which triggers desire. If he wants more, his only option is to pursue.

You're signaling to a guy that you're interested, but *not that* interested. If he does like you, once you leave he'll begin to have doubts: *The conversation was going so well, why did she leave so quickly? Does she not like talking with me? Is she bored? Am I not interesting enough? Is there someone else more interesting? I wonder if I can get her?* Pulling back first, you kickoff the game. The elementary school equivalent of tapping his shoulder. *Tag! You're it, Buddy. Come get me.* You sound the challenge.

My exit excuse line serves as the gunshot at the starting gate, my potential paramour's cue to charge forward and

begin the pursuit. I'll use lines such as:

"Hey, so I need to get back to my friends over there, but it was nice meeting you."

"Well, I'll let you get back to your (work, friends, book, run, etc), I don't want to bother you, I just wanted to come over and say hi."

To make it even more memorable, you can tease him:

"I'm sorry, I have to go, but, you know, it was pretty good, fairly alright, I guess better than average, talking with you."

"Hey, so I gotta vamoose, but maybe I'll see you around, you know, if you're out and about, have a thing for standing on street corners, or like to drink that designer coffee and happen across me."

Closing lines such as these signal to a guy that he might never see you again. Given that he's curious about you (and perhaps a bit smitten with you) he'll jump into action with, "Maybe I can get your number?" or "We should hang out sometime," or "What are you doing right now? Want to do something?" Oh, how quickly a good closing line can turn the most cocky players into eager gentlemen suitors.

The exit excuse line is a quick test to find out a dude's level of interest. The only way to test a man's interest level is to see if he takes action. If a guy likes you, he will close the deal for you. If he doesn't, walk away, hold your head high, and cut your losses. Move on and find a guy who fancies you

enough to seal the deal.

In the end, we're letting a guy think that he won our number like a prize. When he does get our number, he'll celebrate it as a victory. Guys definitely get a rush and ego boost asking for a girl's phone number and successfully getting it. Let him labor under the impression that he picked us up.

Little does he know we aren't like those other girls waiting in dark corners for Prince Charming to stumble into our laps. We're smart and a bit sneaky. We see opportunities, bait our lines, and toss them out in the waters of possibilities. We don't leave meeting men all up to chance.

The exit excuse line is a quick test to find out a dude's level of interest. The only way to test a man's interest level is to see if he takes action.

Knowing When to Throw in the Towel

We talk about meeting the men you want to meet on your terms. Widening your dating possibilities and approaching the men you want to meet rather than settling for the pool that decides to approach you. Many factors come into play that determine your success. One question that I hear a lot is: can a girl get a guy out of her league?

Luckily, Lena Dunham and raw, realistic shows like *Girls* exist. Dunham who casts herself as the unconventional star, Hannah, has gotten a lot of flak for her willingness to display her body that doesn't conform to Hollywood's commercial beauty standards.

In *Girls* second season, Lena's character Hannah had a short, but intense affair with a much older, very handsome doctor who lived in a trendy Brooklyn brownstone. After the episode aired, Dunham was shocked to find how controversial their pairing became. In an interview with *VOGUE* she revealed, "Critics said, 'That guy wouldn't date that girl!'" She countered, "'It's like 'Have you been out on the street lately?' Everyone dates everyone, for lots of reasons we can't understand. Sexuality isn't a perfect puzzle, like 'He has a nice nose and she has a nice nose! She's got great breasts and he's got great calves! And so they're going to live happily ever after in a house that was purchased with their modeling money!'"

True, physical appearance assumes a big role in attraction. So should an overweight girl approach a male model? She could sit back and wait for Perfect Cheekbones to initiate in order to be certain that he's interested in her. Or she could choose to take control of the situation and at very least strike up a conversation with Cheekbones to decide if a spark even exists. Will Mr. Model be attracted to her?

I don't know the answer to that because I don't know him personally. I don't know his tastes and preferences in women. I don't know if they have some weird cosmic connection. A mutual adoration for raising Sea-Monkeys, perhaps?

A pair's compatibility isn't based on appearance alone. As singletons rate their potential partner's attractiveness in comparison to their own, equally, we could set scales for intelligence, charisma, personality, star sign, or success to determine if we match up with someone else. Let's ask the same questions with different criteria. Should a girl as dumb as a stump approach the latest computer wiz kid? Should a

business mogul chat up a gas station attendant? Should airy Gemini pick up a stubborn ox like Taurus?

Honest shows like *Girls* bolster my belief that they should. You never know what lies beneath someone's exterior. Attraction is a complicated thing. 'Normal' isn't a rule, but a blurry suggestion. Love is built on discovering surprising, exciting exceptions.

As you put yourself out there more, you will encounter more men. Nevertheless, as in meeting any new group of people, some of them you will hit it off with, some will fancy you, and some won't. Meeting men isn't without its frustrating moments. Sometimes success equates to cutting your losses early and focusing on guys who are better suited for your time. Many times I'll be flirting with a guy and for whatever reason - he's not physically attracted to me, we're not vibing, he's unavailable, or more moody than a PMS-ing girl - he'll signal that he's not interested.

How can you tell if he's not interested?

First, watch for signals of disinterest in a man's body language: guys crossing their arms, turning their bodies away from you, leaning back on their heels, or gazing over your shoulder to scan the room.

Next, ask yourself these questions:

1. Is he engaging you in the conversation? Or is he talking only about himself?
2. Is he complimenting you?
3. Is he flirting back? Or is his tone verging on that of a dry Economics lecturer?
4. Further, does he take interest in your answers and probe for further details?

Still, it can be tough sometimes to tell a guy's interest level because many guys are polite, some like to play along for attention or a good story to retell their buddies, and others, although enjoying the back-and-forth, have no romantic intentions otherwise.

This is why I suggest pulling away early to test a guy's interest level. You can be as aggressive and persistent as you like, talk with him all night, or perform a standup act better than Tina Fey, but if a guy isn't interested enough, he isn't going to be motivated enough to put in the energy needed to properly ask you out.

Don't waste your time with these uninterested fellows. In situations like this, try your best not to be discouraged. Look at it as an opportunity to meet someone new who you might have a better connection with.

Bonus:

Grovelers: the Anti-Seductresses

According to Robert Greene's book *The Art of Seduction*, as a seductress casts a spell over a man, luring him in with focused, carefully crafted attention, an anti-seductress, does just the opposite, she repels. Insecure and self-conscious women lack the subtlety and patience needed to draw a guy in. These anti-seductresses end up coming off as desperate, annoying, pitiful or needy, rather than sexy, mysterious and alluring.

Robert Greene tells us, "temptation is created by stirring a guy's interest, enticing him with the possibilities of pleasure and adventure, but not guaranteeing satisfaction."

A good seductress will create suspense and then physical distance to spur the chase. Their power lies in their

uncertainty; men are intrigued because they can't figure them out.

On the other hand, anti-seductresses or grovelers, as we will call them, are far too obvious and try too hard to please. A groveler feels inadequate, insecure, and less confident that a guy will be attracted to her. Fearing she will lose a guy, a groveler qualifies herself, begs and negotiates as a last ditch effort to convince a guy to choose her. Overall, she makes it clear to the guy that he can have her if he wants her, which eliminates the necessary part of temptation, uncertainty. Grovelers reverse the traditional roles. The guy assumes all the power since she's the one chasing after him and he's the one doing the final selecting.

All of us know grovelers and many of us are guilty of groveling ourselves. You know the situation: girl likes a guy and will go to pathetic lengths to make him like her back. At bars, girls bribe guys with drinks. Promise future perks like dinner, gifts or VIP treatment in exchange for a date. Plead, "Kiss me. Please? You'll like it." Or throw a pity party to get attention and test a guy's level of interest. For example, she might evoke sympathy with, "I'm not as pretty as that girl over there," hoping a guy will reinforce her self-worth and return her affections with "No Baby, you are," and a kiss.

When faced with competition, a groveler hands over all the goodies for free to convince a guy to select her: "I'm not as pretty as that other girl you were talking to, but she won't go home with you. If you take me home I'll sleep with you." The last line will probably get her a one-night-stand. Groveling can work in the short term. Yet failure, as you can imagine, can be disastrously humiliating.

The problem with these tactics is that even if they do work, a guy isn't choosing you, he's giving into the bribe

or taking the path of least resistance. If it's the end of the night, the dude probably just wants to get laid and will pick the most convenient option. He might have preferred someone else, but the groveler becomes the easy, unlucky taker. Although men love VIP tickets to their favorite band, free drinks, and blowjobs, bribing them with these things won't make them love you. Neither will making a guy feel sorry for you.

A guy falls for a girl when he likes her for 'her', wishes he could have her, but wonders if she is out of his league. Guys place less value on anything too easy to get. A girl playing up her insecurities or piling on the freebies only highlights how unsure she is about herself, which signals to a guy that perhaps he should reassess his initial first impression.

He'll wonder: *Why is she trying so hard? Shouldn't she have lots of options; why is she so frantic to lock me down? Does she even like me, or is she just so desperate she'll take any guy?*

Flirtation should be a heated back-and-forth match, challenging both parties to try to win each other's affections. If ever you're talking with a guy and you feel exhausted, like you are the one putting in all the work to impress him, pull back for a moment, be patient, and give him his turn to concoct a witty rebuttal. Take a break, sit back on your heels and let him sweat a little. Make him wonder how interested you are in him. Then leave, with the vague intention that you might return or not. Give a guy physical space, time to miss that great feeling he gets when you give him attention. If a guy's into you, he'll track you down – trust me.

Hitting on men isn't like roping wild stallions: you don't need to throw yourself at one, pin him down, and tie

him up before he gallivants away. Rather, give a guy the freedom to roam, run, and chase. Pop into his life like a happy, wonderful surprise. Stroke his curiosity, hint at the thrill to come, and then bound off, leaving him bewildered and lusting for more. Even if at the moment you don't have a herd of prospects, give the impression you're picky, patient, and could have plenty of options. You're desirable. If he wants you, well, he'll just have to run a little faster and chase a little harder, won't he?



IDENTIFYING THE PRINCES FROM THE FROGS

No one ever said that Giacomo Casanova wasn't without charm. In his lifetime, the infamous seducer bedded over a hundred women. Slipping throughout high society, with ever-changing titles and positions, he managed to call some the most intelligent and cultured ladies his conquests.

Eventually, Casanova built up a reputation that preceded him, but early on how many of his victims must have felt ticked with luck that he plucked them from the bunch.



Taking the bait-hook-line-and-sinker, they falsely believed such an intriguing man as Casanova had eyes for only them.

While many of the men you'll meet will be upstanding gents with sincere intentions, modern day noblemen per say, there's a good chance you'll come across your fair share of frogs disguised as princes. Your new sweetie pie might be hanging on your every word, or he might be trying to sneak his way into your pants.

Just because a gentleman compliments you or asks for your phone number, doesn't mean his intent is genuine. Certain guys know they can have the pick of any litter, they can hunt without limit, and mount their conquests like trophies. Other men play girls for a pastime and, like a team of used car salesmen, run their tricks on every woman that passes until they find a gullible taker. Even with your best female intuition, it can still be difficult to distinguish the caring men from the comen.

So to safeguard you from all the players and mass marketers out there, I've created the Checklist of Honest Interest. During a conversation, use it as a guide of rules and cues to distinguish genuine signals of interest from disingenuous ones.

Please keep in mind that although a guy might raise a red flag on one or two of these checkpoints, it doesn't necessarily mean you should sound your rape whistle, screaming, "Pickup artist!" It simply means that you should pay careful attention to what a guy is saying and how he's saying it.

For some of the items on the list I'll offer you options to test a guy further.

Checklist of Honest Interest

1. He pays attention to what you are saying
2. He asks at least 3 genuine questions
3. He demonstrates that he has something in common with you
4. He compliments you with a specific reason why
5. He doesn't promise grand future plans

1. He Pays Attention to What You Are Saying:

He might bat those big, blue eyes while you tell the story of your whack job ex-roommate who shot herself in the ass with hormones so she could subsist solely on ice cream. Twice daily, you walked her pit bull, not as a favor, but to prevent the alternative – the poor thing shitting all over the carpet. Is Blue Eyes really paying attention to your heart-wrenching tale of horror and woe or is he more focused on picturing what type of panties you're wearing: thong, bikini, or maybe something he's never even heard of? There's a one hundred percent chance that even Joe Nice Guy has imagined you naked. But let's look at some ways we can tell if a guy is into you beyond just that.

When someone is actively listening, they broadcast nonverbal cues that they are paying attention. They'll turn their body towards you, make eye contact, and nod their head. Verbally, they'll offer commentary, agreement or disagreement, or paraphrase what you've said.

An experienced conman has learned these tricks and

can fake interest.

To test a guy, later in the conversation bring up something you discussed earlier. If he was listening, he'll remember what you said. You can also throw him a curve ball, a left-field, made-up detail to quickly quiz his memory.

Let's say, early on, you told him you work as a lawyer. Later, slip into the conversation all those late nights you've been putting in as a teddy bear therapist or as a mime in Union Square and see if he corrects you. Another more direct approach is to call him out on the spot, but make sure you do so in a playful manner. Say something like: "Oh, you probably don't even remember what I do for a living?"

2. He Asks at Least 3 Genuine Questions:

There's a good chance we've all been in conversations with a self-absorbed narcissist who fails to ask us one single question. If someone is into you, they should want to know personal details about you. Hopefully, lots of juicy details and some off-color facts. They are drawing connections, so their questioning should be deeper than where you've been earlier that evening, where you're from, or what line of work you're in.

An interested admirer should also demand from you more in-depth answers. He shouldn't be satisfied with a short response.

Him: *What do you do?*

You: *I'm a teacher.*

He should be building on his own questions to ask what grade you teach, what type of subjects, maybe how you got into teaching, who your favorite students are, and if you coach any extracurricular activities or lead after school programs.

3. He Demonstrates That He Has Something in Common with You:

Two people can be very dissimilar and vibe so long as their worlds overlap. Take a guy who adores tapioca pudding. For you, it's the equivalent of eating snot; you prefer a nice, dense chocolate cake. If you're talking film, you're Team Jacob all the way and can point out specific moments throughout the *Twilight* series why Bella should have chosen Taylor Lautner over RPatt, the brooding, control freak. The guy has never seen anything starring Kristen Stewart, but he rattles off a list of supernatural recommendations within the foreign film genre. His favorite movie is something French. You repeatedly butcher the title's pronunciation, but keep stumbling over it in an effort to learn more about the film's plot.

A conversation can still progress, so long as two people have common ground and each person is willing to engage the other. Your worlds need to sync up in some way, so you each can comprehend the facts from the other's side of the debate. Had the guy declared her movie choice, 'Peasant crap!' and said, "no more," the conversation would have fallen to an awkward silence. If this continued for every topic, it would be hard to fill five minutes. When someone who has nothing in common with you is willing to admit it, your chances at compatibility might die a slow death, but at the very least they are being genuine with you.

Problems arise when a guy fakes interest. Keep a look out for the one-word agreement.

You: *I love Florence and the Machine. Do you like them?*

Him: *Yeah.*

There's a chance you've stumped the chum. He could be faking it because he likes you and wants to impress you. He agrees with you, hoping you'll think he's cool. Yet all the while, he's praying that you don't ask him for further details and discover his little white lie.

In the alternative, our main man only pretends to agree with you to establish a perceived connection. Destiny makes a powerful weapon. By mimicking your opinion, a guy can have you thinking: what luck, you're meant to be, you're both Florence Welch super fans! In reality, our crafty chap maneuvered the conversation in his favor, along to something more exciting. Like those pants of yours, maybe? To test someone's sincerity, ask them to expand upon their answer. Why do they like that specific thing? What certain feature is their favorite? When did they get interested in this topic?

Or throw in a decoy there way if you have a sixth sense they're bullshitting. For example, if a guy agrees to liking all the same music as you do, see if he likes a band you've made up on the fly.

"What do you think about Terrible Molly? What's your take on their new sound?"

"I'm really digging Unforeseen Turtles. Have you seen them in concert?"

If the guy goes along with your decoy, good chance he's a total faker or completely full of shit.

4. He Compliments You With a Specific Reason Why:

There's a reason that this gentleman suitor has decided to fancy you and let's hope to God it's a lot deeper than

your beauty and brains. When a girl fires off an SAT word, a man may attempt to win points by complimenting, “Wow. You’re really smart.” Or if she’s dressed to the nines, he may feed her ego with, “Hey beautiful.”

Men throw out generic compliments like fistfuls of hard candy on the Fourth of July. And just like that discount parade candy, some common compliments will knock girls in the head without them noticing. Others end up in the trash because some girls don’t like the taste. Yet someone might just catch that golden nugget and cherish it, believing they were individually selected from the masses to receive it.

No compliment should be without a specific reason. If a guy believes you are beautiful, he should clarify why he thinks you are beautiful. You’re beautiful because he loves the way you smile, it’s sort of mischievous. Your dress is really sexy because he likes the way it shows off your fantastic legs. His compliment should distinguish what specifically sets you apart from everyone else. He heard your laugh across the room. The bounce in your step oozes good energy and a zest for life. If he says you’re smart, make sure it is after you’ve proven your intelligence on a topic. Men flatter women all the time by fake laughing at their jokes. The next time he’s rolling in the aisles cackling like a hyena, assess your own pride in your witty joke. Only give a guy credit for proven praise.

A rule: if he could say the same compliment to five other girls in the vicinity, don’t put too much stock in it.

5. He Doesn’t Promise Grand Future Plans:

Once, after first meeting a guy, he asked me what I was doing mid-June. He wanted to take me as his date to a

wedding in Italy. Sure, a part of me already had us eating pizza in little plazas and gondola-ing off into setting sun. At the time though, New Year's had just passed. I hadn't learned his last name yet. Prematurely jumping the gun a bit?

Scheming fanciful, future plans makes for great conversation fodder. Chances are, you won't open karate studio together with a *Ninja Turtle* theme. Good shot neither of you will go so far as to order those matching Captain Hook and Pirate Smee outfits for your imagined Caribbean cruise. These types of whackadoodle plans serve as good ol' harmless, get-to-know-you fun. They test each other's creativity, quick wit, and give you insight on the other person's sense of humor.

Trouble brews when men make false promises to convince a girl that their interest extends beyond that evening. They'll construct grand, far-off plans to reassure a girl that they will be seeing each other more often in the future. She shouldn't be worried if they rush into things and sleep together tonight, because this is only the beginning of their long and beautiful relationship. In exchange for giving a guy a pleasurable evening without her drawers, a girl is duped to believe she'll get bottle service at clubs, expensive dinners, and exotic all-expense-paid vacations. A rich billionaire will scoop her up in his private helicopter and whisk her off to his red room of pain. Christian Grey is out there somewhere, isn't he? Each and every fairy tale we read as kids made us a little more susceptible to the Prince Charming figure stealing us from our everyday lives and sweeping us off our feet. (Unless you were like me and fantasized about shacking up with thieving, impoverished Robin Hood.)

Future plans belong in the realm of fantasy. And the

men who make the promises could be real or they could be too-good-to-be-true fairy tales.

Don't let a game of make-believe increase your opinion of a guy. Facades are easy to build. Many times, the guy that promised VIP bottle service can't even get into the club. Nope, he doesn't own a sprawling mansion, he house sits for Matt Damon.

Instead, let reality, the current moment, dictate how you choose a guy. Reward a guy based on his personality and the rapport you share. Compatibility is something a guy can't manufacture easily.

And if he's really persistent on taking you out, you don't need to rush into anything, worrying if you don't please him you'll lose this great catch-of-a-man. Even if he's baiting you with the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to eat Asian-Mexican-Ethiopian fusion blindfolded and served by roaming tabby cats. Be patient and let him call you next week and take you out properly like he promised. The tabby cats and strange food will still be waiting for you, I guarantee.



QUALITY VS. QUANTITY DATING

Make fun of me all you like, I'm the girl that once dated a guy my friends nicknamed Frodo. Although short and hairy everywhere else, at least he didn't have a hobbit's hairy feet. Or he managed to shave them expertly, so I never caught on.

Compared to my friends, I'm a lot less picky on whom I accept a date. Don't get me wrong, the dude still must be interesting. Yet, he doesn't need to qualify on every single one of my checkpoints for an ideal mate for me to go on a date with him.

Despite his heinous nickname, Frodo wasn't a hideous troll; he was an average looking, slightly stocky guy. Physically, he wouldn't be the first guy I'd jump in the sack with. However, his snarky humor and creativity at drinking debauchery won me over. The dude organized drinking dodgeball tournaments and bar crawls and encouraged all participants to wear unorthodox costumes. Amazeballs, right? Holy matrimony, a 3.5 bedroom house with a white

picket fence, and a brood of children, weren't in the cards for us. Nor did I swoon with lust for him. But why holdout for The One when you can share some laughs, sushi, and sake with an interesting yet average-looking man?

"But aren't you wasting your time going out with guys who you are not that into?" I knew this question was coming.

My friends bring up a similar sentiment, "How can you go out with that ugly guy?" Again, not hideous.

He's just not Ryan Gosling. He's average.

Or as my friends commented on a different date's career ambitions. "You're okay with him being just a hotel bellman?" What can I say? Sometimes I just want to suck face with a hottie and it doesn't matter that he doesn't have a car, health insurance, or 401k.

As women, we date less. Some of my friends have not dated anyone in months solely because no one has met their astronomically high standards. Understandably, high standards are great. Fantastic when you're selecting a long-term boyfriend. I get that we all have our type and we're very picky when it comes to going on dates with guys who don't fit what we think we want. As women, we look for quality.

Albeit, we're at a disadvantage compared to our male counterparts. Men tend to go on more dates than women. Recall men's strategy online. When online dating, men spread the wealth. There is no way a guy is intellectually AND physically attracted to the three dozen women he'll hit up on a dating site. He's going for quantity over quality. He'll ask a lot of girls out who might not be perfect. Maybe not even close to perfect. But because he's asking more women out and going on a greater number of dates, he's

gaining more experience.

By doing so, he's getting to know a wider range of women. He's testing out conversation material and finding out what he likes and doesn't like. Initially, he may value a certain personality trait, but after dating that type for a while, find that he vibes terribly with them and is much better suited with a different kind of girl. By dating more, he'll spot patterns and pitfalls in his own dating habits, recognize quality women, and possess the know-how to get them.

I'm not coaxing anyone to run off and kick start a kissing spree. Rather, I'm encouraging you to let more men take you out for a latte. Share some ceviche. Throw caution to the wind and catch a baseball game.

Here's the kicker. You don't have to be that attracted to a guy to accept a date with him.

I know! This is crazy talk! But before you completely shut off your computer, consider this. If you said 'yes' to more men, imagine how many more dates you would have. Fathom how much more you would know about yourself. Heck, your anxiety level sure would decrease going out with a guy you have little attraction to.

Use these dates to learn how to present yourself in the best light. My friends always ask me my secret to flirting

A guy will ask a lot of girls out who might not be perfect. Maybe not even close to perfect. But because he's asking more women out and going on a greater number of dates, he's gaining more experience.

with men. I make it look easy, they say. My best explanation for success is that I've had a lot of practice with a wide range of personality types.

Through trial and error you too can find out what works best for you and what doesn't. Use these dates as opportunities to test out stories. Note ways to keep a guy's interest. Try different methods of flirting. Make the dating blunders with the ones you're not as attracted to. Then, can you believe how much less pressure you'll feel when one of the guys you really do like asks you out? By discriminating less and dating more you'll develop the skills to get the men you want on the terms you want.

And a wonderful side effect to dating more is that men tend to view girls who are high in demand as more attractive. You send off the message that you are fun to be around, you have choices and won't tolerate bad behavior.

The last costume bar crawl I went on with Frodo, I bumped into a swarthy bloke dressed in a camouflage jacket, hunting orange pants, and combat boots. The guy studied Economics and introduced himself as Jeremy.

I guessed his outfit, "You're a hunter."

"What?"

"Your costume?" I asked, shouting over the bar's loud metal music. I pantomimed towards my sexy Little Red Riding Hood getup, which I obviously didn't sport on a regular basis around campus.

"I'm not in a costume," Jeremy replied.

"Oh."

It wasn't love at first sight. Still, we went for tacos that next Wednesday.



THE FOLLOW-UP: MAKE HIM WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN

So here's the scenario. Jessica met a guy she really liked. In this case, we'll call him Ryan. After a brief, but playful conversation, Ryan asked for her phone number. The very next afternoon he sent her a brief text message. Nano seconds later, amped with the rush of adrenaline, Jessica zipped back a speedy reply. Minutes ticked away. Her phone lay silent. She picked it up. She put it down. From across the table she bore a Care Bear stare into the screen. Still nothing. After an hour, she checked to make sure it was still working.

The more time that passed, the more elaborate Jessica's excuses for Ryan's non-reply became. *There's a chance he went to the gym? Maybe he's hiking and there's no cell service? It's just past lunch, I can't rule out food poisoning? Perhaps his hamster took a turn for the worse and he's too emotionally distraught?* Soon after denial, her heart sank and

regret started to seep in. That little voice in her head scolded her. *What have I done? I was too excited. Too quick to respond.* Jessica's mind plummeted to dark places, conjuring up Ryan's interpretations of the situation. *Does he think I was overeager? Too easy? Worse, desperate?*

Most of us, have been Jessica at some point in time. And Friends, I'm right there with you. I'm impatient, optimistic, and like a squealing teenager with glittered poster board outside a Beiber concert when it comes to a crush. So I've created a list of follow up qualifications to keep my rampant, self-sabotaging eagerness in check. I keep each of these three things in mind before I hit send or pick up the phone.

Your Follow-Up Should Convey:

1. You are far more intriguing than the average girl.
2. You have a busy life and a guy isn't always going to have full, immediate access to you. He'll have to work for you.
3. You are interested, but not 100% sold on a guy. Make him wonder how much you actually like him. To do this, sometimes less is more.

I'm not advocating you to play games or be a bitch. This is all about putting yourself first and getting the type of man you deserve, one that will respect you and treat you well. I feel like we're becoming friends, so the last thing I want you to compromise is yourself or your time.

These three criterion will help you use a little mys-

tery to evoke curiosity on the guy's part. This guy wanted your phone number and called or messaged, so we already know he's somewhat interested. But how interested? How do we keep him interested? How do we get him more interested?

Be Far More Intriguing Than the Average Girl

The same tactics we learned during the approach apply to the first follow-up. Remember how we alternated joke answers with serious answers? This is flirting and we will need to bring out the big

guns for our first follow-up. Whether a guy calls or texts, switch up your responses between witty or joke answers and actual serious statements.

For example, a guy text messages me and asks about my weekend. I could reply with:

“Great! How was yours?”

But doing this gives him nothing to work off of. He'll probably say “Great!” and we'll be right back at boring, square one.

What if instead I replied:

“I went to a concert, an Alice in Wonderland art show, and Saturday night my friend got punched in the face at a bar by a random girl for no reason. Pretty epic weekend overall.”

Lucky for me, all these events actually happened when I wrote this to a suitor.

Switch up your responses between witty or joke answers and actual serious statements.

Still, the personal touch and slightly mysterious details kicked my reply up a notch. I baited the guy. Who got punched? For no reason? What concert? What is an *Alice in Wonderland* art show? What does that even mean?!? I've set the stage for a slew of questions and made myself more intriguing.

Take this case. What if a guy asks, "Where do you live?"

I could reply simply with the name of my neighborhood: "*Silver Lake.*"

Discussion over.

Or I could add a quirky twist and utilize the fact that I live in a very hilly neighborhood:

"I'm in Silver Lake. I'm queen of my hill."

Since my Silver Lake cabin bungalow overhangs a cliff, spicing up mundane details with a bit of whimsy, I could answer with something like, "*I live in a treehouse.*" or "*My house pretty much resembles the Ewok village. I gotta cross over a little rope bridge to get home.*"

Here's another. A suitor writes: "I'm going to the Raiders game this weekend. Do you like sports? Who are your teams?"

I could write: "*Cool! I like sports. I'm a Cincinnati Bengals fan.*"

Sweet and nice. But...EHHHHH! Boring! Say something that the average girl wouldn't say. This is your chance to tease him and highlight some of the quirky things that make you stand out.

"Raiders, huh? I guess I'll let that pass..I'm a Bengals fan..my team is usually so bad but at least our helmets are badass."

Much more personal and I'm starting the conversa-

tion with light teasing. I'm prompting him to tease me back or impress me with a more interesting story.

The guy did well, replying with: "Well I've been a Raiders fan since I was born. In almost all my family photos my parents have me in some sort of Raiders onesie."

One guy asked, "How do you like living in your neighborhood? What are the local haunts?"

Instead of typing out a *Zaget*-style guide, I sprung off his word 'haunts.'

"My bedroom. I'm often awoken by moaning."

Sure, I hinted at ghosts, but there's other times moaning takes place in the bedroom.

I know you want another and I like to give you what you want. A guy asks me out. "Do you want to go to a comedy show or get a drink?"

I could reply, "*Sure! That sounds great!*"

Or elaborate on details to make the conversation more memorable: "*Yes, going to a comedy show sounds fantastic. Or we could always just get those mixology drinks with big ice cubes and a small herb garden..*"

Here's another example where a guy suggests a specific date. "Could I take you to Disneyland tomorrow?"

I joke around, "*Only if you promise to dress as your favorite Disney character.*"

When dating online, your response has to make you stand out from the dozens of other girls a guy will message. When a man I'm interested in writes me, the first thing I do is review his profile and pick out a few key details to comment on thoughtfully but also in interesting, jokey ways.

For example, a comedian named Dane wrote that he wanted a partner in crime for late night acts of vandalism. One of his profile photos really sold me. Dane, like a young

Ron Burgundy, lounged on the ledge of a balcony, his back against a fake Greek pillar, puffing a cigarette in a ratty bathrobe slung open a bit too far. He was either a cheesy douchebag or a sarcastic genius. I prayed for the latter. My reply touched on these selected highlights.

Why hello there, Dane! I'm Evie. First off, your photo smoking on the ledge in your bathrobe is absolutely amazing. Daring perhaps. Dashing even. You're a comedian-that's awesome! I try to catch shows at UCB or Comedy Store whenever I can. Also late night acts of vandalism? Does it have to be late night? I've always wanted to wheat paste random posters at twilight...would you be flexible? ;)

I've said all the serious facts that I need to, I've complimented him, but I've done it in a way that will make my conversation memorable. Being fun and flirtatious scored me major points and a date with Dane.

You have a Busy Life and He Isn't Always Going to Have Full, Immediate Access to You:

So back to our story of quick draw Jessica and her impulsive texting habits. Why did Jessica feel the need to text Ryan back so quickly? Was she worried that by waiting another girl would snatch him up with a faster reply? That he'd think she wasn't interested if she didn't text back right away?

Guys are not counting down the seconds until your reply. When you don't reply immediately, a guy's going to assume you are busy doing other things. You have a life. Being popular is not the worst thing in the world. Also, he may wonder if you're dating other guys. Not a bad assumption to make him believe, true or not.

Whether it's the first text or throughout the first several weeks of dating, don't be too available or too predictable. Girls make the mistake of giving up their entire life for a guy. They wait by the phone. They cancel plans with their girlfriends to spend time with him. He is their only social outlet. He

has full access to them whenever he wants them. If a guy knows a girl will wait around, he'll put her on the reserve list for when he doesn't have better plans.

If a guy knows a girl will wait around, he'll put her on the reserve list for when he doesn't have better plans.

How to Boost Attraction and Your Priority Level In His Eyes:

1. Be unpredictable and don't always pick up
2. Don't always be available when he wants to see you
3. Don't be a booty call
4. Make him think you are interested, but not 100% sold on him:

Be Unpredictable and Don't Always Pick Up:

First, let's tackle texting. Be unpredictable with the timing on your replies. Mix it up. For the first text, maybe wait a few hours after his message before you write back.

The next round, text him back within a few minutes. The following instance, wait an hour. Let him guess a little what you are up to.

This will give the impression you aren't attached to your phone, you have a full life, and possibly other suitors outside of him. While other girls freak out and blow up his phone, you're laid back. He'll be intrigued. Why aren't you like the rest of them? Do you not like him that much? Does he have competition? By being patient and being unpredictable, you'll make him wait. You'll get him to think about you. You've made yourself far more interesting.

The same goes with phone calls. Don't pick up the phone 100% of the time. If you are at work, you are unreachable. If you are out to brunch with friends, you are busy. You have priorities in your life. Block out times when you are unavailable. This means put your phone away. Enjoy your time with your friends and family. Focus on work. Being unreachable, isn't considered a bad thing. You just have a life and you are respectful of your friends and obligations.

Let's start with the initial phone call. When a guy calls you for the first time, don't pick up. Now I know what you're thinking. The guy you like is calling you. *Calling you!* In the age of texting a guy picking up the phone and having the guts and gumption to take the risk and hear your voice is an anomaly. So I'm sure you're asking, why oh why are we avoiding him? By not picking up, you're not avoiding him. You are busy. You have a life. You aren't waiting patiently by the phone on the off chance that he would call you. You aren't bending over backwards the second a guy picks up the phone.

Ok, I can guess your reaction: You've blown it. You missed your big chance. He'll assume rejection. Great Evie,

now there's no way in hell this guy is ever going to call you again! I hate you Evie for screwing up my life!

Before you start berating me, hear me out on my reasoning.

By not picking up the phone the first time a guy calls, you're firing up the chase. This guy of yours has worked up a bunch of courage to call you. When you don't answer, he's going to have to leave you a message which means additional work on his part. After, he's going to think about you more. He'll wonder what you're doing and why you're not ringing him back. There's a shift in power because now he'll be checking his phone to see if you've called him back. You've become more attractive by making yourself a busy person and a bigger challenge.

I know the next question that's coming: do you call him back or wait for him to call again? After a guy's initial call, if he leaves a message, I will return his call within twenty-four hours. Although I do not want to appear over eager or glued to my phone, I don't want to be rude either. I mean, I do like the guy. If he doesn't leave a message I'll wait until he calls again. You know what: a guy will call you back if he wants to reach you.

Don't Always be Available When He Wants to See You:

Initially, don't make yourself too available. If a guy can hang out with you whenever is convenient for him, you won't be as big of a priority. Instead, turn down last minute plans. Resist accepting every invitation. A guy will assume you're popular and realize he needs to plan further in advance if he really wants to see you.

For instance, if a guy asks you out for a Tuesday night and you already have plans with your friends, don't

drop your plans. Tell him that you are busy and get him to suggest a different night. Maybe a Friday because Friday is a far better date night. Sometimes you may not even have plans on a Tuesday (but surely you could if you wanted to). Still, block out your time as unavailable. Indicate that you're not desperate for the first date that comes your way. Your life doesn't revolve around a guy's schedule.

Don't be a Booty Call:

If you want something more serious with a guy, absolutely never ever be a late night convenience. A guy texting you at midnight isn't flattering, it's an afterthought. From the get-go, don't accept this bad behavior.

My rule: Don't pick up the phone or reply to a text past 10pm. You are unavailable and busy. If he wants to see you, he should have contacted you in advance.

My rule: Don't pick up the phone or reply to a text past 10pm. If he wants to see you, he should have contacted you in advance.

Here's an example of unacceptable:

Text at 11:30pm from Jamil: *At Beantown Pub.*

Here, Jamil has made the mistake of texting me far too late. Further, his text is not even an invitation, but rather a notification. In my head, I'm wondering if he and his friends arrived at Beantown Pub, there weren't any pretty girls, so bored, as an afterthought, he considered texting me for some excitement. And, I have to wonder, how many other girls?

Jamil and his friends surely communicated earlier than 11:30pm with their nightly plan and Jamil could have included me in that plan.

Here's how Jamil could have played the same scenario to prove that he wanted to see me that night:

Text at 7:30pm from Jamil: *Hey! Me and the crew are going out tonight. Not sure where yet. You and your friends going out? Want to meet up?*

Text at 11:30pm from Jamil: *At Beantown Pub. You should join us.*

This scenario is my exception to the post-10pm rule. Here, Jamil is still out with his boys but he's indicated clearly, early on, that he hopes to see me that night. He shared his plan instead of making me a late-night afterthought. Now, if I am out with my friends, I am far more inclined to convince them to go to Beantown Pub to meet him even though he texted me past the usual cut-off time.

Never buy the excuse that guys don't plan anything ahead of time. For their favorite band's show, they wouldn't miss the opening song, would they? They wouldn't show up late to Opening Day of their favorite sport's team? If something is a priority, they fit it in their schedule. Similarly, if you're important, they'll include you in their pre-planning and make you a priority.

***Make Him Think You are Interested,
but Not 100% Sold On Him:***

So back to the story of our girl Jessica. Here was their initial exchange:

Ryan wrote her: *Hey! It's Ryan from the other night. How's your Saturday?*

Ecstatic, Jessica fired back: *Hi! So good to hear from*

you! My day is great so far! I just got back from brunch at that awesome new spot in the South End with friends. Might be a little drunk off too many mimosas. LOL! Now shopping on Newbury Street. What are you up to tonight? Might go out later to that new club...

Stop!

Writing a novel like this, Jessica is trying far too hard. Ryan was being polite. He didn't ask for Jessica's life story. With a lengthy reply like this, Jessica is letting him know that she really likes him and just how badly she wants to please him.

Worse, she's spoiling him. He's written all of nine words, he's essentially proven nothing yet, and she's making it obvious she's sold. She tells him it's so good to hear from him, and then asks what he's doing later that night. Once a

guy knows that you are 100% sold on him, he knows he doesn't have to put in as much work to impress you. And why should he? You're already so happy with him at the bare minimum.

Instead, don't try so hard. Make him put in some effort in the beginning. Act coy. Be a little noncommittal and mysterious. Make him wonder if he can win you over. The girl a guy can't figure out is the most attractive.

Here's a few ways to do this:

Get In, Get Out:

Keep the conversation short and sweet, fun and flir-

Once a guy knows that you are 100% sold on him, he knows he doesn't have to put in as much work to impress you.

tatious. Before asking you out he may pepper you with some personal questions: What are your favorite movies or books? What's one food you couldn't live without? What song do you sing in the shower? If you confess over text, phone or social media that you love *Annie Hall*, read anything by David Sedaris, inhale peanut butter straight out of the jar, and belt out *The Lion King's* "Circle of Life," he will have nothing to learn about you on the first date. Save the get-to-know-you topics for later. Make the goal of phone calls and texts to hash out the date details and then wrap up the conversation quickly. For texting, refrain from replying to every message he writes. Let his text be the last message in the chain. The magic rule is to leave him wanting more.

Don't Help a Guy Ask You Out:

On a Thursday, Jeff and I went out on our first date.

The following Sunday evening he called me up after dinner. The conversation started out something like this:

"Hey! How was your weekend?"

"Good. Got into a little trouble. Yours?"

"Good. I went up to Toronto...."

Jeff continued to tell me about his trip to Toronto. This segued into a story about a new client he was working with. Patiently, I waited for the highly anticipated part of the call, the part where he planned to ask me out on our second date.

"So what are you up to this week?" he finally brought up.

Now my response could have taken two different routes.

The first: "I have dinner plans with a friend tomorrow, but I'm absolutely free the rest of the week if you want

to do something. Maybe we could hang out Wednesday?”

Luckily I stopped myself.

Asking myself out like this, I'd steal Jeff's thunder, claiming the role of the aggressor. He wouldn't have to do any work. As a rule, the harder a guy has to work for something the more he's going to value it. So all eager beaver, suggesting we hang out and choosing a day I'd end up appearing too interested, easy and available.

So instead I chose a second alternative:

I acted coy. Of course Jeff wasn't calling just to tell me about the amazing oysters he had in Toronto. I was onto Jeff. I knew the purpose of all the banter beforehand; he was building up to ask me out. So I didn't give away my excitement. I pretended the entire call was just a nice little chit chat. Not that I was already planning which dress I'd wear on our next date.

My answer was, “I have dinner plans with a friend tomorrow night.” Then I paused and handed the lead back to Jeff.

This prompted Jeff to suggest a day. “What are you up to Friday night?”

“Hmm, I don't think I have anything Friday night yet?”

Again, a crossroads emerged. The last thing I wanted to do was blurt out things like, “There's a great comedy club that has a show on Fridays. We could do that...”

I needed to put the brakes on jumping into planning mode. Jeff's duty is to ask me out.

Besides, the activity he'd decide upon could say a lot about him. I had to remind myself I'm the chooser, not the pursuer. The ball lays in my court to decide if the date

happens.

I waited and Jeff decisively made a plan, “Do you want to do dinner and drinks? Have you been to The Black Cat?”

Here’s another scenario.

I had a big crush on this guy named Peter and hoped he would ask me on a date. We’d been texting and playing phone tag for a few days. When I returned his call after lunch, he picked up. We had a conversation about our weekends, but nothing seemed to indicate he was moving towards meeting up in person.

Sure, I could suggest, “*Do you want to go out this week? Happy hour?*” Hell, I could totally throw caution to the wind: “*How about Friday? Drinks on me!*”

But by doing this, I’d steal the role of the pursuer from him, kill the attraction, and encourage complacency. Remember: men feel attraction when they officiate as the pursuer and work for your affection. When you take this role from them, their lustful feelings plummet to a suicidal zero, they grow lazy, and expect you to do all the legwork.

On the other hand, perhaps I’d wrongly assumed Peter’s texts and phone calls indicated he wanted to take me on a date. Maybe he legitimately just wanted to gossip over the phone. Unlikely for a

Men feel attraction when they officiate as the pursuer and work for your affection. When you take this role from them, their lustful feelings plummet to a suicidal zero, they grow lazy, and expect you to do all the legwork.

dude, but wholly possible.

If a guy gives you no indication that he is leading up to asking you out, speed up the process by signaling that you need to end the conversation. This is similar to the exit excuse line we used when closing a conversation. Chitchat is fun but much more fun over a few margaritas. Don't waste your time dilly-dallying on the phone; you're a busy girl. If a guy wants to talk further, if he's interested, he should want to see you in person.

My mom uses an expression that seems fitting here: "Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free." I was giving Peter all my time and witty conversation without a single date. I needed to cut him off. I gave Peter the cue that I needed to wrap it up. Basically, silently indicating that he needed to get to his point sooner than later. Ask me out or not.

"Hey, so I need to get back to work." Which is true. I talked with him an extra fifteen minutes over my lunch break. At this point, my boss might be scouring the building for me. *"It was good catching up."*

Peter cut in quickly with, "Well maybe we can get together Friday night? Maybe we could grab dinner?"

Good thing Peter couldn't see the silent, little victory dance that I was doing in the middle of the sidewalk.

Avoid His Social Media:

Armed with Freddie's last name, what was the first thing that Gretchen did between handing out her phone number and meeting Freddie for tapas and wine? She booted up her computer and studied his Facebook page. Albums chock full of photos of his pit bull Patches, parties at his apartment, college football tailgates and snowboarding trips to

Jackson Hole provided her with a cliff notes version of his life. Instagram unearthed a visual timeline of the past six months. His Tumblr indicated he was pretty into Pink Floyd, exotic animals, and maple syrup. This was good, she figured. She was getting insights into Freddie.

On their date, Gretchen told Freddie, “I saw that you went to Jackson Hole.” She launched into a story about her last trip to Aspen. She told him about her love of Spider Monkeys, pit bulls, “Brick in the Wall” and syrup-laden blueberry pancakes.

Natalie met Anthony at a friend’s birthday party. At the end of the night, after they made out on the back porch, he asked for her number and proposed dinner the following Sunday night, and she suggested they follow each other on social media.

The entire week, Natalie raved about Anthony to her friends. He’s six-foot two, hot and ripped. He’s studying law. He’s president of his fraternity. With each retelling of how they met and their magical first kiss, she cued up his social media pages and her friends fawned over the photos of him.



Tuesday, she spotted photos of Anthony and his fraternity brothers out for happy hour. Anthony was posing with a goofy hat on. They were friends, possibly more than friends, she figured, so with a thoughtful tap, she liked the photo. You know, just to remind him of her. Later that day, when she checked

back, three other girls had commented on his photo. One redhead even went so far as to write ‘Hi cutie! Missed you last night!’

Wednesday he posted about his favorite band. Natalie loved the band too, so she joined the list of comments, indicating her favorite song.

Friday, after a slew of posts, she discovered that his fraternity had hosted a party. She frowned scrolling through photographs of Anthony playing beer pong, Anthony dancing, and Anthony’s arms wrapped around a group of pretty girls. Why hadn’t Anthony thought to invite her? Was he dating one of these girls? Was he just a player?

When you like a guy, sure, you want to know everything about him. You want to see where he lives, what he likes, who his friends are, and what his ex-girlfriend looks like.

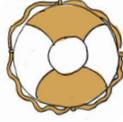
Although, what you see online can be misleading. Social media tells only a portion of the story. We curate our pages to portray the best version of ourselves: hot, popular, sensational and busy. Many times though, it’s not really what’s going on.

Both Natalie and Gretchen wanted to spy. Natalie found things that she didn’t like. She wondered why she wasn’t invited to the party. Finding the ‘Hi cutie!’ comment by another girl, irked her. Natalie hadn’t even gone out with Anthony yet and she was already getting jealous and angry. Gretchen knew too much about Freddie before even going into the date. Gretchen’s intentions were good, she only wanted to point out to Freddie all the things they had in common. But by commenting on things that he had not yet brought up in actual conversation, Gretchen looked

more like a stalker.

Stay as far away as you can from a guy's Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, or whatever else is the new-fangled social media site. First, you'll steer clear of making prejudgments. Second, instead of already coming into a date knowing everything about a guy, you will actually get a chance to get to know each other organically. Let him tell you about his strange syrup obsession. Or his awesome trip to Jackson Hole, complete with embarrassing moments and epic tales. A bond isn't created by matching up your common interests, it's formed by sharing and communicating. Lastly, and most importantly, you'll avoid looking too interested. Gretchen marked up Anthony's social media page. No question, our little vixen liked him, so much she transformed herself into eager beaver, super fan 99. Anthony hadn't even taken her out for a drink and she was already acting like his girlfriend. Remember, you want to make a guy wonder how much you actually like him.

A good analogy is to look at the first few follow up conversations like a good game of tag. The excitement lies in the chase. If you stop running and get caught, the game is over. But if you run fast for a little while, slow up, run fast again, and then let your opponent almost catch up and tag you, he'll keep chasing you. Giving your opponent the illusion they are winning, they will sense victory. When you surprise them and take that victory away, you'll keep the game going. Toying with each other like this is fun, creates good tension and sets up an ongoing challenge. Guys love a challenge. You're more attractive if you aren't always running away and also if you aren't always giving in. Be unpredictable by alternating your responses. And if he can catch you, he'll value you a whole lot more.



ONE-NIGHT STAND

911

I'd consider sex with Dylan, not sex, but half of sex. After some awkward shuffling, panting, repositioning, some soft moaning on his part, and I have to ask, "Is it in?" and he says, "Yes," then it's too small to fully count.

This disappointing evening ended with a walk across campus at dawn, wearing a nylon tube top and zebra print skirt, my one hand clutching my forehead in attempts to cure last night's pain, the other, pressing my tiny clutch to my bare stomach in hopes to conceal any dignity I had left. My gait must have closely resembled a pirate with a peg leg. I'd lost one of my platform sandals somewhere along the evening. I couldn't remember where. I'd searched Dylan's place but threw my hands up after ten minutes. Just like the sex. Dylan said he'd call me if he found it. He didn't say he'd call me otherwise. Honestly, the sandal was the biggest casualty.

The outcome of a one-night stand is like a choose-your-own-adventure novel. The story begins the same, with

two crazy kids embarking on a spontaneous, passionate romp. Yet there's several alternate endings.

Like Dylan and me, there's a chance you aren't looking for anything serious, you're just banking on a night of steamy sex and don't care if you ever see that person again. At worst, you'll have a few awkward run-ins.

Or, although you go into the night apathetic, after several rounds between the sheets, you realize that you might want to sleep with this guy casually in the future. This can end with you and your fuck buddy copulating off into the setting sun, or begrudgingly accepting the 2AM booty calls.

Then there's the times you're looking for something more serious. You've developed real feelings for a handsome lad. It's your one chance, caught up in the moment, you jump him and shag him silly. This can either end with long walks on the beach coupled with conversations over Merlot, or weeks waiting for that phone call – a phone call your fetching fellow never makes. This second scenario is the dead end. The disastrous ending you wish you could have foreseen. If you'd have known you would have done things differently.

Love, more often than not, is complicated. Facebook didn't fight this fact, they keenly offer more status options than just 'single,' 'married' or 'in a relationship.' And maybe this is because we're no longer the traditional heroines; we have more choices in our story too.

While the time-honored trend of our parent's and grandparent's generation was to marry younger, birth a couple kiddies, and buy that white picket fence house in the suburbs, today more and more women are dominating the work force, buying their own condos, and adopting or raising chil-

dren on their own. According to data from the U.S. Census, the percentage of unmarried women between the ages of 35 and 39 only increased 0.8% from 1999 to 2009. Yet from 2009 to 2011 it jumped from 11.8% to a whopping 14%. This data shows that more women are remaining single later in life. While the cause for this dramatic spike is uncertain, it does mean that there are a greater number of women out there dating and hooking up at an older age. This could be attributed to the fact that many of these mid-to-late thirty-somethings are satisfied with their lives without needing a monogamous relationship. Companionship, a boyfriend, or a baby has been replaced with a slew of single best friends and a sweater-wearing French bulldog.

It's only natural that with all this time spent at the office, jetting away to exotic locales with girlfriends, and taking Frenchie to the dog park, convenience dating has become more popular. Sites such as Tinder and OKCupid sprung up almost overnight, allowing women to locate single men a few miles from their current location, with features that connect them to men in minutes. Hooking up has never been as easy as in the digital age.

Previously, we discussed the pros and cons of one-night stands and fuck buddies. Since most dating books don't recommend diving into the sheets after you first meet a man, they also come up short when offering advice on what to do if you do happen to hook up. This seems a bit unfair to me. So I decided we should tackle the task. We'll analyze follow-ups to a one-night stand and ways that you can get closer to the ending you want. I've split this chapter into two parts, based on your goals beyond the morning after. Since the love-you-and-leave-you folks are already satisfied, we'll focus on the other two scenarios. First, if you'd like to turn

your one-night stand into a fuck buddy and second, if you're angling for a more serious relationship with him.

You Aren't Looking For Anything Serious. But After Sleeping with a Guy You Realize that You Might Want to Sleep with Him Casually in the Future:

Gina, 33, met a 25-year old guy we'll call Adam at a bar. She was crashing on her friend's couch at the time and after crazy sex with him on the kitchen table, they moved round two to the couch.

"That was so incredible," she gushed as they spooned. "So spontaneous." She kissed Adam over and over, "Just so you know, I don't normally do this," She told him.

The next morning, she drove Adam back to his apartment. On the drive, they stopped off at a coffee shop and Gina bought him a latte and a scone. She suggested they do this again and should exchange numbers. As he swung open the passenger door, her phone rang. The image set to come up on her phone when her dad called was a picture she'd taken of him in a plaid shirt.

"What is that?" Somehow her one-night stand must have glanced at the picture and mistaken it as a photo of himself from the night before. "You already have a picture of me on your phone?" Adam jumped to the conclusion that she'd gone so far as to pair a picture with his phone number he'd just given her.

Gina's hangover didn't help her confusion. "What?" Or the swiftness of her reply. "No." For some reason her

phone refused to cue up the picture again, so she tried to explain, “That was a picture of my dad.”

Adam glowered at her, bounded out of her car, and slammed the door hard.

Being broke, between jobs and close to homeless (she lived on her friends couch) didn't afford Gina the luxury of having a serious boyfriend – that was the last thing on her mind. Her adventure with Adam distracted her from her plight. He was her first one-night-stand in years and she toyed with the idea of promoting him to bi-weekly fuck-buddy status.

So two days later, Gina reached out to Adam by text, “The other night was fun. Want to hang out next week?”

With no reply, the following weekend she wrote him again, “What are you up to? Want to meet up?”

After two weeks of similar unanswered texts, she finally deleted his number.

Gina's one-night stand with Adam was a happy exception she hoped to repeat on a more frequent basis. Had she wanted more, she wouldn't have jumped into the sack so quickly. Didn't her upfront actions convey that to Adam?

Guaranteed, Adam isn't sitting in a trust circle with his best buds, holding hands, burning incense, decoding Gina's reasons for sleeping with him. He's a dude, his conditioned response is: “I just got laid.” *Awesome. High five. Let's go play some video games.* In his mind, sex is physical. A guy won't analyze anything unless a girl starts getting more aggressive. Then he'll leap to the conclusion: “She's smothering me! She's smothering me!” With Gina's behavior, Adam could have easily presumed that she was looking for a more serious relationship.

First, she told Adam, “I never do this.” To avoid the negative stigma associated with sleeping around, women like to paint their one-night-stands as a fluke, special occasion. A girl will justify she isn’t a slut; the guy’s an anomaly, he’s an exception. But what makes the guy so special? If you’re looking to rack up numbers, don’t paint yourself as a Virgin Mary who’s met her knight in shining armor. He’ll think you harbor romantic feelings for him.

Secondly, Gina fits into an age bracket we’ll call the Dating Danger Zone. Many commitment-phobes avoid women between the ages of 28 and 36. They think this age bracket wants to pop out a baby or two, knows they aren’t 21 anymore, and fears they need to get a man on ‘lockdown’ before the aging process wreaks havoc on their looks.

Even though Gina didn’t want anything besides a fuck buddy, her communication contradicted her intentions. It’s unlikely Gina would have asked Adam directly, “What do you think about banging every couple of weeks?” Which is actually what she should have proposed. Instead, she disguised her intentions by suggesting casual sex indirectly, inviting him to bars and asking to ‘meet up’ or ‘hang out’.

These messages are easily misconstrued by a guy like Adam, who thinks she secretly wants more. He may view her invitations as strategic, hopeful date proposals. Young Adam might have enjoyed their tryst, but doesn’t want the complications that come with seeing a girl repeatedly. Nothing is worse than ‘the talk’ of where this is going after a few hookups.

If you establish yourself as the aggressor, such as Gina did with Adam, you may scare away a young buck. By the way Adam reacted to the picture on her phone (that was not even his picture), we can gather that Adam most like-

ly fears Gina is moving too fast. There's a chance he dated someone overly possessive in the past and the incident jaded him. Or he just ended a long-term relationship and is hell bent on his freedom. Either way, Adam thinks Gina wants to sink her claws in him. Notice, she is the one that asked him out. She bought Adam the latte and scone, not the other way around. Gina is establishing that she has control. There's a role reversal. She is courting him.

Although Gina's an independent gal in need of a good shag and not embarrassed to ask for it, she went about it in the wrong way. Let's revisit what we learned when closing a conversation to find out why this aggressive, obvious approach doesn't work well.

When wrapping up a conversation, we learned to pull away by making up an exit excuse. This cues the man to pursue and allows us to gauge his interest level. If his efforts are lackluster or nonexistent, move on. He's not that into you. But if he's willing to work for your affection, you've got yourself an interested suitor.

Second, our uncertainty establishes that we are not 100% sold on him. After a one-night-stand, the guy should still feel a bit uncertain about how much you like him. He shouldn't think: *Whelp, I got this one. Another notch on the bedpost. Yep, she loves me. I'm a fucking stud. Or worse, God, she's calling all the time. Sex was alright with her, but man, she's super clingy.* It's much better if he wonders: *Does she really like me or was this just a good time for her? Could I really get with this girl again or did I just get lucky that one time?*

So what could Gina have done differently?

Every guy wants to delude himself into thinking he's a stallion in the bedroom. The morning after, a guy is

strutting around like a peacock in prime mating season. He's flexing in the shower, belting out the theme song to *Rocky* at the top of his lungs. He's bragging to his buddies, "I swear she was walking with a limp."

Women pump up a guy's ego by piling on compliments after sex. We bestow sexual medals of honor, calling the sex 'incredible' like Gina, or 'mind-blowing,' or raving about the quadruple orgasms he supposedly gave us. We want guys to like us and be satisfied in our presence, so we inflate the truth a bit and tell them that they pleased us better than anyone else. And maybe they did? Maybe he can make you cum four times consecutively? Either way, men will take these compliments as success. Success in a way that their work is done. That wasn't that hard. They can relax. They are sex gods in our eyes. We're lucky to have them.

What have we done? We've given them all the deciding power.

Whereas, can you imagine what would happen if instead of acting impressed after sex, a girl acted indifferent? What if after sex a girl didn't act more or less affectionate. She didn't cling to him. She didn't say he blew her mind. I'll bet a guy would freak out. You see, he's been through this rigmarole before and most girls will be shouting his greatness from the rooftops, expecting boyfriend behavior, and cuddly pillow talk. When you don't give him his due praise, it's an ego blow. *What did I do wrong? I thought I was Mac Daddy in the sack? Doesn't she like me? Has she had better?*" He'll see you differently and want to prove himself. Lo and behold, you have the power.

I'm not saying that Gina had to roll over and kick Adam off the couch that night, but she could have acted more coy. Words like 'mind-blowing,' 'incredible,' or 'best'

make a guy think he's the greatest lover you've ever had and encourage him to half-ass it in the future. But when you act indifferent, you indicate the sex might have been good, but there's room for improvement.

Gina didn't need to be a cold hard bitch to Adam, but she also didn't need to shower him with attention the next morning. The scone, the coffee, the number, the mistaken picture, it all adds up and freaks Adam out. Worse, it's almost like she was trying to bribe Adam to see her again: I'll drive you home, I'll buy you breakfast, here take my number.

One-night stands usually end with someone sneaking out in the wee hours of the morning. Dating ends with cuddling and breakfast. Gina gave Adam the wrong idea. She should have called him a cab. If she was driving him home, Adam should have payed for the coffee and scones in exchange for the free ride. Gina most likely didn't think of the four buck breakfast as a big splurge, but to young Adam it was the act that was more meaningful. The next day, he probably bragged to his friends, "You wouldn't believe it, I even got her to get me breakfast!" Gina transformed herself into Adam's sugar-mama.

My first rule: don't be the one convincing a guy to see you again; he should be the one hoping to score with you again.

Imply that just because he slept with you once, doesn't mean he'll get to sleep

**My first rule:
don't be the
one convincing
a guy to see you
again; he should
be the one hoping
to score with
you again.**

with you again. Adam probably thought he was the shit. When Gina suggested they see each other again, she only inflated his ego further and made herself appear less of a prize. If she didn't mention seeing him again, he'd wonder why. Had she not enjoyed the sex? Was this only a one-night thing? It was a pretty fun night but could he get her again? Suddenly, she's not so easy; he'd be lucky if he could sleep with her again.

Gina should have used more direct and sexual communication in her follow-up messages. Don't ask "How's your day?" or "What club are you at?" to start the line of communication. Instead, start with something suggestive like: "I'm naked" or "Where are you? If I was there I'd (insert a sexual act that you did or would like to do)." These types of statements bait a guy. Once you hook him, you can arrange a reasonable time to meet.

This leads to my next rule: set a precedent.

There's a difference between a 2AM booty call and a fuck buddy. Face the facts: You're probably not the first girl he's had casual sex with. Maybe he doesn't sport a billion dollar bank account or GQ looks. Perhaps he's a little shy. But if you fancy him, other women do as well. He may have throngs of willing females just a text mes-

This leads to my next rule: set a precedent. There's a difference between a 2AM booty call and a fuck buddy. To avoid becoming a booty call, create a consistent and respectful arrangement.

sage away. You have no way of knowing where you stack up on his totemic pole of value. So, if you are willing to enter a fuck buddy situation, you must come to terms with these facts. And similarly, he doesn't have to be the only one that you are hooking up with. Fuck buddies use each other. There's a mutual understanding. A consistent routine. Naturally, a guy might be looking to meet new people or have other fuck buddies on the docket, so scheduling should be flexible. For this reason, don't ask a fuck buddy to make plans too far in advance. Dates are obligations scheduled days ahead of time. Fuck buddies are an easy convenience. Still, both parties agree on a respectable time for the meet up. Usually earlier in the evening, from 7PM to 9PM, so it doesn't interfere with each other's outside obligations.

On the other hand, booty calls hand one party the short end of the stick. More often than not, the guy calls the shots. While the girl patiently waits for his 2AM phone call, he attempts to score with some fresh meat. If he fails, he may call her as a last resort. The later it gets, the more she worries that he passed out or... gulp... even worse... hooked up with another girl. He fully knows the power he wields: one request and she'll traipse over to his apartment at any hour to service him. Booty calls are unpredictable and one-sided because they are all on a guy's whim.

So to avoid becoming a booty call, set a precedent that doesn't tolerate late night bad behavior. Basically, create a consistent and respectful arrangement.

Let's say at 8PM we send a baited text that simply reads: *"I'm wet."*

The blatant sexuality of the message lures the guy in. Now he's getting a little bit worked up, yet if we want him as a fuck buddy, we'll delay meeting him until we can set up

a time at a reasonable hour. If we agreed to meet him later that night, let's say at 2AM, we'd only prove we're desperate to hook up on his terms and lose all our negotiative power, reducing us to a booty call. Rather, when he suggests meeting up, we'll propose an earlier time the following night, maybe at 7PM. We're establishing guidelines and setting up a routine.

If you create a clear agreement from the beginning, you'll both know what you're getting into and be able to enjoy the situation for what it is. And what single dude wouldn't be stoked to have a hot girl on call, no strings attached?

You Are Looking For Something Serious And End Up Sleeping With the Guy Right Away:

Lily really liked a guy named Marshall who worked at the same hedge fund company as her friend Robin. Marshall seemed pretty into Lily. He asked Robin about her, told Robin to bring her to parties, they flirted, and at one of the parties asked for her phone number.

He promptly called and set up a date. A proper gentleman, he arrived at her apartment with flowers a bottle of Prosecco and wedge of brie. They drank, ate, and



then cabbied it over to his friend's holiday party on the Upper West Side. All seemed to be going perfectly. Drunk, they ended up back at his place and had a crazy night of mind-blowing sex.

The next morning, as they lounged in his bed, she stroked his hair and cuddled with him and Marshall told her he'd never been with a girl as smart and successful as her. Lily had heard through her friend Robin that he usually dated 21-year old college students. She took his acknowledgment as a good sign; maybe he was looking for something more mature and serious.

A little before noon, he took her to his favorite diner for breakfast. They mowed down greasy eggs and sloshed back a few Bloody Mary's. Marshall opened up to her and confided that his mother was going through chemo. Lily reached across the table and held Marshall's hand. Then he turned the conversation to a lighter note, New Year's Eve. He and his friends were planning a trip up to Stowe. He hinted there might be extra rooms at his friend's cabin and maybe they could get a group together and go.

The following week didn't go well for Lily. A careless bike messenger hit her on Madison Avenue and she was taken to the hospital for stitches. Two days later, her job threw her on a plane to Philadelphia for an emergency summit. She didn't tell Marshall about the accident but with their mutual friend Robin she assumed he must have heard.

She wrote Marshall from Philadelphia, 'Hope you're having a good week.'

Her phone remained silent.

Returning from the summit, a week since she and Marshall had hooked up, she posted an aerial picture of JFK on her social media page. It gave her hope when Marshall

liked her photo.

She texted him: 'Hey Stranger, what's your week look like. Drinks?'

When Marshall didn't return her message, she began to concoct excuses for him, first assuming he was busy with work, then blaming the stress of his mother's illness.

She attempted to contact him again with, 'Are you OK?'

Stress did seem like a plausible reason for his disappearance, until Robin noted she saw him out at a party, having a good time.

When New Year's passed she started to wonder if she'd been duped. Marshall had appeared genuinely interested but maybe all he wanted was a one-night stand.

Why is it that we never hear a guy say: "I just want to fuck you and then never talk with you again. Cool?" A bit of disguised dishonesty proves to give them better results. Can't fathom why? Men are hot-blooded hunting machines who pride themselves on their number of conquests. They will do whatever it takes to bed a girl, spouting things they really don't mean, "Marriage! House in the suburbs! Strap that Baby Bjorn to my chest!" Men tell you what you want to hear, despite their lower-level, primal intentions.

You won't gain anything by sleeping with a guy. Good sex, even mind-blowing sex, isn't going to make a guy care about you. Recall, we discussed two types of attraction - physical attraction and emotional attraction. Guys need only physical attraction to sleep with a girl. They need both physical and emotional attraction to want something more serious.

Though, all hope isn't lost. A healthy, happy relation-

ship is still in the cards if a guy has an attraction to you both physically and emotionally. Personally, I have several good friends who banged their boyfriends on their first dates. The key to success is patience, space, and slight skepticism and indifference until the guy has shown his affections.

The next morning, the sex haze will wear off and the situation will come into focus. There are three ways you can process what happened.

One way, you throw on some Jason Durulo, hug your cat, and dance wildly around your apartment. It's fate. Oh what a great day it is, you've found you're soul mate! He talked about love! He likes Ethan for a boy's name too! Maybe you go online and order matching his-and-hers terry cloth robes.

Or, the realization slams you to the floorboards like a four hundred pound sumo wrestler. Your stomach cramps, you can't breathe, you cry out for help. The weight of the situation keeps piling up: You're an idiot. You screwed up. Now's he's slept with you. You're no longer a challenge. Oh course he isn't calling you. He probably assumes you're naming his children and picking out matching his-and-hers terry cloth robes by now.

Or, there's a chance as you're going about your day – at brunch with friends, on a brisk morning jog – your lips twitch as a snapshot from the night flashes through your head. There's no argument, you and this hottie are definitely compatible in bed. It certainly was a fun and slightly naughty evening, but there's so much more you could have done. You like him, you might actually care about him, you admit to your surprise. At the same time, you're a little leery of him. You'd consider sleeping with him again, but he has to prove beyond words that he wants something more too.

As you can guess, I'm steering you away from purchasing the monogrammed robes.

Possibly the biggest mistake a girl can make after a one-night stand is appearing over-eager. Girls have a tendency to 'reach-out' after a casual encounter with something like: 'Great time last night!!!' 'How's your day today?' or 'So much fun last night! Let's hang out again soon!' Emoticon!

These seemingly harmless, friendly reminders ease regrets and are meant to serve as a reminder to the guy what a fun filled evening they shared. Yet your seemingly innocent 'reach-out' isn't without repercussions. Being the first to initiate contact, you are pursuing him. These reminders let a guy know that you're interested and it is up to him to decide whether or not he wants to see you again. Further, these 'reach-outs' could be misconstrued as attention-seeking neediness. Or, you're jumping the gun on commitment. Too many reminders and a guy will feel trapped and smothered. The emergency sirens going off in his head tell him to duck and cover: *This girl doesn't think we're dating, now does she?*

Lily tried to be cute by beginning her message with 'Hey stranger.' This phrasing, although an interesting opener, only served to blatantly reiterate to Marshall that he hadn't contacted her but she was going to chase him regardless.

The worst possible message you can send is one assuming there must be something wrong because a guy hasn't contacted you. Please, please, please, for your own good, never write: "Are you alright?" If he's not contacting you, there's a reason he's not contacting you. More than likely, he's just not that into you. No one fell ill. He's not swamped at work. There isn't a *Roots* marathon keeping him

strapped to his sofa.

In Lily's scenario, there's a good chance Marshall wanted only a one-night-stand with her. I'm guessing he admired her and found her physically attractive, but didn't see her as anything more than a challenge.

On the other hand, she thought they had a real connection.

Being a red-blooded hunter with a penchant for a new kill, Marshall helped feed her fantasy. He brought her flowers, champagne and stinky cheese, took her as his date to a party, bought her breakfast, shared personal stories, and created future plans. We can pass off the

champagne, flowers, and brie as understandable. At that point, he was still seducing her. But once he slept with her, after he already got what he wanted, why did he continue the charade the next morning? He could have just bolted, but he bought her breakfast? Why after unreturned texts, did he approve her photograph on social media?

Most likely, because they had a mutual friend, Robin. He worked with Robin on a daily basis. Work could be a nightmare if Lily bitched to Robin about his douchebaggery.

The worst possible message a girl can send is one assuming there must be something wrong because a guy hasn't contacted them. Never write: 'Are you alright?' If he's not contacting you, there's a reason he's not contacting you. He's just not that into you.

Also, because their worlds overlap, there's a good chance he'd run into Lily in the future. He certainly didn't want Lily creating a scene by throwing a hissy fit and drink in his face.

So Marshall slowly soothed the blow. He didn't sneak out that morning. Instead, he gave her some reassurance that she'd made an alright decision: false promises, faked intimacy, a little 'like' on social media to cover his more devious intentions.

The outcome might have not changed if Marshall didn't have any emotional feelings towards Lily, but there are a few things she could have done differently in this situation.

Earlier we discussed how most girls praise a guy after sex. The guy knows the girl likes him, the girl is unsure whether the guy likes him, so he possesses control in the situation. To shift the power, we act indifferent and unimpressed to make a guy wonder if we like him.

Let's take this a step further. After a one-night-stand, many women are going to continually contact a guy, praise him, bribe him with gifts, even corner him and demand to know his feelings. Instead, you are going to remain slightly indifferent. All the praise, gifts and reminders whether annoying or wonderful from his perspective, only further attest how much a girl likes him and what lengths she's willing to go to get him. She's convincing him to like her. He becomes the decider. And if he's uncertain of his feelings towards her, the harder she chases, the more he will run and hide. The bigger prize is the girl he can't get, the one who appears slightly disinterested.

So let's say you appear unimpressed after sex. Rather than 'mind-blowing', only acknowledge that the

sex was 'alright.' You can use phrases like, "That was nice," which gives meager praise. Or "Wow, I really made you cum," recognizing your own prowess. "We should try (insert sex position) next time," says that you're adventurous, but, not wholly satisfied with his current performance.

Next, keep your distance and be patient. Don't text or call him until he texts or calls you first. By not contacting him you're signaling that no one impresses you that quickly or easily. If he does like you he'll be a little put off that you're acting cold compared to the other girls who are so quick and eager to please him.

To occupy yourself in the meantime, stay busy with your own life. Accept dates with other guys. Broadcast that although you slept together, you have other options besides him. You aren't going to hound a guy to go out with you. At the same time, you don't wait around for a guy to call.

Reframe the situation: he's the one that needs to demonstrate that he's good enough for you, not the other way around. Wait for him to ask you on a proper date. Keep in mind, guys aren't attuned to our timelines. Girls often believe that if a guy's interested, he'll call in a few days tops. However, it may take him a few weeks to realize, "That girl's cool, I kind of like her, and definitely want to see her again." Most guys don't go into a one-night-stand knowing what they want, but after a little reflection, some discover they have deeper feelings for that person.

Make sure that if you do run into the guy or he does ask you out, you don't fall into the same trap and sleep with him again right away. Do not make a one-time instance a precedent. If you want a guy to date you, don't accept bad behavior as a consolation prize. Just because you've let him get away with it before, doesn't mean you should let him

get away with it again. I know girl logic all too well. She thinks that by showing up at a guy's door, he'll realize she's The One and fall madly in love with her. Alas, things don't always pan out the way they do in your favorite romance novel. I hate to say this, but men approach sex like lions do: sex develops into more sex, not meaningful relationships. Meet ups past midnight won't progress your relationship. It will only keep it in the same spot. And if that becomes a booty call, that's a rut that's hard to escape.

Yet just because you decided to jump into the sack quickly doesn't mean you can't reset the ground rules and decide you deserve more. If you follow a laid back approach, a guy will be wondering why you are different from all the other girls. Why aren't you smothering him with attention and expecting something more like all the rest? Give a guy time and space to decide what he feels for you. If he likes you, he won't want to lose you.



SEXTING IN THE GELSON'S FREEZER AISLE AND OTHER DATING BLOOPERS

When a date goes really well, it's thrilling. There's that unexpected feeling, that magical spark as both of you realize you have a connection above and beyond your mutual love of Scott Baio and YouTube cats falling.

Although sometimes Cupid misses. Shitty dates happen all the time. Whether it's because you don't like a guy, or he doesn't like you, or you both find some sort of consensus in your mutual contempt. The upside, the more dates you go on, the more extraordinary anecdotes you tend to stockpile. Over time, these tales morph into comedic performances you showcase at friend's dinner parties. Or worst-case scenario ice breakers used to one-up off-color dates.

While writing this book, a lot of my friends were eager to share their disasters from the dating trenches. Some of

these stories are funny, others, a bit more shocking. But they share something in common: each tale is about a hopeful singleton tempted by the promise of romance - be it sucking face in the depths of a dark club, blueberry pancakes and a pillow fight on a Saturday morning, or diving into shark infested waters with someone handsome. We can relate because we all go out there hoping for the best.

Yet no one warns you that there are no rules in dating. A guy can be a complete jerk. He can be totally fucked up and completely deceive you. A sociopath accountant. A spiritually enlightened drug lord. A Snuggie wearing QVC compulsive. A fanatic of that *I Love Raymond* show. By accepting a date, you're taking a risk. Don't get me wrong, I'm encouraging you to accept a lot of dates. Who knows? You might just click with the *I Love Raymond* dude? Just remember, if by chance you do end up across a table from a weirdo, don't feel bad. Know that others have been there right with you.

Cherie:

This guy took me to a super cheesy Italian restaurant where we loaded up on over-sauced mushy pasta. At the end of the date, he took out a gift certificate that his parents had given him for the restaurant. When we left, he made a big deal about how he had really spoiled me with such a nice meal, implying that I should pay him back with some TLC. Needless to say, there wasn't a second date. I wonder if his parents realized he was using their gift certificates to barter sexual favors.

Deborah:

Our brunch date was going well until he scolded me

for not eating my fruit cup. Then he took the other half of my meal and said that I'd had enough.

Fiona:

A 43 year-old man. "I'm the road manager of a major rock band." Before our date I met him at his studio apartment. He had no furniture, just a sleeping bag tossed in the middle of the room. He didn't own a car, so I had to drive us to a restaurant.

At the restaurant, he elaborated on his job. At each show, he actually unloaded the band's equipment. For free.

He was hot, so I paid for half our meal, and we went back to his place. We fucked on his sleeping bag and then I never returned his calls.

Madison:

I cancelled on a date because my mom was in town. He texted me: "You're being real fucking annoying." And then continued to call 23 times that night until I blocked his number. He was a psychiatrist.

Brooke:

He asked me if I liked sushi. I said yes, and he held up his palm and shouted, "High-five." He did this about five or six more times throughout dinner but I stopped high-fiving him after the second one. He also had some really strange compliments such as, "You have really nice eyebrows."

Katherine:

We'd been on one date when the guy sent me a text asking for a sexy picture. At the time, I was shopping at the grocery store. Feeling daring, I hoisted my leg up on the

ledge of the dairy case and started snapping shots up my jean shorts until a manager approached me and asked if he could help me with what I was doing. I said no and ran out of the store.

Anna:

After several awkward silences, I actually heard myself say: "So nature is kind of nice."

Tiara:

On a drive to Pizza Hut, he asked if it was ok if we pulled over. He immediately skidded to the car on the side of the road and whizzed on a tree. When he got back in the car, he reached across and grabbed my face and tried to kiss me.

Rima:

My date sold those Japanese knives you see on infomercials. When he picked me up at my parent's house, my dad answered the door and my date launched into his sales pitch.

Amber:

I thought he was nice until he kicked a pigeon.

Jemima:

I met this guy at a club in Mexico. After a sweet kiss goodnight at my hotel room, he returned ten minutes later and started violently pounding on my door, screaming my name, and swearing for twenty minutes straight.

His persuasion went from "I want you so bad. Come out." to "Fuck you, you fucking cunt."

I cowered in my bed, praying he'd go away.

In the morning I found a note slipped under my door which read: You fucked up. You don't know this but I am the best guy you will ever meet in your life. Your loss.

He was Canadian. I always assumed they were nice.

Jill:

On our first date, the guy, being a gentleman, asked to walk me home. We kissed for a bit in the doorway of my apartment. A fully Disney approved make out.

I wasn't sure how much I really liked him and wanted to get to bed so I began to nudge him out the door when he proceeded to rip his snap button shirt off Hulk-style. I picked his shirt up off the floor and reminded him that I needed to get up early.

Out of nowhere, he started to talk dirty to me.

"I want to touch your wet pussy."

"You know you want my rock hard cock."

I had to kick him and his snap shirt out.

Jennifer:

He took me to Denny's. He didn't order anything and told me he liked to watch me eat. He paid and we left.

Marie:

I was setup by a friend. We met at a place called Eno Vino for drinks and appetizers. It was early, like 5:30 at night. He proceeded to order an entire bottle of wine for the both of us, right off the bat. Didn't even ask me if I wanted or liked wine.

Then, as I'm telling him about my dog, he cuts me off and starts going on about how he hates animals.

Minutes later, he abruptly stopped our conversa-

tion, saying "let's just get this out of the way," leaned in and jammed his tongue down my throat.

I cried the entire drive home.

Misty:

I pointed out the fact that he was wearing a wedding band. "Oh that?" He pocketed the ring and without skipping a beat continued, "So I was saying.."

Isabel:

He whispered, "I'm a vampire. I want to suck your blood." Instead of running I logistically asked him how he was going to do this. A part of me wondered if Hot Topic now made products that could do this.

Erin:

The day before our first date this guy sent me a picture of him and his mom at a baseball game. Being polite, I told him he had a nice smile.

My phone blew up.

'You like my smile?'

'You make me smile.'

'You're so beautiful.'

'I can't wait to make you smile.'

'I hope you think I'm cute.'

'I'd smile for you again if you said I was cute.'

'I'm smiling so much because I can't wait till tomorrow.'

Beyond 30 text messages nothing could have swayed me to go on that date without a police escort.

Leah:

I was really excited about this guy until I showed up at the bar and he said he had someone special for me to meet. He led me to a table and introduced me to his sister. All night he kept trying to pair his sister and me up on the dance floor.

Sara:

Thirty minutes into dinner, my date leaned across the restaurant table and told me that his roommate's cat had died two days ago. I replied with something sympathetic. He told me that he'd put its body in the freezer until his roommate got home. If we went back to his place later, I shouldn't freak out.

Vivienne:

In a crowded bar he shouted that he loved cunnilingus. Then showed me videos of his ex-girlfriend running her high heels up and down his penis.

Margret.:

This guy insisted we go to a place with a television. The entire time he stared at the basketball game on TV and kept repeating, "I could have been at this game." Returning from the bathroom, I found him making bets with an older lady at the bar.

Holly:

He confessed he really found large asses attractive. He asked me to stand up and do a spin, which I was hesitant to do at first, but eventually obliged. He told me that my ass wasn't very big. He proceeded to ask if my mom had a big ass. Then he requested pictures of my mom, so he could

judge for himself.

Greta:

For our first date, he suggested I watch him play soccer with his intramural league. For three hours, I sat alone in the bleachers while he played. We stopped at a Taco Bell drive thru and then he took me home.

Nicole:

Before taking me to the performance of the Blue Man group, my date thought it would be a good idea to pop into the bar next door to where he used to work. It was a gay strip club. Men thrust their banana hammocks in my face while my date regaled me of his days dancing in a boy scout uniform.

Gabriela:

Using the candle in the center of the table, he lit his arm hair on fire. He blew it out and said, "Now you can't say this date was boring."

Charlene:

I quickly realized he was going to talk in a cartoon voice for the rest of the date.

Nina:

Right away he said, "You're one of those feminists, right?" Then returned to scanning the menu, "Because just so you know I don't believe in paying for a girl's meal."

Danielle:

We were at a coffee shop when I noticed my date

staring across the street at a girl waiting by the bus stop. He interrupted me and asked, "Do you think she's going to be alright?" I was a little put off but assured him that she was probably just waiting for the bus.

He followed this up with: "Well, cities can be dangerous. Just let me know when you see her get on the bus."

Samantha:

His opening line: "Do you like dogs?"

Me: "Yes."

Him: "I ate one last week in China."

April:

We started drinking early in the afternoon and on the walk to another bar I tripped and fell in the middle of a crowded sidewalk in Chinatown. People jumped to my aid and asked if I was okay. My date was a block ahead and it took him several minutes to realize I wasn't with him. My hands stung and my forehead sported a small gash. My date suggested we stop off at his apartment, which was close, to get a Band-Aid.

At his apartment complex, he led me through a maze of passageways until we emerged in an outdoor courtyard. I reminded him I was still bleeding. He ignored this and tried to make out with me. After I refused him, he realized he'd locked us out. To escape, we climbed over a chain link fence.

I skipped the Band-Aid and flagged a taxi home.

Kayla:

My date was forty minutes late. When he finally arrived at my house, he told me he'd hit a fire hydrant on the

way there. The back corner of his Firebird was dented in the shape of the fire hydrant.

Still we went to the movie. Just after the opening credits, he turned around and started talking to a man. I soon learned the man was his dad. My date had to go turn himself in at the police station. Someone had filed a hit and run on him for the fire hydrant.

His parents drove me home in their minivan.

Jane:

Him: "I'm studying to be an oceanographer. So I don't want to get too close to anyone. There's a good chance I'll die of the bends."

Savannah:

On our first date, before I even knew his last name, he asked if we could take a picture together. "So we can remember this forever." He took two. He said, "In case you looked bad in one."

Lauren:

Late one night I met a cute bearded guy in line at a food truck. He said he was short a dollar for food so I gave it to him with a kiss and my phone number. The next day he didn't call. But then I saw him sleeping in front of a Starbucks.

And one of my own:

While internet dating, a guy named Seth asked me on a date to a German beer hall. Hours before our date, I received a text from Seth: "My good Evie, I hoped it didn't come to this but I have to ask to postpone dinner tonight as

work requires me to stay for last minute changes. I'm quite upset about it. I hope you understand. Thursday?"

I began writing a normal response, but deleted it. Worried I'd made an error in judgment when scanning his profile (did I miss his penchant for Medieval Times?), and preparing to save myself from possible future embarrassment if he planned on turning up looking like Dumbledore, I crafted a reply to judge whether he was serious.

"My dear gentleman caller. Oh, tis always those small changes, thwarting a great evening of hearty libations and robust conversation. Alas, dear Sir, tomorrow I am attending a musical performance by some of the best flautists and lutists in the land (The Killers). Perhaps Friday we might sample a sumptuous feast of wild beasts and luscious mouthfuls of wine?"

Then just to remind him that I wasn't the crazy one, I added: "Oh and good luck finishing everything up tonight!"

Within five minutes Seth wrote: "LOL. I love your diction. Friday seems like the best of evenings to sup and frolic like lords and ladies. And thank you! I shall make the best of it. Enjoy your incredible Thursday evening tomorrow. Until then, Evie."

This was followed up by a separate text that just read: "..."

Then he never wrote me again.



BAGGAGE, DEAL BREAKERS, AND CRAZY EX-GIRLFRIENDS

“Homewrecker! Bitch! Whore! Hoe! Slut!”

You’d think that if I picked up the phone and heard an onslaught of offenses like this I’d have hung up, but I have some real issues with curiosity. So I waited a beat, eager to see what other derogatory insults this unknown female caller could concoct.

My waiting paid off, another compound affront came flying my way, “Cunt ass bitch!”

Normally, I didn’t get phone calls of this nature from blocked ID’s at 9PM on a relaxing Sunday evening.

“I’m sorry, who is this?” I asked politely and patiently.

“You know goddamn well who this is. You stay away from my boyfriend!”

“Oh, this must be Jodie.” I replied, sweet-as-pie.

I'd been dating Joel for a month. He still lived with his ex-girlfriend Jodie, but assured me that despite the fact she weighed close to three hundred pounds, he wasn't attracted to her anymore and they had broke up months ago. He also hinted that she might be delusional to this fact.

Apparently, I hadn't taken this warning seriously enough.

"We are together! We love each other very much! You're a fucking home wrecker!"

"Actually this might be something you want to discuss with Joel." I suggested.

"I'm talking with you, bitch! He's mine! Stay away from him! Stay the fuck away from my boyfriend!"

"I think that's up to Joel now, don't you think?"

"I'm warning you, Bitch. I'll kill you. I'll find out where you live and I'll come after you and fucking kill you, if you come near my boyfriend-"

"I'm sorry," I interrupted her, as talk of murdering me tends to make me less inclined to continue any conversation, "but I have some things to do, so I'm going to have to let you go." "You can't hang up! Listen to me! I'm talking to you!"

"If you want to continue this conversation, I might be able to set aside some time later this week. I can fit you in on Tuesday? Does Tuesday evening, maybe around six, work for you?"

"He's mine! Stay away from him! You bitch! Home wrecker! Fucking cunt ass whore!"

The thought that she could use some more creative adjectives popped into my head but I didn't feel this was the time to point out her lack of an extensive vocabulary.

Instead, I was all upbeat, easy breezy. "Ok, well, have a good night, Jodie."

Jodie was still blurting out a string of obscenities when I hung up. Joel called me ten minutes later, apologizing profusely. Joel explained Jodie had gone through his cell phone and found my phone number. Joel assured me that they were not together. Leaving the only possible deduction, she was bat shit crazy. He pleaded with me. Please don't hold Jodie's behavior against him. He was trying to move out. All this drama would end soon.

"It's fine. She can call me anytime." I said in the same relaxed tone. "You don't mean that."

"Well not like I love being called a bitch, cunt, or whore. What was the other one? It was good. Home wrecker."

"You are not a home wrecker. Jodie and I are not together. Ugh! She has to understand that. I will never love her again." Joel let out a long breath. "She was pissed that you wouldn't fight back. She was throwing things. She started hitting me."

"She hit you?"

"Not too bad. The apartment is in worse shape. There's broken picture frames everywhere."

"Joel, hitting is abuse. You can't take that. You can call the police and report that." "I can't do that to her."

"She hit you. At the very least, you need to get out. It's a bad situation."

"I'm trying. I thought we could be civil as roommates and it was fine until I started dating. She can't handle it. I don't want her to ruin what we have. I'm looking for a place." He sighed. "I just want to be with you."

"I want to be with you too. We can do this together."

A week later, Joel arrived at home to find Jodie in hysterical tears and a positive pregnancy test on their kitchen counter. She had been throwing up for the past few weeks. When she didn't know what was wrong with her, a friend suggested she take a pregnancy test, despite the fact that her and Joel hadn't slept together in three months. Turns out she was pregnant. She was three months along.

As Joel stood in shock, a smile replaced Jodie's tears. She threw her arms around him. "We're going to be such a happy family."

As you can probably guess, Joel and I didn't work out. As many baby pamphlets and 'Your Rights as a Father' websites that I studied to try to make it work, Jodie won out. They had the baby, a boy. Joel and I remained friends and since then I've helped many of his new girlfriends deal with her. I'd tell Joel, "If Jodie thinks you're dating anyone, tell her it's me. Have her call me instead. I can handle her." Jodie was a piece of work, but she taught me a few valuable lessons.

To look at it from her side, an ex like Jodie feels hurt. She's used to her ex's attention. Being competitive, she wants to test her dominance. An ex intimidates hoping for a reaction from you – anger, jealousy, fear. An emotional response will validate her delusions – that she still has control over her ex's life. To deal with an ex-girlfriend's jealousy, the trick is to give her no reaction. Don't buy into her drama. Act as though she isn't important. Her power doesn't exist. And really, in the dynamic between you and her ex, she doesn't matter. Their relationship is over. She is the past.

Don't give an ex the satisfaction that she can manipulate your relationship. For example, if you were to fly

off the handle and scream insults back, you'd reveal to the ex that she emotionally gets to you and has the power to control your relationship whenever she wants to. In reacting aggressively, you've also created a reason for the guy you are dating to take his ex's side and question your sanity.

Didn't we learn how to handle mean girls back in middle school? You can take the bait, fight back and stoop to their level by proving your dominance, or outsmart them with mind games and indifference. I choose the latter. Take away an ex's perceived power by removing the thing that creates power - attention. To have relevance in the situation, she needs your reaction. To really piss off an ex-girlfriend, all you need to do is ignore her. The smug satisfaction you will get will be so much greater than a verbal or physical assault. To do this, at all times, remain calm, collected and rational. Speak slowly. Be polite. You have done no wrong. You're the one with the upper hand, the girl the guy wants to be with.

The same lesson can be applied to ex-girlfriends calling or texting.

A big mistake girls make is overreacting. "Who's calling you? Is that another chick? What does she want?" Absolutely do not go a step further by snapping up a guy's phone and snooping through his phone or text log. By doing so, you've entered the land of no return, crazy-girl status.

Instead, it's best to remain upbeat, confident, and nonchalant. Fake indifference towards a random call. This guy has chosen to spend time with you, for drinks, for dinner, for a movie or whatever. He's not spending time with the ex or whomever the other girl is on the end of the string of texts. The other girl isn't important, so don't make her important. Don't fall for the trap that you need to prove your-

self over the long line of girls that are texting him. They are begging for his attention - a bad tactic to begin with. Don't give up your power too by letting him know how anxious the competition makes you.

I prefer a joking approach to unsolicited texts during dates. "Popular over there, aren't we?" I'll say with a smile. After a comment like this, many times the guy will explain who's calling or texting, sometimes with elaborate or funny stories that can create a further bond between you two. Acting cool and relaxed, you alleviate questions in a guy's mind on how you react to drama in general.

Another way to handle the intrusion is to be overly polite and trusting with the guy. Subtly, you're indicating that the guy is being rude and breaking social etiquette by checking his phone during a date. But, by all means, if the call is important enough that it interrupts your special time together, he should take it. I'll gesture towards his phone and say in a nonchalant tone, "You can take that if you need to." Usually a guy will say no, apologize, and put his phone away.

Both ways, you've beat the other girl. Your date indicates with his actions that you are more important. Moreover, you have foiled his ex's grand scheme of sabotaging your new relationship.

Appearing unthreatened also works wonders when confronted with ex-girlfriend get-back-together messages. There was a phase when I dated nice guys whose ex-girlfriends cheated on them and tore out their hearts. Inevitably these guys' ex-girlfriends came to their senses months or years later, hoping to weasel their way back in, only to discover I'd moved in on their territory.

Early in my relationship with Nolan, he received one of these get-back-together attempts. We'd been out at a holiday party and arrived back at Nolan's apartment a bit tipsy when he noticed two messages from his ex's number on his phone. It had been over six months since they'd broken up. Shocked, Nolan listened to the first message.

Now, I could have been appalled. Outraged, at Nolan that an ex-girlfriend had called. My mind could have went down that crazy-girl rabbit hole and conjured up all sorts of backhanded, cheating scenarios.

But Nolan and I shared a stable, committed relationship. Maybe because I acted understanding, Nolan handed me his phone after he listened to the first message. Nolan had no control over his ex Sherry calling. He wasn't keeping secrets from me. I shrugged off the chill of jealousy and listened to the message with a calm and reasonable mind.

"Hi Nolan. This is Sherry. I just hope you're doing well. I'm doing really good. I just wanted to say hi and that I'm sorry for what I did. I'm in a much better place now."

Nolan and I discussed the call. Sherry had left the message at 10PM. It was good she wanted to make amends. Maybe because I didn't accuse Nolan, lash out against him or snatch his phone to search for all possible contact with Sherry, he was willing to hold up the phone so we could both listen to the second message together. This one Sherry left a few hours later. We wondered what other well wishes could Sherry have missed that warranted a second message.

"Hi again, it's me-" Her speech was slurred from the get-go. This wasn't a good sign for Sherry.

Nolan chuckled, "Sounds like she got into some wine."

"More like a few bottles." I added.

“-So I’m not in the best place, actually. I really miss you. I’m so sorry for what I did. I was so stupid. You were the best guy I ever had. I’m really really sorry.” she hiccupped, “I think we should talk. We never had closure and there’s a lot of things I want to tell you.”

“Like you cheated on me?” Nolan grumbled.

“I really hope you’re doing okay.” Sherry babbled on, “And I hope your family is doing okay. Please give me a call back when you can. I miss you so much. And everything we had. I know you still love me. I still love you.”

Sherry sounded like an absolute train wreck, but she and Nolan had shared a six-year relationship. She couldn’t have been that much of a drunken mess, or she hid it well. Still, I couldn’t let her ‘I love you’ threaten the bond I had with Nolan. I needed to trust him. After all, this guy was my partner in crime. Together, we were dealing with whatever curveballs this crazy world threw at us. He had a past, but so did I. I chose to look at the humor in the situation. I didn’t need to prove myself. I was with Nolan, I’d already won. I laughed and focused on our bright, new, Sherry-free future.

I’d like to say you can find a Prince Charming with a clean slate. No crazy ex-girlfriends threatening to kill you at 9PM on a Sunday, oddball phobias, children from a previous marriage, addictions, shady track records, quirky habits, or crippling financial debts. But does a guy with a perfectly clean slate even exist? There’s a reason a man past a certain age is single. Just as we have to shine that mirror back at ourselves. There is a reason we are single. The fact is, after we reach a certain age, we all have accumulated a past. We’re jaded, guarded, and with the mention that a guy has a son, was previously married, had been to AA, or has never had a

long-term relationship, we write him off as damaged goods. Equally, we're careful to share our past hang-ups that might put us in an unattractive light.

For instance, personally, I don't walk around advertising that I was once engaged. My engagement ending without holy matrimony could easily lead a guy to assume there's a underlying problem with me (maybe I'm a cheater, a habitual nose picker, or bad in the sack). In reality, I wasn't in love and I needed to do the right thing. Yet I hide this baggage initially because I know the label will spark a snap judgment, killing my future chances without allowing me an opportunity to defend myself.

It's hard not to judge. We're programmed by nature to find a strong mate. To weed out the weak and crazy. But remember, a date is just talking and getting to know someone. So what do you do when you discover a guy has a hang up?

"I don't mind that he's divorced," Emily summed up after discussing her next Match.com date, who had checked the divorced box on his profile. "Most girls would take divorced as a bad thing. I think, hey, at least the guy can commit."

Personally, I like my friend Emily's very real approach to a man's baggage. Sure, the dude might be a lying, cheating bastard who slept with hundreds of women until his wife discovered his philandering ways and kicked his ass to the curb. On the other hand, he could be the nice guy who married too young and things just didn't work out. You have to get to know a guy to find out the answer. Before you quickly dismiss a guy based on his past, get to know his present. Give him a chance to explain himself before chucking him into the damaged goods bin.

The older we get, more boxes get checked off in our lives. Everyone has a box checked off. It's just up to you to decide which boxes are deal breakers and which ones you can understand and come to accept as habits or life lessons that make the guy who he is.

My friend Sabrina found that hang-ups are sometimes less immediately obvious:

Sabrina met a Wall Street trader in New York. Matthew seemed perfect. He took her on elaborate dates, made her laugh, and his intelligence on art and culture impressed her. He embodied many of things Sabrina looked for in a man - he came from a good family, owned an amazing Soho loft, and looked delicious in Tom Ford suits.



Yes, he'd mentioned on one occasion that his favorite movie was "Superman." Sure, she noticed a framed comic book from the same series in his bathroom. Yet, it wasn't until she was having an early Saturday morning brunch at a sidewalk cafe with friends in the West Village that his obsession came to light.

Sabrina had just stabbed a bite of her egg white omelet when she spotted a man dressed in a full Superman costume and sporting the same big, green eyes as her dear Matthew. Her mouth dropped open. The man appeared to be going about his day dressed in a skin-tight super suit. He ducked into a store and returned moments later with coffee and newspaper. He stooped to pet a poodle. The same

handsome man who took her to the Met and dinner at the trendiest restaurant in Tribeca readjusted his cape in the reflection of a store window. Only tall red boots replaced his expensive Italian shoes, his hair was gelled in the crime fighter's signature curl, and a plastic, yellow utility belt separated his blue spandex top from his high waisted red briefs.

Sabrina felt dizzy. There had to be a reasonable explanation. Maybe he was coming home from a costume party? Maybe he'd lost a bet? Guys with successful Wall Street careers and skyline views didn't dress in blue and red spandex. Did they? Yet Matthew didn't seem the least bit phased as passersby gawked and pointed, and children waved as if he were in a parade. Just the opposite, he embodied the character, a real life Clark Kent with a secret identity taking credit for a fictitious comic hero's do-gooding.

She blanched at the implications. So if this was his usual routine, when was he planning to spring this on her?

Date five: "So by the way, I'm Superman."

Would he dress like this with her in public? Would she be expected to fix his cape if it got caught in a yellow cab's door? Would he surprise her with a matching Lois Lane getup?

As Matthew strode past their table, horrified, Sabrina stiffened, slumped in her chair, and quickly hid her face with her Prada bag. Her friends giggled at his spandex, missing her mortification.

"Look at that freak," Her friend Georgie whispered, rolled her eyes and in the same sentence turned back to Sabrina and inquired, "So dish Sabrina. You must tell us all about your new man."

Sunday night Matthew phoned her. Sabrina broached

the subject. "So I thought I saw you in the West Village Saturday morning." She paused, awaiting his response but he gave none. "Dressed in a super hero costume," she prompted with a nervous, staccato laugh as though the thought was absolutely absurd.

"Yeah. So?"

"So," she slowly concluded, "you think you're Superman?"

"No." He said in a superlative, matter-of-fact tone, "I look good in it."

Sabrina avoided Matthews calls after that. Wall Street trader or not, for her, dressing up as a superhero on weekends, costume play, period, was a deal breaker.

For many women, kids from a previous marriage are big deal breakers. Divorced guys with kids admit to dates walking out in the middle of dinner after confessing the fact. My friend Jackie was one of these girls. She had never thought of dating a guy who was divorced, more, with kids, until she decided to give it a shot on Match.com. After a slew of mediocre dates, she had a talk with her brother who changed her mind.

"I found out the girl who my older brother was dating had a kid and I was surprised." Jackie admitted. "I asked him how he could date a girl with a kid. But then I thought, why am I being so judgmental? This made me wonder. Could I date someone with a kid? If my brother could do it, maybe I could? Maybe I was being too picky?"

There's a good chance that before her conversation with her brother, Jackie would have never met Fred. His Match.com profile showed he was divorced with two small children. But she decided to give him a chance and accept

a date instead of immediately dismissing him. After all, it was just a date. If she liked him, she'd decide if she could handle the situation: an ex-wife and two children under ten years old.

Jackie wasn't going to waste her time and fall for a guy whose situation she couldn't handle. Fred's past wasn't perfect on paper. High school sweethearts that fell out of love after ten years together and two children. But Fred as a person turned out to be a perfect match for her. His past could have stopped her. But she thought of the future instead.



BONUS:
Catching Your Crush



I'M AN OPPORTUNIST, NOT A STALKER

We've all had crushes from afar.

There's that guy Zach in your office whom you've never spoken a word to. You don't know his last name, star sign, girlfriend status, but strategically pass nine times a day when you circle the office pretending to get more coffee.

The hottie on your daily commuter rail ride whom you toss your hair at seductively, flutter your eyelashes and telepathically impart your undying desire. The guy your friends have heard so much about that they start to refer to him with a nickname like Train Boy regardless of the fact that your only contact occurred when the train jerked abruptly.

Let's be honest, in your head your crush and you are destined to be, if only he knew it. You imagine he loves *Game of Thrones* as much as you do, he makes the most amazing pancakes on Saturday mornings, and likes sports but not too much that he'd paint his face on game day. He's from some quirky state like Vermont and likes to camp, hike

and do things a bit daring, like heli ski or scuba dive. He recites passages from Hemingway, reads the Wall Street Journal, and can fluently discuss classic, foreign, and John Hughes films. A world traveler, he's trekked to remote locations like Africa to help underprivileged children. He's an animal lover, a caring friend, a smart, successful guy with lots of ambition, and most importantly, he has been waiting his whole life to meet someone just like you. You fantasize about the exotic trips you will go on, your future apartment together, all the pancake mornings and *Uncle Buck* movie nights. Your first fun-filled adventure to IKEA and the inevitable fight to follow that will only bring you closer. You might have already chosen a quirky nickname for him. The breed of dog you'll buy together to take your relationship to the next level. You'll decide to name the little fella Steve because it's the most un-dog-like name you guys can think of. After, you'll pat yourselves on the back and chuckle how clever and creative you are as a couple.

This whole fantasy is endless really. But it's okay. This is normal. Your imagination is allowed to run rampant with the unknown possibilities.

And most times, we never act on it. Train Boy is still Train Boy after two years. One day he'll disappear and you'll wonder if he's just on vacation or if he moved or bought a car. You'll be sad that you missed your chance. That poor dog will be named something lame like Ginger instead of Steve. You'll never scuba dive the Great Barrier Reef. Or hear about that crazy incident in Rwanda. Eventually you'll forget all about him. You'll move on because you have Coffee Shop Boy now. And he could be an FBI agent, zoo keeper, or poet from Montana with a fondness for fondu and 18th century British fiction?

One question that will nag you in the interim before your next crush: *why didn't you just talk with the guy?* Believe me, I've been there with you. The fantasy seems safer.

There's a good chance this crush of yours isn't what you built him up to be. For all you know, Train Boy is an accountant who still lives in his parent's basement, hates pancakes (I don't know how this is possible for any hot blooded male. But what if?) and is allergic to Boston Terriers. Talking with him, you run the risk of ruining your fantasy. And then what would you and your friends chit chat about at the water cooler? Last week's episode of *Game of Thrones*? (For the record, I still would. But my crush was at least real. John Snow is a fictional character)

Many dating gurus will tell you to move on, forget about this amour of yours, maybe delve deep in your psyche to really determine the underlying reasons you have a hankering for unavailable men.

I'm not going to dissuade you. I get it. You really like this guy. You're not crazy or stupid to want to be with someone you feel a strong attraction and affection for. It's rare to discover someone that fascinates you. I'm proud of you for recognizing and choosing to go after what you want.

So I don't believe you should throw in the towel so quickly just because he hasn't approached you. Life is all about following what you are passionate about. I ask you, what do you have to lose? At least by approaching a guy you like and gaining rapport, you'll see if this person is someone you are compatible with. Maybe you won't even like him once you get to know him? Maybe he'll surprise you and trump your fantasy? My goal of this section is to change the way you think about chasing a crush. In the following chap-

ters, I'll show you with small real actionable steps how you can make getting the man of your dreams happen.

First, let's get the distinction clear from the get-go: there is a difference between having a crush and being a full-blown stalker. Stalking is a way more complicated game. Stalking involves lurking in bug-ridden bushes or spying from a cramped car seat. Cue binoculars. Usually restraining orders follow stalking. While consuming pints of Ben & Jerry's, pining away while perusing Facebook pictures from your dreamboat's last trip to Florida, follows having a crush. A crush is a happy distraction, involving lots of 'what ifs' with friends over tapas. Stalking is dangerous, manipulative, and usually consumes your life.

Stalking is creepy. Being an Opportunist is smart. Rather, I suggest attracting a crush subtly and strategically. Luckily, we can benefit with some excellent take-aways from my own experience.

"Hi, my name is Evie."

Cue your part: "Hi Evie."

"I was once a rock star pursuer."

Before you start getting all judgy, calling me cuckoo, and conjuring up images of me with a giant pair of binoculars staked out in some prickly bushes, I don't like to get my hands dirty. No muddy backyards or filthy alleyways for me – yuck. Moreover, I'm not good at waiting around. I'm terribly impatient and get cold very quickly.

The truth is, the whole thing started with an innocent crush. My crush happened to be an older, semi-famous rock musician. From reading interviews, I discovered what inspired him, which music and foods he preferred, and businesses he'd invested in. Taking advantage of a little down time at work, these facts weren't hard to find. The

difference with this crush over my other past crushes was that I didn't want to let him just disappear and wonder 'what if' over empanadas and sangria with the girls. So I decided to do something different. I took action.

Action doesn't equal stalking. True, many groupies choose the route of climbing through windows, digging through trash piles, and sending off that creepy lurker vibe. But hiding in bramble or groveling for an autograph in a seedy alleyway didn't seem like the most optimal route to become the next Penny Lane. Surely there had to be an alternative that made me look less desperate and more like I belonged on my crush's level.

In school, we're taught to research before beginning a project. Determined to reap from other's past successes and mistakes, initially I turned to Amazon. With a few clicks, I snapped up as many groupie guides I could find. I poured over *Queen of the Groupies*, Pamela DeBarre's acclaimed biography *I'm With the Band*. In it, I found some very useful, confidence building material and fantastic tales of a sister who was gutsy, cool, and a hopeless romantic. Had I lived in LA during her time, I feel as though we would have been besties. Yet, overall, I discovered a lack of tangible advice available. Guess most celebrity stalkers are locked up in mental wards? Or the subject is too taboo for conservative publishers?

While the focus on this section isn't to retell the story of my rock star mission (we'll save that tomfoolery for another book), I decided it is a good place to share my strategic knowledge to help all of you get the man of your dream's attention. It wouldn't be fair for me to offer up advice on meeting men and leave out some of the most crucial material: how to get the man you really want. These tips are basic

and can be applied to any crush, from the guy Zach at the office to the cute bartender to the star of the latest HBO show. I'm not teaching you to become a stalker, I'm teaching you to become something I call an Opportunist.

First, we need a well thought-out strategy of attack. There are two strategies in any attack.

You can use the element of surprise to overwhelm a guy and give him no time to think or react. Like women dressing to impress a man in a crowd. Or groupies propositioning musicians backstage. With a strategy like this, you aim to make an immediate and unrepeatable impression. Boldness carries the day. When successful, these are often short-lived, one time seductions. Unsuccessful, you'll raise doubts and a resistance that can never be lowered.

For the second approach, let's picture a spider spinning an invisible web. The spider pays close attention to detail, taking its time to make the web intricate and strong. Then, patiently it waits for its victim to come all on its own. The prey ensnares itself. This is the type of strategy I'm going to discuss.

With a strategy like this, you're a smart opportunist. You arrange occasional "chance" encounters. You create situations where your crush will see you in different places but you never approach him. You spin the situation to appear as if fate threw you and your crush together. At first, your aim is only to make him vaguely aware of you. He'll be the one who decides to move in closer. If he wants

**A smart
opportunist
arranges
occasional
"chance"
encounters.**

you, he will have to come to you. All you are doing is getting his attention. In the end, he still needs to work for you.

Be Like Nancy Drew

Like any good project, you'll want to start by researching your subject. You'll want to gain as much knowledge as you can, so you can successfully orchestrate "chance" encounters. The internet supplies the 411 on celebrities. If your dream dude isn't a public figure, even an amateur gumshoe can sniff out a few noteworthy facts.

Locate His Natural Habitat

Begin your investigation with your crush's local stomping ground. What neighborhood does he live in? Where does he work? Does he own a business? If you spotted him at a coffee shop, gym, or grocery store, he probably lives or works in the area. Look for clues that suggest his interests. Is he carrying a gym bag? Does he ride a bike? Was he wearing a band's t-shirt? What type of place did you spot him in? If it's a dive bar, he might frequent other dive bars? If it's a concert, he might go to similar shows?

Your goal is to uncover what your crush does in his everyday life. At the end of the day, this dream dude of yours is just a normal guy who grocery shops, does laundry, hangs out with friends, and most likely geeks out over some slightly dorky hobbies.

What you are looking for are opportunities to meet him in his natural habitat. I wouldn't dare approach a celebrity at his movie premiere. Just as I wouldn't proposition the hot bartender when he's slinging cocktails surrounded by a herd of hot blondes. You don't want to catch them in

the spotlight. When in their element, your crush's ego is sky high. A divide of power separates you. The amount of effort to stand out appears almost insurmountable.

Imagine approaching that same celebrity or bartender at their local coffee shop on a Sunday morning. The tone and setting are casual and slightly mundane. They are not surrounded by fans. Their guard is down. And best of all, you don't come off as a drooling female groupie but rather a friendly (and cute) new friend and neighbor.

The optimal time to meet your crush is on a level playing field. These are the types of places you want to target with your detective work. In this low-pressure, seemingly coincidental scenario, the approach is the same as with any other man.

Take Note of His Interests

First, check for clues in the environment and his dress. Is he wearing anything that tips you off to his interests, like a designer sneaker or hat with an emblem? Examine if he's carrying, drinking or eating anything? Novels or magazines offer good leads. A specific drink or food could suggest a favored trend. How did he arrive? Is his single speed bike parked outside? Or did he arrive in a Porsche? Who is he there with? Is he with friends or family or alone? Speculate his reason for being there. Is he watching a sports game? Visiting a friend who works there? Maybe a great DJ is spinning that night?

If possible, without appearing obvious, eavesdrop on

**The optimal time
to meet your
crush is on a level
playing field.**

his conversation. For example, was he talking to a friend about a trip home for the holidays? About his favorite bar or restaurant? Is he really interested in, say, beer or wine? Golf? Vintage cars? German Shepherds with a heart of gold? Traveling? Swimming the English Channel? Amazing old school pinball games? A certain genre of music, film or literature? Jot down a few hot leads and then hit the books.

Research what he likes so you can form an intelligent opinion. For instance, if he has a thing for a certain band or genre of music, give it a listen, read some articles, and see what you like and don't like about it and why. You'll be able to use this information in the future to keep a conversation going, to create rapport, and ultimately uncover further opportunities to interact with your crush.

Establishing Yourself in his World and Utilizing Less Desirable Admirers

Remember, the optimal time to have a "chance" encounter with your crush is on a level playing field. At this stage, you want him to notice you, but you are not going to approach him. To do this, you'll want to haunt his periphery. This means putting in some time frequenting his local hangouts - his favorite bars, restaurants, sporting events, concerts, coffee shops, the laundry mat, gym, or wherever else you have determined he goes during his daily life based on your research. Make his local establishments, your to-go establishments.

At the same time, you're going to accomplish this without looking like a total creeper. Your presence should appear natural. In order to do this, you must genuinely have a reason to exist in his world.

Pick a passion of his that you like as well. Feigning interest to win a guy's heart will make you only a poser or, worse, a groveler. But becoming curious and learning about someone's interests gives you a chance to discover if one of his interests is something you might like as well. New discoveries are fine, so long as they are something you can speak to intellectually and authentically.

Your goal is to establish yourself as a 'regular' in his favorite places, so when he does, by chance, arrive, you are already an established and popular member. You can only do this if your interest and enthusiasm are genuine. Otherwise, don't play pretend.

Right off the bat, let's establish a few simple ground rules, so you don't crowd your crush or blow your cover:

Smart Opportunist Ground Rules:

1. If you do see him, don't stare or freak out

When I get nervous, I have a terrible tendency to flip my hair uncontrollably. Unless I'm a thirteen year old valley girl, this is a dead giveaway. Analyze what you do when you get nervous and train yourself or ask others to watch for these ticks. At all times, try to behave calmly, coolly, and as if your crush isn't anyone special.

2. Never ever trail your crush home or purposely drive by his house

This is a given but buzzed off a few mimosas at two in the afternoon, it can seem like a good idea.

3. Give your crush space

Recall our spider analogy. To make someone come to you, you must give them space and time to ensnare themselves. Cats and coquettes draw us to them by apparently not trying, even by seeming uninterested. If your crush doesn't see you often, you keep your distance or appear unattainable, he will be more intrigued by you – an object that is rare and hard to obtain is generally more prized.

4. Do not bring his name up in conversation to others unless someone else does first.

Even then, it is best to pretend you do not know who he is. You want to establish yourself as a member of the group or denizen in the area without raising suspicion. Don't probe others for information.

Supposing someone happens to mention your crush, silently take note of the facts, but remain aloof.

If someone questions your motives, they will question your honesty. It's paramount when creating a foundation of belonging that others trust and support you. To further avoid suspicion, it's necessary to create allies.

5. The purpose of this chapter is to give you a chance to meet your crush and see if there's chemistry there. Yet if you've signaled to your crush that you are interested or approached him and he

doesn't seem interested, move on. Stop obsessing. He's just not that into you.

Many girls think: I just need to try a little harder. Maybe if I relate a little more. If he's not that into you, further work may be flattering, but it could also make a guy uncomfortable.

Feel proud that you tried your best, but don't waste your time.

Always Make Friends with 'Regulars' and Employees

Ask any of my friends and they will tell you I have a tendency to make new friends wherever I go. Besides the fact I find people's quirks and life stories fascinating, they can make great allies. So when my crush walks in the door, I not only look like I belong, but I actually do belong.

This strategy works well for two reasons. One, I have a reason to be at one of my crush's favorite places. My new friends are my alibi. Two, I'm not lurking in a dark corner, eyeing the door every five seconds. I'm bouncing around the place, a social butterfly displaying myself in an outgoing, positive light.

Let's look at one of my more extreme examples. Through my research I knew my rockstar crush owned a dive bar. The first night at the bar, my friends and I stayed close to bar time, chatting with the bouncers. I mentioned that I worked at a shoe company. The bouncers Raffiel and Dominick were huge sneaker fans and I hinted that I'd send them free sneakers. I've worked in bars before; bartenders get the royal treatment, while bouncers are like the ugly stepchildren. I genuinely enjoyed talking with Raffiel and

Dominick, and since I had the means, I wanted to help them out. The next week I gifted them each with a pair of cool kicks. This act of kindness didn't cost much, the equivalent of two or three rounds of drinks on my part. Cultivating the friendship over the span of several months, I received countless free drinks and several private event invitations. On one of these occasions, Raffiel unknowingly introduced me to my crush.

No one grew suspicious of my underlying intentions. Not even my crush. Because remember, at this stage in the game you are just placing yourself in their world and letting them take notice of you. And the fact is, even the most narcissistic guy isn't going to jump to the conclusion that you are showing up at a place repeatedly just to see him. Guys tend not to analyze things that much. Most guys wouldn't assume a girl would go through that much effort. It's far more reasonable to mistake your careful planning for coincidence. If they do recognize you, they'll think something like: *that girl looks familiar?* If you've forged deep alliances your alibi is solid and readily available: you go to the bar (or restaurant or coffee shop or gym) because your friends work there.

Utilize Less Desirable Admirers

If you are doing your job well, illuminating yourself in an attractive aura, like the spider and its tantalizing web, you'll lure and catch other men along the way. Look at every meeting, even with men you are not interested in, as an opportunity to make connections and gain allies. Rather than blowing off a less desirable suitor, search for benefits in the interaction and find ways to charm them.

First and foremost, a sociable girl surrounded by men looks far more attractive than a quiet loner. People gather

around those who have already attracted interest. We want what other people want. Manufacture an illusion of popularity, an aura of desirability that will stimulate rivalry and raise your value. Build a reputation that precedes you: if many have succumb to your charms, there must be a reason.

Also, since you are frequenting the same local haunts, chances are you're going to run into the same people again and again, including men you are not interested in. Better to have friends than enemies. The more regular patrons you get on your side, the more natural your presence will be perceived. Just because you wouldn't date a guy doesn't mean he can't be a valuable friend.

Just to be clear, I'm not encouraging you to be disingenuous. Everyone I've met along the way on my rock star mission I've been genuinely interested as a friend. If a guy voices his romantic interest, I'll gently and politely turn him down, offering my friendship as consolation. Friendships can be formed on many levels without my crush ever entering the conversation.

Ok, so I know what you're thinking. What happens if Lurch kidnaps you into the dark depths of some wacko conversation? What if he's more annoying than Jar Jar Binks? Give me one good reason I shouldn't fire off a snide comment, turn tail and save myself from this abomination. True, Lurch isn't going to win you many status points. Chances are you won't survive a friendly game of Big Buck Hunter, less the occasional coffee and conversation. The beautiful friendship is out.

Yet, the last thing you want is Lurch spreading rumors that you're a nasty stuck up bitch. Weighing your options, it's really a dicey call.

A girl named Blaire uses a great line against the

Lurchs. She'll politely say, "If you want to continue to talk to me, why don't you buy me a drink."

This is great because a guy is now buying some of her time. Blaire is being polite, friendly, and open-minded by giving the guy a chance to prove he's worthy of her time. The guy most likely won't resort to name calling. She's not acting like a bitch by rejecting him outright. However, she addresses the fact that her time is valuable and she's popular. If a guy wants to continue to talk with her, he'll need to at least give her something in return. A less desirable suitor might get the hint and worst case scenario, buy her the drink. Then, after he gets his face time she can pleasantly excuse herself without the guy feeling slighted.

Getting Yourself in the Inner Circle

If you can charm your crush's friends, they will allow you access to their social circle. Maybe it's our childhood weaknesses to rainbows and glitter, but people prefer to focus on pleasant, colorful details instead of the bigger picture. If you can fill a person's eyes with dazzling details using small, kind acts or thoughtful gifts, they won't see your grander ulterior motive. To do this, first pay careful attention to detail. Note a person's desires, tailor your gifts, clothes and adornments to show how much time and attention you are paying to them and you will win them over. If you make a favorable impression with the friend, he'll allow you into the inner circle, and without knowing it, introduce you to your crush.

Remember, your crush's friends will not suspect your motivations if you've successfully made allies with employees and other patrons, established your status as a 'regular' or 'local' within the setting, and charmed them with careful

attention. If anything, they'll think the similarities between you and their friend (your crush) are a crazy fated, coincidence. They might even decide to play Cupid and devise some hair-brained scheme to set you two up.

While talking with your crush's friend, this is a good opportunity to let some common ground slip into the discussion. For instance, my crush is a Cincinnati Bengals football fan. So when chatting with one of his friends we'll call Pete, I steered the conversation to sports and hinted, "So glad football season has started. I'm a huge Bengals fan."

For the record, I had already charmed Pete with my knowledge of fine art and designer sneakers before I snuck this comment in. We already created a genuine connection, so my shocking similarity to his friend (my crush) might have surprised Pete, but it wouldn't have made him suspicious that any part of our meeting was premeditated.

Pete replied, "No way! My friend is a Bengals fan!"

I played my part, acting cool and mocking a mild, pleasant surprise. Then I hinted at an introduction, since Pete and I were technically friendly acquaintances now, "A fellow Bengals fan. There's not many of us. I'll definitely have to meet him."

My intentions came off as purely innocent. The similarities with Pete's friend were a rare fluke. Minutes later, Pete called my crush over to introduce us. Me, not as the obsessed rock star groupie, but the persona I created – the cool, Bengals fan, art and sneaker extraordinaire, who's a regular at his bar.

Smash that Stupid Pedestal

I'm sure by this point, you're thinking: *Evie, this is*

all well and good, except, news flash, I can't even talk with the guy. You've done all the research like a good little sleuth, established yourself as a regular in your crush's natural habitat, and created plenty of allies. Still, you can't stand in the same vicinity as your crush without freaking out. Forget attempting to talk with him, you're tongue-tied. First sighting, you bolt.

What can you do?

Humor me and pretend for a moment you have an alter ego. Give it a badass name, something like Aria or Harleigh or Elliot. Your alter ego is the epitome of cool. Harleigh or Aria or Elliot is sexy, witty, confident, and charming. She deserves a guy as cool as your crush. She's on par with Angelina back in her *Tomb Raider* days, she would never feel weak in the knees at the sight of an attractive man. Girls like that, they grab what they want. They take on men like your crush as a challenge.

Now determine which traits separate you from your alter ego. Stripped down, Aria, Harleigh or Elliot look nearly identical to you. Yet is it their mannerisms that set them apart? Their status? Their confidence? Their intellect or abilities? Do they have strength and swagger or are they more delicately feminine and coy? Are these defining traits something you feel would make you more successful with men, specifically your crush? And if so, how can you possess these seductive traits?

Despite what '80s cartoons lead us to believe, unfortunately, there's no magical sword that can instantly transform us like Princess Adora into the all-powerful She-Ra. Yet with smart actions to overcome self-consciousness and boost our self-confidence we can find ways to embrace our killer cool and become our own super selves.

This process starts by changing the way we view ourselves in comparison to our crush. We placed our alter egos on the same level as our crushes. We can do the same for ourselves.

In the Overcoming Self-Consciousness chapter, we touched on the topic of placing too much value on looks. For the sake of this section, let's revisit my crush story, now that you have a little more background history.

Personally, I once had a huge crush on a musician living in my neighborhood. Any other guy I could walk up and talk to, except this guy. My knees buckled. Language turned to baby garble. My attraction towards him paralyzed me. Although I didn't know him personally, I followed his band on Facebook and Instagram, and saw him out and about. Again and again, every time I attempted to build up the courage to approach him, my mind intervened: Why would he go for you? Are you good enough? My confidence dropped and I chickened out.

It's always hard to talk to someone you are attracted to. You fantasize about what they are like. You put them on a pedestal and then sabotage yourself by feeling inferior. Questions fill your head and cripple your confidence.

What if I say something stupid?

What if he doesn't think I'm attractive?

Doubts like these only get worse the longer you obsess.

Initially I shied away when faced with actually approaching my crush.

As time passed, I'd run into him on the street, at a juice bar, in a parking lot and while eating Japanese

noodles. None of these circumstances I deemed a worthy meet cute. The timing was off. The place smelled like ramen (it was a Japanese ramen restaurant). He was talking with other people. It wasn't the 'right' moment, so I shied away.

I couldn't keep waiting for the perfect moment. If I didn't make a move soon, chances are, my whole mission was going to end pretty sad and pathetic. I'd already established myself in his periphery through enough "chance" encounters. The next obvious progression was to approach and befriend him. To do this though, I'd need to see him as a normal person instead of the man I idolized. He couldn't be a rock god, but an average chump I could have an everyday conversation with.

Here's what I did:

Find the Root of Your Intimidation

First, I pinpointed what made my crush intimidating. Mainly, I worshipped his band. I listen to a lot of indie music, I go to plenty of local shows, but the thought of talking music with my rock star crush, someone who was an actual musician, made me a tongue-tied spaz. What if he asked for my interpretation of a song? What if he used technical music jargon? I'd be mortified if he brought up bands I'd never heard of. Doubtful, he's a Britney Spears devotee.

So in order to feel less inferior, I distanced my crush from the topic that made me most uncomfortable, music. When I finally met him, I avoided topics that I didn't have equal expertise on and instead steered the conversation towards subjects that I did have decent knowledge in. Basically, I looked for opportunities where I could shine.

For example, from my research, I learned my crush followed football and baseball. I could proficiently talk sports. He'd also done all the interior design for the hotels and bars he owns, decorating one bed and beverage as a sultry bordello, accenting another inn with chandeliers, cow skins, and Oaxacan artwork. I graduated from art school. I can parley when it comes to art, fashion and photography. If I swayed our repartee towards these topics, I would be much more comfortable, confident and capable of adding depth to the discussion.

Side Note: How to Hijack a Conversation:

If you're caught in a conversation that's heading down a dangerous path, there are two simple strategies for steering it into safer waters.

The Steam Roll:

I simply talk over the other person to switch topics mid-sentence. Rude, a tad, but I'll disguise my faux pas as a tangent. Or a sudden, urgent epiphany.

For example, if we're talking about Kim Kardashian's baby at a bar and I'm almost stabbing my eyes out with my drink straw, I might blurt out, "Oh my god, did you see the new episode of "Girls?"" We're still talking entertainment, but I've completely kidnapped the conversation for my own selfish needs (and sanity...sorry Kardashians).

The Bait and Switch:

For this strategy, I'll distract the other person with a surprise, random fact. Caught off guard, the current subject is paused and during this time, I'll jump in and switch topics before the other person can catch on.

Let's pretend we're in a bar, talking candidly about saving the rainforest. But I really want to tell you about a coyote that might be my spirit animal.

I'll suddenly interrupt with, "Is this Tom Petty?" referring to a song playing on the jukebox.

We'll both pause and listen for a moment, nodding our heads, confirming the song playing is, "Free Fallin'."

Then before we pick back up on Green Peace, I'll transition to the topic of my choosing, "So the other day this coyote followed me home..."

Pretend You're Not in the Fan Club:

The second thing I needed to do was ditch the groupie status. Here's the dirty little secret that many people don't realize: you can choose your role in any interaction. I didn't have to come off as a lowly, desperate, drooling fan if I played dumb and pretended I didn't know who he was.

So I assumed the part of an interested local female who has a great job and likes to travel, paint, and write fiction in her spare time. The first time I met my crush, he bought me a drink and in return, I asked him what his name was and if he lived in the neighborhood. Although I'd listened to

countless hours of songs and interviews, I made our meeting seem like just a happy, random, everyday encounter.

Since I didn't frame him as a rock star, I had no reason to act impressed or intimidated. Not wanting to brag, my crush humbly introduced himself as a bar proprietor. Which is true, he owns several bars and hotels. But if he had owned up to being semi-famous rock star, I would have been a thousand times more intimidated. Charming a bar proprietor was an attainable goal.

I approached the regular Joe, real life him, not the alter-ego rock star he plays on stage. I could have begun by confessing I orgasmed the first time I listened to his third album. But, just as with any guy, it's better not to look 100% sold; it's more advantageous to be slightly indifferent and let them win your affections.

If a guy is recognized a lot for what he does, and you don't mention it, he's going to be wondering why you aren't like the others. Don't you know who he is? Are you not impressed? He might even try to impress you. Or he wonders why you aren't fazed by his presence, assumes you hobnob with high-status folk, and starts to think you yourself must be someone pretty important.

Also a high-status person is far more inclined to continue to talk to someone who treats them as a regular person. Encountering so many users and hangers-on in the entertainment industry, celebrities tend to be more cautious and skeptical. You can drop their guard and flatter them if you appear genuinely interested in them personally and oblivious or indifferent to their fame. Since they won't see you as a threat, they'll readily assume you are on their level.

Give Everyone Else Attention First

Third, I didn't initially focus all my attention on my target. Instead, at first I ignored my crush and engaged his friends. I flirted, asked them a lot of questions, listened for details and catered my conversation toward their specific interests to win them over. Gaining the groups trust, you gain access and acceptance. Additionally, your crush, used to getting attention, is going to wonder why you aren't interested in him. Any suspicions of your motives will be eased. A little jealous of all the attention his friends are getting, your crush might even try to win you over.

Level the Playing Field

Lastly, I approached my crush on an equal playing field. As I said before, if your crush is a celebrity, the last thing you want to do is rush the red carpet or wait backstage after a show. Even if they are the bartender slinging Mai Thai's at your local TGI Friday's, there's still the distinction between bartender and customer. Behind the velvet ropes, under the stage lights, behind the bar with fans flashing skin or flapping one hundred dollar bills, your crush is distanced, distracted, and his ego is running sky high. Not only is the competition fierce, but you're segregated by physical and class barriers.

You must find ways to break down the barriers. Meet your crush in an everyday circumstance where you are both just normal people. Underneath it all, your crush is just a guy. A man who drinks coffee, eats sandwiches, goes to the gym, pumps his own gas, and shops for jeans too. A dude who has insecurities, bad hair days, and regrets over greasy late night pizza. A dude. And you know what? Dudes like to be approached by cute and interesting girls.



BUT WE'LL LOSE THE FRIENDSHIP...



Last week my friend Michelle admitted she is in love with her best guy friend Joe. They've known each other for close to three years. He's witnessed her slob around in stained pajamas and no makeup. Been the shoulder she cried on through rough times. Played handy man. Wiped poop from her French bulldog's butt.

"Do I confess my love to him? Do I make a move? What if he doesn't feel the same way? I'm scared I'll lose the friendship. What if it's super awkward after?" She let out a long sigh. "And I'm totally not his type. He dates small Asian girls." It's true, Michelle is like a Viking queen. "What should I do?"

Crushing on a guy friend is a whole separate conundrum. I'll share with you what I advised my friend Michelle to do.

Test the Situation

First and foremost, Michelle needed to examine her own feelings. She had known Joe for three years but had never felt attraction to him prior to this moment. Was she attracted to Joe or was she in a slump and Joe seemed like the most convenient option? Were her feelings caring, sisterly love or jump-him-and-fuck-him-now passion? Sure, the man could fix her coffee machine, but were Joe and her compatible in the long run? Maybe he had a weird pooping-with-the-door-open fetish? Harbored a secret love for Yanni? Or detested chocolate?

I asked her to make a list of qualities she liked and disliked about Joe. Next, I had her circle any qualities that were deal breakers.

To determine her physical attraction to Joe, she needed to test their sexual tension. The next time he came by her house I advised her to stand close to him. Smell him. Imagine kissing him. How would his lips feel? Imagine stripping his clothes off. He's down to his boxers. Is she fantasizing about the size of his penis? Is she feeling aroused? Or is the thought funny or repulsive?

If you feel a sexual spark, charge forward to the next step.

Make the Guy See You as an Option

For most male and female friendships, there's an initial attraction on someone's part. To keep a friendship alive,

usually one person extends a little more effort than the other. Whether this person realizes it or not, they have a sexual attraction towards their friend. Ask most guys if they'd fuck their female friends and they'd give you a resounding, "yes." Are they actively chasing their female friends? No, probably not. Most say it's because they don't think they have a shot. Forget Joe's Asian inclination. He could still be attracted to Michelle, he may have been initially. But he may have not thought a sexual relationship was an option.

Chances are, a guy like Joe doesn't see Michelle as a sexual girl, but as his platonic friend. And that's because for three years this has been their normal routine. If he had sexual feelings for Michelle, he learned to repress them.

For example, Joe posted a picture on social media drinking a latte at eight in the morning in Michelle's kitchen. When I saw this photo on my feed, I jumped to conclusions and was ready to dial up Michelle shouting, "Congratulations! You guys finally hooked up!"

They didn't hook up. Oblivious, Joe didn't even realize the vibe his early morning photograph sent off. He laughed when Michelle pointed out the implications. "I never thought of it that way," was his reaction. He didn't see Michelle 'that way' because he was comfortable with her. He believed she was interested in only his thoughts and his company, so he lowered his resistance and dissipated the usual tension between sexes.

Yet, because his guard is down, he's vulnerable. Friendship with Joe has opened the golden gate to his body and mind. If Michelle wants to kick in his male libido, any offhand comment, any slight physical contact, will spark a different thought, which will catch him off guard. He will wonder: perhaps there could be something more between us.

Once you stir a guy's mind, they will wonder why you haven't made a move, and might even take the initiative themselves. The best way to seduce someone is to let him think they are the one in control, the one doing the seducing.

So, Girl, let's get him to see you as a sexual option. Begin by dressing more feminine around him. Wear makeup, lipstick, dresses and high heels. Don't task him with household chores like pitching in on yard work, building your BBQ grill or fetching doggie doo-doo. Instead, invite him as your date to social outings. In conversation, don't drone on about your boss; that's what you'd tell your friends and family. Keep your conversation interesting and flirtatious. Tease him. Dare him. Drop in a dirty sexual innuendo or two. Monitor your body language. Don't cross your arms. Instead, angle yourself towards him. Lightly touch his arm when you laugh or tell a story. All of these are indicators of interest that men pick up as a green light to make a move.

Be Suggestive

As girls, we like to talk out our feeling. Still I wouldn't advise Michelle to declare her love to Joe in a big, blubbery confession. Attraction isn't a decision after a rational verbal discussion, rather it's a chemical feeling that uncontrollably draws your body towards another person. If there's a connection there, a subtle sexual hint on Michelle's part should trigger Joe's attraction towards her.

Ready? Here's the plan:

First, invite him to a social gathering (and ask him to drive) or throw a small get together at your house. The purpose of this interaction is to set the stage and not make the evening's intentions too obvious. If you drink, I'd suggest a

few cocktails to make the process smoother. Not too many or you may stumble into furniture, pass out or yak in the bathroom. Think Kerry Washington, not Lindsay Lohan.

If he's driving you home, a great place to make a move is parked outside your house or in front of your apartment as you are reaching for your keys. If you are hosting a party, as the night is winding down, convince your crush to stay later. Occupy him with another drink (The Merlot shouldn't go to waste; someone ought to finish it). Request he plays DJ. Or convince him to stay to keep you company while you clean up a bit. Basically, you want him alone. You also want to appear a bit vulnerable.

Find a way to make contact with him. Touching him will create arousal. Cuddling is ideal. Genital hugging even better. If you are at your house, lay down on your bed and call him into your room. Say something like, "Come lay down with me a second." If he protests, be playful. "Come on, just for a minute. I'm tired. I need a break. I need a hug."

Or if you're cleaning up in the kitchen, put down the dishrag, walk over to him and lean your body against his in mock exhaustion. Nuzzle into his chest, close your eyes, and say, "Mmm, this is nice." This line works if you are in his car or he's walked you to your door too.

Now bait him to kiss you by suggesting more. Press your entire body against his or wrap your arms around him and go in for a light kiss on his neck or cheek. Play up your feminine sexuality. Hint at the possibility of sex. Awaken his sexual desire. For the guy who isn't sure of your affections, you're setting the stage, revving up his libido, and cueing him up for success. You're flashing the green light. You're firing off the starting gun. The guy is the aggressor. If he's attracted to you too, he will pounce and kiss you. Game on.

Bonus, he's already in or near your bedroom.

This progression is the simplest and most natural way to take your friendship to a romantic level. It involves little risk. Even if it doesn't work out, no guy is offended that a girl wanted to kiss him. A guy's goal is to get kissed. And unlike a big fat declaration of love which lets a guy know that you have been obsessing about him for weeks and are 100% sold on him, a little smooch on the neck or nuzzle to the chest can be harmlessly brushed off as spontaneous or ridiculous.

Laugh it off the next day. "Wow, was I drunk last night. Remember when I was cuddling with you?" or "I must have been so tired I was delirious." Very little awkwardness. Friendship stays intact.

But hopefully for my friend Michelle that kiss does work out. I'll keep you posted.



WHY FIFTEEN PAGE LETTERS NEVER WIN GUYS OVER

When I like a guy I have a tendency to show my undying affection with over-the-top heartfelt gifts. Nothing says I want to smother you like a poem rhyming the word ‘fate’ with ‘soul mate.’ Usually my romantic gestures consist of baked goods with an elaborate list of gourmet ingredients. I’ve done a few mix tapes over the years when cassettes and songs by Vertical Horizon were all the rage. A pair of scissors and roll of Scotch tape can do a lot more harm than good if you think a framed photo collage will win a man’s heart. For a cautionary tale, probably the most extravagant catastrophe to date was for a guy named Ben.

Ben and I met while working at State Street Brats, a sports bar in Madison, Wisconsin. Not at all stereotypically Wisconsin, it boasted a themed German interior and a menu highlighting fatty sausages and deep fried cheese.

One Saturday afternoon, I was assigned a job called the Brat Handler. This job is just as it sounds, I handle the

bratwurst. The bratwurst being a male State Street Brats employee dressed up in a six foot tall foam sausage outfit. At State Street Brats, all the advertising dollars were spent on this mascot costume and during the 90 degree summer heat some poor lowly schmuck would have to traipse up and down campus dressed as a oversized sausage with a permi-grin, handing out candy to kids, and manically waving to students. And as they quickly discovered, getting their ass's kicked. So Brats wised up and got some protection. Protection being a cute 100 pound freshman chick to thwart off any attackers with her tight shirt and short shorts, and assure that The Brat wouldn't run into light posts or get hit by cars. Let's just say that costume had some big blind spots.

I couldn't have guessed at the significance of that afternoon as my finger slid down the shift schedule. I stopped on my name, listed under Brat Handler. The lucky brat was a new kid named Ben. My stomach flipped as Ben walked in. Ben wasn't like the cocky frat boys I usually went for. He fidgeted with the hem of his Who t-shirt as he spoke. His eyes trained on the floor while I led the way to the back room to gather the costume. He snuck a glance at me from behind his mop of shaggy brown hair, before disappearing into the foam suit.

For hours, Ben and I traversed campus, popping Starburst candy and bonding over music, baseball and video games. Ben's stories were funny, self-deprecating, and painted his innocence with women. While on weekends my friends and I cruised State Street to meet men and dance to Britney Spears, he hosted poker night and played his favorite band The Who on loop.

It was a bit strange, but I was forming a crush on a giant sausage with feet. Or the shy guy beneath the costume.

The next week they paired us up again and we made a game of it, showing up at our friends apartments to surprise them with the giant bratwurst on their door step. Soon after, Ben started coming in during my waitress shifts to hang out. Finally, he asked me out and we ended up at the Kollage Klub, an underage campus drinking establishment, downing Jack and Diets alternately with Jell-O shots. We'd kiss. He'd confess he liked me.

I'd been burned in the past, so I strategized that if I dated several guys at once I wouldn't get hurt. Add in the fact that Madison has only so many popular bars. Inevitably, this didn't bode well for a nice, inexperienced guy like Ben. At the time, I was dating two guys. Aaron worked at L.L. Bean but secretly hid his raging alcoholic tendencies. Tiger James DJ-ed at KISS FM, hooked me up with free concert tickets and announced my name over the air nightly before playing my favorite Bloodhound Gang request. I liked Ben better than Aaron or Tiger, but when Aaron caught me out with Ben, and then Ben saw me sucking face with the DJ, I had some explaining to do.

After my radical honesty, Ben stopped coming in during my waitressing shifts, he didn't return my calls, and drunk, late at bar time he'd kiss me, but that would end only with him leaving my apartment before sunrise. I screwed up and I didn't know how I could make it up.

My crush before Ben got one of the mix tapes, a boatload of cookies, and a half-dozen cheesecakes. In attempts to win Ben back, fueled by passion, I snapped up The Who's greatest hits album. For a week, locked in my room, listening to the record on repeat, I painted a portrait of Ben beside Pete, Roger, John, and Keith. At the time, surveying my eerily good resemblance of the band and Ben, I didn't think

the acrylic masterpiece was quite enough to express my undying love. So I accompanied the painting with a fifteen page letter, really spelling out to Ben just how much he meant to me. God knows what I wrote for fifteen pages. How many times can you tell someone they are the man of your dreams? Apparently for me, for fifteen pages.

Somehow, it didn't work out between us. Maybe because fifteen page letters are just a little over the top? Noooo.

Mostly I hope Ben saved the painting. I spent close to forty hours on it. As he's married with kids now, somehow I doubt he has it squirreled away in a 'Evie' box like some sentimental John Cusack. My masterpiece is most likely at a rummage sale in Madison, selling for \$2.99.

Regardless, even after Ben's rejection, I couldn't shake my feelings for him. For years, I'd drag future boyfriends to the bars Ben would bartend at. I'd drink the free consolation drinks Ben dished out to me with a side of pity.

Thankfully, my current boyfriend was away the weekend I surfed Facebook and discovered a photo of Ben and a girl with a bob haircut and a plain, round face in a hospital. In their arms was what appeared to be a swaddled human baby. Immediately, I collapsed to the floor, clutching my chest and moaning. Curled in the fetal position, I managed to locate my mouse in a puddle of tears and snot and click through the series of photos. It was true, Ben knocked up this girl, this Ann person. The baby was Tommy, named after The Who's rock opera.

For years, what really got to me was that Ben married someone else: an average girl who didn't finish college, make him a painting or write him a fifteen page letter. I felt that I trumped her on all aspects. So why then

did he choose her? But then I wondered, maybe it was never about being pretty or successful or outgoing or having a zillion more Facebook friends or even better blow job skills (yes, I said it). It was too sad a thought to think that all the hard work I had done and years I'd been pining away wasn't worth it.

A fervent overachiever, at the time I figured sentimental gifts like mine proved I was the better choice. My thoughtfulness, dedication, devotion, and acrylic skills verging on that of Bob Ross would make Ben more attracted to me.

Of course, this strategy completely backfired. Not only because making a painting of a guy you are no longer dating is downright creepy, but also because the harder I tried to convince Ben to be with me, the more pathetic I appeared. In the end, Ben became less attracted to me. Not only did I show him just how much I liked him, but also how dependent I was on him liking me. I handed over my power. He called the shots. He could have me whenever he wanted me. He could put me on the reserve list. Game over.

Why we do these gestures to begin with?

Inevitably, a girl wants to please a guy. So she spoils him. She cooks him elaborate five course meals, does his laundry, cleans his car, runs errands, and surprises him with romantic gifts. As girls, we assume doing these thoughtful things will make a guy find us more attractive. He'll see us as great girlfriend material. Sure, a guy appreciates clean clothes. Yeah, it's nice when their dry cleaning gets picked up. Who wouldn't want courses of wine, cheese, duck confit,

and hand torched crème brûlées?

The next time a guy is sick, I want you to put down that chicken noodle soup ladle and consider this. Analyze how much effort you are putting in, the reasons men become attracted to a girl, and how your little act of kindness may alter a guy's perception of you.

Here's my general rule: Do not go out of your way for a guy until he has proved himself and earned that level of affection.

Ask yourself, why are you spoiling a guy who has done nothing extravagant for you?

He's hungry? Why don't you just order some easy Thai takeout?

It's his birthday? Why can't you just send him a simple 'happy birthday' text.

He wants to go to a concert? Why doesn't he buy tickets and take you on a date?

Why are we so urgent to shower a guy with affection? Are we afraid another girl is going to swoop in with her homemade fettuccini, Barney's sweater, and VIP passes to Arcade Fire? I'm going to challenge that thought by saying: let the competition go right ahead. If you're cool, laid back, and confident, if he likes you as a person, you don't need to try that hard.

Remember, you are the one deciding whether you want to date a guy or not. He should be the one trying to win you over, pursuing you, not the other way around. There's no need to prove your worthiness to a man. You shouldn't have

**Here's my
general rule: Do
not go out of your
way for a guy until
he has proved
himself and earned
that level of
affection.**

to bribe a guy to want to see you. Thoughtful actions are flattering, but they won't necessarily make you more attractive.

The other day I rounded up my guy friends and took a survey. I told them that two girls liked them. One was a very pretty, fun and outgoing girl. The second was a slightly better than average, fun and outgoing girl who also baked him cookies and showed up unexpectedly with gifts. I asked them which girl they would choose. All of them chose the prettier one. They chose her because they were more attracted to her. They all agreed they liked the cookies and appreciated the gifts, but it didn't make them more attracted to the other girl.

I assumed by giving Ben grand gifts of love he would magically see me as his dream girl because these were the types of doting gifts that I considered romantic. Really, what I wanted was Ben to do romantic things for me, like paint me a portrait or confess his love in a sappy fifteen-page letter. My grand gestures were selfish actions. I committed the gigantic mistake of never wondering what things Ben actually wanted. I mean, maybe all he hoped for was someone to watch the Green Bay Packers football game with and share some chicken wings? Maybe I didn't need the painting or the letter or a penchant of giving blow jobs? Perhaps all I needed to know was Farve's passing stats, who the Packer's leading wide receivers were, and which wing sauce he liked best? Maybe he chose the other girl because, like him, she was ready to settle down and start a family in Madison, Wisconsin?

What's Wrong with Being Sweet and Thoughtful?

Before you begin berating me as an emotionless

witch, let me tell you there's nothing wrong with thoughtful gifts and sweet gestures if you are at the right stage in your relationship. In a serious and stable relationship, those little sentiments are some of the best parts. Although if you are trying to attract a guy, showing signs of affection too early can negatively affect his feelings for you.

Going out of your way for a guy, especially if the guy hasn't put in a lot of effort, makes you seem too attached too quickly. Nothing kills attraction like acting desperate to please a guy, any guy. Nothing is more threatening to their freedom than the girl looking to lock down a boyfriend (or husband), stat. Men want to know that you are choosing them for a reason. In order for a guy to feel special, you really have to get to know him and that takes time. Writing a poem, dropping off a birthday gift, or cooking a Michelin star meal after seeing a guy a few times is pretty hasty (and scary).

Once you start cooking and cleaning or crafting ad hoc collages of your mug shots together, it's pretty obvious that you like him and are seeking his approval. Apparently, you are already more than happy with his behavior as is. He can slack now. He knows he no longer needs to impress you. Giving a man little gifts and compliments that scream, "I'm 100% sold on you," chips away at your allure. As the one doing the convincing, you've reversed your role. Suddenly, the guy has become the one deciding if he is going to choose you.

So What Do You Do Then?

Should you be a demanding, cold-hearted bitch?

Hungry? Here, have some stale Doritos!

Yeah, I bake a mean carrot cake. Hehehe, but you don't get any.

Want to go to that concert? You better be buying my ticket and it best be VIP if you know what's good for you.

Ok, I'm not saying go that far.

Friends, here's my suggestion. Act coy. Refrain from expressing too much interest too early. As I've said earlier in this book, a guy should wonder how much you actually like him. So wait on Nana's chocolate chip cookies and trinkets from your recent holiday trip. I'm a romantic too, but please, be patient. You'll meet a great guy and be able to do all these thoughtful things once you are in a more serious relationship. Well, maybe except rhyming 'love' with 'morning dove.' Just because it rhymes doesn't mean you're the next John Keats.

Rather, allow a guy to ask you out and get to know him. Create a bond, build trust, laugh, share stories and inside jokes. That way, the sweet gestures you do for him in the future are meaningful and will be specific to him. On dates, by all means, brag about your orgasmic spaghetti sauce recipe. Gush on your love of cleaning the toilet. Hint that you attend a crap ton of awesome local rock gigs. Just make these details about who you are, not bargaining tools. Above all, make certain the guy you are dating treats you well and deserves kind gestures.

And because I know you want a good laugh, or you're on the verge of pouring your heart out to a long lost love and need someone to talk you off the ledge, I'll leave you with this bit of prose I wrote years ago for a college crush. I was young. Please forgive me.

Sell Away a Soulmate

To Steve

When I think of winter evenings, and summer afternoons,

I cry to think of life without you, not to see you soon.

I don't know where my life will take me, or where we have been,

*But my life could never be the same without you, and it shall not
be again.*

I miss the long walks down on Langdon Street, all the parties anew,

I miss the night so long passed, when it seemed just me and you.

I miss the way you held your smile, held me and not let go,

For to a friend you said yes, and to a lover, you said no.

When I think of all the smiles lost, and the soft, sweet kiss good-bye,

I did not know it was the last, I did not know to cry.

When the sun comes up at dawn, and douses out its light,

And each day passes as the next, the memory losing sight.

I cannot forget our magic, how can you forget the girl's dance,

*The one who loved you for who you were, when the frat boy gave
a chance.*

Your eyes seemed to tell a story that those lips could never say,

And with each December that does pass, each year that wears away,

I cannot feel that feeling, I cannot understand your thought,

Why you sold away a soulmate, and what in return you bought.



I LIKE HIM, SO I SLEPT WITH HIS FRIEND

Our favorite old Van Halen song clicked on the jukebox as I caught Brandon's attention. Our first summer after graduation had been well to him. His arms and face glowed golden from the days he spent at the beach.

"What are you doing here?" he recognized me and seemed happily surprised.

"Mike invited my friend and me to come up and stay the weekend."

His smile teased me as he asked me what I'd like to drink. He mussed his hair, the type of hair I could run my fingers through for days and never get bored, while he riffled off the beer list.

I ordered my usual and he said it was on him. Just like the old days.

"Charlie's here too. You remember Charlie, right?" he told me, pointing to where Mike and my friend were standing beside a row of stools molded into horse saddles. Gimmicks to attract the tourists.

“No way, he’s working up here too.”

“Yeah, there’s a good crew of us all up for the summer.”

Mike, Charlie, Matty, Tom, and Brandon all shared a house on campus. They’d set up lawn chairs and a kiddie pool in their front yard and run a hose onto a Slip ‘N Slide. They’d call girls off the street to join their keg parties that lasted from noon until far past midnight.

“Hey! Evie! It’s so good to see you.” Charlie ran over and threw his arms around me. I glanced at Brandon, then back at Charlie.

“We should do shots,” Charlie suggested. “To celebrate.”

The black liquorish liquor always made me sick but I couldn’t help but grin as Brandon poured out three shots. I clinked glasses with Brandon and Charlie, swallowed, and cringed. By the time the scowl eased off my face, Brandon had walked down to the end of the bar to help another customer. Charlie slung his arm around my back. The famous White Snake song played from the jukebox and he began to sing the lyrics to me.

“Pour some sugar on me!” Charlie shouted.

“Brandon!” I called.

His body stooped at the cooler, he cocked his head. “What?”

“Pour some sugar on me! Like that afternoon on Flower Street.” I reminisced.

Brandon had to remember pouring Midori on me as I lay sprawled on their Slip ‘N Slide in the center of their front lawn. He tickled my sides until I squirmed in a fit of giggles. He licked the melon liquor off my stomach. His lips kissed my navel, then my breasts. His fingers pushed aside the wet

fabric of my bikini. His tongue lapped until I let out a moan. Slowly he worked his way up to my mouth.

“Not here,” Brandon laughed now, shaking his head.

Charlie was on board, “Come on. Let’s do it. Body shots! Body shots!”

Brandon found the bottle and poured out a shot.

I leaned over the bar and clapped onto his bicep.

“Brandon, you have to do one too.”

“Not tonight,” he said, pulling away to return the bottle.

I climbed up onto the bar and laid down. Brandon watched us as Charlie tilted the shot glass. I squealed as the liquid pooled on my abdomen. In one swoop Charlie sucked it up. His lips moved to my mouth. He tasted like summer, illicit and fruity.

Abruptly I sat up. I liked Brandon, I wanted Brandon, I’d come to Door County for Brandon.

Charlie helped me down from the bar. “We should go sailing tomorrow,” Charlie whispered, kissing my neck.

“I don’t know.” I shied away. “Mike said Brandon usually goes to the beach.”

At the other end of the bar, Brandon was helping a group of girls. He used his same smile, my smile, with them. When I turned back, I was alone, Charlie had returned to Mike and my friend.

I bounded back to Charlie, but kept my eye on Brandon. I nudged Charlie. “What are we going to do after this?”

Charlie said there was a barn party going on outside of town.

Brandon threw his head back, laughing with a lithe red head.

“There will be a few local bands playing,” Charlie continued as Brandon hugged a tanned blonde.

Brandon was downing drinks with the red head when Charlie told me it was time to go to the party. Brandon said he would meet us there as we waved from the doorway.

At the barn party, my friend and I found Brandon talking with one of the bands. I hip checked Brandon and my friend and I flirted with the drummer. The drummer asked where we were from. The lead singer wanted to know how long we were in town. Glancing back, Brandon had disappeared, so I didn't bother to tell the drummer.

We pushed through the crowd until we found Brandon with Charlie and Mike. The red head from the bar appeared. She stood between Brandon and me.

“You wanna take a walk in the field?” Charlie revealed a flask from his breast pocket, pointed out to the expanse of dark corn stalks in the distance before passing it to me.

I tilted it back but only let the liquor touch my lips.

“Brandon,” I butted in front of the red head. “Want to take a walk in the field?”

“We're going to go for a walk,” Charlie repeated.

“I think I'm going to stay here.” he said, distracted by the red head.

Our feet made a shushing sound as we passed through the tall grass, heading towards the field of corn.

“You're missing out,” I yelled back to Brandon's silhouette illuminated in the moonlight before we disappeared into the wall of corn stalks.

It must worry Brandon that I was alone with Charlie.

While Charlie kissed me, I hoped he would tell Brandon later.

When Charlie suggested we go back to his and Brandon's apartment, I agreed.

As we passed through the front room of their apartment, Brandon, Mike and my friend were stoned on the couch.

Charlie lead me into his room. I only partially closed the door. He put on Brandon's Def Leopard album and I let him kiss me and when he unwrapped a condom I gave him my best smile and didn't hesitate.

I thought of running barefoot through the grass and hurling myself onto the Slip 'N Slide. So many people cut themselves that summer on the rocks or metal stakes. But we'd throw ourselves at it anyways because in college it was a time when you weren't supposed to think about consequences. Although, sobered up, bloody, disappointed the next day, you always did care.

Brandon must have cared. He must still care now, only he's pretending that he doesn't care because that's what you're supposed to do. Mike, Charlie, Matty, Tom, and Brandon were my boys. They all liked me. But I saved myself for Brandon. I waited the whole summer for Brandon to make his move. When Mike invited me, I came up north for Brandon. I went to the bar just to see Brandon. He's supposed to stop his friend.

But he didn't stop his friend and so in the next room I had mediocre sex with Charlie.

As girls, we have a bad habit of using jealousy as a tactic to get back at guys or attempt to make them see us as more attractive. We hope that the attention of other men will raise our perceived worth. In other words, the more men that want us, the more desirable and popular we must be. If other

men want to sleep with me, my crush will see how attractive I am and want to sleep with me. If I kiss another guy, he'll wish he was the one kissing me. You get where I'm going with this.

How Jealousy Works:

A lot of us get insanely jealous when a guy we like shows interest in another girl. This somewhat explains why we think jealousy will work on men. Jealousy does work on men, but men and women react differently to competition. If a woman spots an attractive possible rival zeroing in on a guy she likes, her first thought is that she has to try harder. She will do things to make herself look hotter, more popular or better in bed. Whereas if a man spots an attractive possible rival honing in on a girl he likes, his first thought is that he will have to fight the guy.

True, if you are surrounded by men fawning for your attention, you will appear more popular and interesting. Yet jealousy works only if the other person has feelings for you. If you like a guy and he isn't showing interest in you or if you think he's out of your league and you feel the need to try to make him like you more, there is a very slim chance that he will respond to your attempts at making him jealous. You may become jealous when he shows attention to other girls. However, this is only due to your desire for

In a situation in which you like a guy more than he likes you, he isn't going to feel angry or inadequate if another guy is honing in on you.

him. In a situation in which you like a guy more than he likes you, he isn't going to feel angry or inadequate if another guy is honing in on you. He has to have feelings for you initially. Jealousy can't create desire. Desire only exists in a situation where the guy already thinks you are attractive.

Guys' Three Responses to Jealousy:

Let's say a guy sees a girl flirting with another guy. He has three possible responses to the situation, which come down to how interested he is in her.

If he is genuinely interested in her he will either be disappointed and give up or ignore what he saw and give it his best shot later on. That is if he thinks he is better than the guy she was flirting with.

If he is just sort of interested in the girl, but not genuinely, he won't care that she is flirting with the other guy.

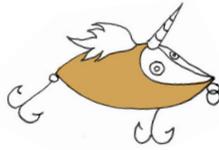
If he's not interested in her, he won't notice at all.

Jealousy didn't work on Brandon. Sure, he was kind of interested in me. He kissed me back in college. However, he wasn't genuinely interested, so he didn't care if his friend made a move. I hoped he'd spring into action and fight for what was his. In reality, he didn't care enough. I put on a huge display for nothing.

I traveled hours up to a northern Wisconsin tourist town to impress Brandon and convince him I wanted something more. Not that I necessarily had shot at a relationship with him, but once

I slept with Charlie, there was a very slim chance that that would ever happen. Moving from one member of their crew to the next looked bad. The fact that I had sex with Brandon's friend and roommate, according to Bro Code, made me off limits. A golden Bro rule: Bro's don't date a bro's ex-girlfriend. Charlie might brag how good I was in bed. If Brandon was really hard up for some action, he might entertain having sex with me. However, most guys can't take a girl seriously if one of their good friends has slept with her. Bro's before hoes, man.

**A golden Bro rule:
Bro's don't date a
bro's ex-girlfriend.**



IN THE POOL WHERE YOU LEAST EXPECT IT WILL BE THE FISH

At any moment, one decision can change the course of your life forever.

This is the kind of self-help hullabaloo you'd expect to find touted by an Invisalign-grinned life coach with a gelled hair helmet on an infomercial at 4AM. Yet, it's true. A single, unexpected, chance meeting can turn your world upside down. Every time you leave the comfort of your couch and drive to the grocery store to pick up toilet paper, pump gas at your local Amaco, or slog through spin class, your potential paramour could be right beside you choosing Charmin', filling up his Pathfinder, or pounding away like he's the next Lance Armstrong (without the doping). And after you blink away the saucer eyes and wipe the drool from your lips, you have a choice. You can sit tight and let your Adonis-type decide your future, or blaze your own path and

see what could happen between you and said-Adonis.

A Roman poet named Ovid once said, “Let your hook be always cast. In the pool where you least expect it, will be fish.”

Rather than be caught off guard, the purpose of this book has been to prepare you and empower you. Provide you with the tools to take action and subsequently take control of the dating game. Inspire you to be courageous. To steal a line from Sara Bareilles, “Honestly, I wanna see you be brave.” You never know when or where you’re going to cross paths with someone jaw-dropping. Like the Girl Scouts taught us (besides the fact you should always order more boxes than necessary of the Samoas), it’s best to always be prepared.

Throughout this course, we’ve talked a lot about controlled, rational, calculated strategies. However, love isn’t something you can control, but rather, something that irrationally overwhelms you. Even the word ‘fall’ paired with the phrase ‘in love’ implies a lack of planned foresight. You can’t determine who you fall in love with. You can’t make someone love you. Love is an emotion you respond to and get pulled in hook-line-and-sinker.

Lust and actual love are very different.

In the early stages of a relationship when hormones are raging, lust is fueled by idealization and projection - you see what you hope someone will be like or need them to be - rather than seeing the real person. Pure lust like this is based solely on physical attraction and fantasy and often dissipates when the ‘real person’ surfaces. Lust equates to the hippie at Burning Man high on LSD. Carefree and euphoric while wearing rose colored glasses. Yet, eventually the drugs wear off. A lustful idealization can easily be contrived. Manipulative seduction tactics that promise pleasure but withhold

certainty work well in the short run to heighten arousal.

However, real love is not based on idealization or projection, but requires time to get to know one another. Yes, physical attraction is a key component to love. But to build a bond both partners also need to let their guards down and expose their most vulnerable selves. Playing games won't create a trusting foundation, trickery will only delay a couple from getting to know one another and understanding each other. If you want a shot at love, take the risk and be honest about your intentions. Relationships rely on communication and certainty.

Honesty and certainty like this might seem contradictory to what I've been telling you all along. I've drilled into your head the notions of remaining mysterious, elusive, and indifferent.

I'm not going against any of these initial strategies which will help you test how much a guy likes you, push him to pursue you harder, and see you as a bigger prize. The man still needs to pursue you. Remember, you're not 100% sold on any guy. You're not dying to mother anybody's babies. You're not popping by anyone's apartment at 2AM, begging, pleading and demanding answers with the dreaded 'talk' either.

Instead, I suggest you let your guard down and take the time to really get to know a guy to see where the relationship can progress. Be upfront with what you are looking for. You're a respectable and desirable woman who has the ability and freedom to decide what happens in her life and with men. This is the reason I'm encouraging you to approach men and chase your crush in the first place; I don't want you to waste time sitting around waiting for men. Similarly, I don't want you to waste your time

waiting around if a relationship isn't going anywhere. Don't gyp yourself of the happiness you deserve. Listen to your gut, approach the edge of reason, swallow hard, weigh the consequences, and take a leap of faith into the unknown. You can't play love safe. In love, you have to go all in.

While we're on the topic and it's nearly the end of this course, there is something I should share with you. I feel like we've become friends and there's something I've been hiding from you.

Guys, I met a man. Since the day I began writing this book, I have been slowly, secretly falling in love with him. Yes, I've had crushes before. Felt the fatal jolt of fantasy lust. You've read my many dating escapades. Yet this man has managed to do something no one else has done before. He's amazed me. He's challenged my path and priorities. He's inspired me. He's believed in me. He's the person I most want to see. When I have a fun, stupid, embarrassing, or ridiculous story, he's the one I most want to tell. I should have known we had a strange connection – mere hours after meeting, I confessed to him more intimate details than I ever shared with anyone else, including a boyfriend I dated for close to seven years. Normally, I'd be scared of letting someone in like this, but around him, I'm comfortable. Unlike all the others, I'm not compelled to turn tail and run. Sure, I'm half crazy and I know it, but perhaps he's just as equally crazy. To tell you the truth, you'd like him. He's dashing akin to a young Vince Vaughn. His web of wit and wonderful sarcasm entangles you in a way that hours pass without you knowing. He's charismatic, passionate, sharper than a whip, daring, humorous, at times vulnerable and sweet, and others devilishly devious in a way that is such a freaking turn on. He aspires to be a bit of a bad boy and sometimes I think he

is. He's cunning, although, I like to think I let him get away with nothing. Or close to nothing. He probably gets away with something. I adore his quirks. Especially when he gets a little nerdy, because deep down I'm a bit of a nerd myself. I deeply admire his work. He's a successful, clever, pioneer in his industry. And the kicker, I'm really beginning to care for him. Oh, and I'd fuck him a million times over in the middle of Hollywood Boulevard. Yep, he's that kind of awesome.

Somehow, I have not admitted any of this to him. I like him, but I'm skeptical if I can truly trust him. I care for him, but does he feel the same? We seem compatible, but how well do I really know him? My seemingly charming chap could suffer from random bouts of arachibutyrophobia (the fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of your mouth. And I love peanut butter), stalk Paula Abdul, be allergic to gluten, have a closetful of Crocs, or hide a history of Tourette's? So I'm being logical and playing it safe. I'm teetering at the edge of reason, weighing my options. My irrational emotions urge me to jump, but my rational self argues to keep my feet firmly planted and avoid getting hurt.

Truth is, letting down my guard and committing to someone is frickin' scary. If I give up the mystery, stripped down he'll see me as a girl that just wants to love and be loved by a boy who she thinks is absolutely amazing for who he is. That knowledge is power and he could abuse that power and use it to his advantage. He could play me. He might let me down. He could just be a man I care about, who can't emotionally give me what I need.

On top of that, it's difficult to lay your whole heart on the line for a future that is unknown. Can love and passion really survive five, ten, twenty years from now? Is it possible to face your greatest fears, change and grow together? Or

will love elude you one day and vanish silently without a cause?

Is the risk worth it?

I suppose I could be patient and wait it out on the sidelines, hoping that he'll come around and express his undying adoration. Painting him a creepy portrait or baking him a single morsel of Nana's chocolate chip goodness is out. And although 'I want you to choke me hard' rhymes with 'On Hollywood Boulevard,' I think it best I put down the pen and paper.

In my life, I have the ability to choose what I want. I have the strength, the gumption, enough crazy in me to throw caution to the wind. Life is short. Don't hold back. Chase what you're passionate about. Fuck the past. Fuck heartbreak. Fuck hard and fast and loud like there is no tomorrow. Cut yourself open, be vulnerable, lose control, and risk it all. Aren't these the morals of every romantic love story?

My endeavor might be fruitless and stupid. The entire thing could pan out with me mowing down an entire bowl of uncooked brownie batter while balling to songs by Sarah McLachlan and perusing my stray cat options on the adoption boards. I also subsequently might get salmonella poisoning from the uncooked eggs and wind up in the ER. Yes, all possible.

But, I might not. There's a chance. What should I do?

Thing is, if you asked me to place an ad for the man of my dreams, I wouldn't seek Prince Charming. If some big chinned hero-type rode in on his big, white steed, jabbed some glass stiletto on my foot, and tossed me over his back, proclaiming me 'saved,' I'd sound the rape whistle and send him packing on his merry way. For one, a horse? Who is he

trying to impress? Upgrade to a vintage Porsche, at the very least an economical Prius. Two, has he not considered how glass will totally clash with my leather rocker vibe? Three, who says I needed saving? And don't get me started on riding off into the sunset. That sounds downright desolate and boring. What could possibly be out there besides an Amaco with some stale hotdogs and a mouth breather McDonald's?

Give me unpredictability, I say. Sign me up for danger. I want adventure, Goddamnit. And maybe a bandit hat I could pose in for selfies. My ad would call for a Partner in Crime. Clyde to my Bonnie. Destro to my Baroness. An equal to share in the shenanigans. Though, I have a feeling we'd write our own story and never get caught.

All this makes me hopeful because this guy who I'm really starting to like has become my co-conspirator, my partner in crime, the guy I've jokingly referred to as 'Trouble.' Together, I imagine we'd get away with a lot and have a good, hearty chuckle after.

So do you want to know who this man is that caught my attention? The man who dared me to see the world a little differently. The man who made me feel and care and give in a way I didn't know possible. Come on, you can admit it, you want some sort of happy ending to my little tale, don't you?

Alright, Reader, I'll let you in on my secret. He's read every word of this book with you. Because he's the one who asked me to write it.

When I first met him, my now publisher and editor, did I know that I would write a book and fall in love with him one day? At the time, had you have asked me, I would have said no. We met by chance, on of all nights, Cinco de Mayo. Our timing sucked. Our meeting was anything but

smooth. I raved on and on about one of his friends I found attractive, he insulted me, we fought, and then nearly died in a car crash. Nothing like a memorable meet cute, huh? Still, there was something about him that stayed with me.

A year passed after our first meeting. Big changes happened in my life. I moved across the country, ended a long-term relationship, secured an amazing, new job, and completed my lifelong dream of writing my first fiction novel. I was focusing on bettering myself and at the same time trying to define love and passion – figure out what those terms meant to me. From time to time though, my mind would return to him. Something about him fascinated me. Something about us seemed unresolved. A year passed until he contacted me. He had a writing project for me, he said. He wanted me to work for him. He took a chance, believed in me, and gave me the opportunity to publish this book. And the more time I spent with him, the more I realized why I never forgot him. How could I? Yes, it's true, I meet a lot of men. But, I've never met one like him.

So what should I do?

For him, I choose to be brave. I'll be honest, stand before him and take what could be the chance of my life. I'll let him know I care. I'll give my whole heart to him. Even if it means getting hurt. Because you can fight to protect yourself, be safe, and hold on, or you can fight to let go, fall, and see what new, wonderful, and unexpected places love can take you.

If you are prepared and open to love, I'm confident that you will reel in someone exceptional too. Through and through, I'm a hopeless romantic. If you are honest with yourself and others, you try to meet as many interesting people as you can, you stay positive, and open your eyes and

heart to every opportunity, I'm optimistic that you'll catch a man who inspires you. That's the excitement of life, the fantastic possibility that any day could be the day that someone may surprise you and truly amaze you.

Maybe I'm a sucker, but I believe in the message of those cheesy love songs and romantic comedies. A love that sweeps you up and drives you blissfully insane. A love that can adapt and grow as both of you do. I blame Bridget Jones, Harry and Sally, John Cusack and all his grand romantic gestures. They ruined me forever.

Somehow though, I'm very glad they did.

Until next time, Girls. Have a great time out there. And give all the hotties my best regards.

Cheers!

Evie Jasper

If You Would Like:

- More articles, resources, and quirky case studies on flirting, meeting men, understanding men, and dating
- Evie to answer your dating question
- Information about how to submit your personal dating stories to make Evie grimace or chuckle
- To convince Evie to sell commemorative Cat Lady coffee mugs

...please visit www.realmenin.com

