Lovereading.co.uk
Helping you choose your next book

You loved your last book...but what are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

Love Me Tinder

Written by Nicola May

Published by Accent Press Ltd

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

Love Me Tinder

Nicola May

Published by Accent Press Ltd 2016
ISBN 9781786154934

Copyright © **Nicola May** 2016
First published by Nicola May 2016

The right of **Nicola May** to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by the author in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The story contained within this book is a work of fiction. Names and characters are the product of the author's imagination and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the written permission of the publishers: Accent Press Ltd, Ty Cynon House, Navigation Park, Abercynon, CF45 4SN

‘Never let a fool kiss you, or a kiss fool you.’

– Joey Adams

Prologue

The fact that Cali was a bit drunk was probably a good thing. She tentatively reached for her mobile and searched for the required 'love app'. If there was going to be a right time, this had to be it.

A flame logo flickered on her phone screen and she felt a sudden rush of adrenaline. Tinder was the dating app that millions of people used worldwide. Surely there was one man on here who would be a suitable match – if only for a few dates to start with?

Now all she had to do was set up a profile and start swiping…

Chapter One

‘Cali big tits, Cali big tits.’

‘Lady P! Not tonight, please!’ Throwing her keys down onto her desk, Cali Summers ran a hand through her neat brown bob.

‘No, no, no, no, no, no.’ The African grey parrot shrieked and started diving around its large cage. It’d been fine in the marital three-bedroom detached home she had shared with her ex, Jamie, but in her pokey, two-bedroom first-floor flat, her feathered friend took up half the lounge.

Jamie had, of course, taught the mischievous bird every rude word it could take in, which more often than not came spouting out of her beak at the most inappropriate times.

‘Miss Dumb Bell’, Jamie’s new ‘bird’, was apparently allergic to ‘real’ birds, so Cali had pathetically done as asked and taken this particularly badly behaved one in.

Cali sat back on her small cream sofa and looked around. What did she have to show for all the years she had worked and wasted with Jamie?

Yes, she owned her own place, but all that surrounded her was a bird cage, an untidy desk and a TV with a remote control stuck together with duct tape.

She lay back on the sofa and rested her tired feet on the wooden coffee table in front of her. A couple of family photos stared back at her. Josh, her handsome younger brother, sporting his Red Cross jacket in Nepal, and her parents, Sue and Duncan, with a giraffe looming behind them while on safari in South Africa.

Bless her lovely dad; if it wasn't for him she wouldn't have this place. Despite being so settled with Jamie back then he had suggested she use her grandfather's inheritance as a deposit on a flat, as an investment for the future. She wanted to put it in her wedding fund, but he had been insistent and now she was eternally grateful. Luckily the tenants had been nearing the end of their year's stint when her break up had occurred, so it had all been ironically convenient.

She had initially just turned all of her wedding photos around, but now they were shoved in a box in the spare room; smiling reminders of what now seemed like an unbelievable farce. There wasn't even any divorce settlement coming her way. The marital house wasn't in her name and there was no equity in it anyway, as they had installed a brand new kitchen straight after the wedding. Her best friend Annie had said she should fight for money out of him, but she couldn't bear the hassle, and felt that walking away with her head held high made her a better person.

All she had salvaged were her personal belongings and a wonderful ornate mirror they had bought together on a fun day out to Portobello Market.

This past year had been like a bad dream. To everyone else, they were the perfect couple. When they started telling friends that they were divorcing, there was a distinct rumbling of disbelief and a sense of checking their own relationships. If Cali and Jamie couldn't make it work, could they?

But not all of them had taken on a blonde bimbo of a personal trainer to get them both fit. Or a husband with strong abs but a much weaker spine who had run to someone else as soon as he began to feel 'trapped' and 'unsure' of his decision to marry 'so young'.

Cali knew that was an excuse – at thirty, Cali wasn't young, but the sad thing was that at twenty-four, Miss Dumb Bell *was.* She also didn't impose the immediate pressure of creating a family, which was exactly what Cali had wanted, as soon as she was married.

'Bitch!'

Cali leapt up and threw the purple velvet cage cover over the relentless bird. 'Lady P! Stop! Just stop!'

She crashed back down on the sofa as her phone beeped through with a text. *So have you received the divorce papers yet? Be a good girl and get them signed, will you?*

She looked to the envelope of broken dreams, sat dormant on the coffee table for two days, and flicked on the TV.

'Be a good bloody girl! Who the fuck does he think he is, Lady P?'

'Fuckety fuck, fuckety fuck.'

Cali got back up and pulled the cover off her

maddening bird.

‘Exactly, Lady P, my thoughts entirely.’

Twelve years she had known Jamie Summers, nearly all of her adult life. What did she have to show for it?

A sad, fragmented heart and one bloody annoying parrot.

Chapter Two

Putting an empty Tupperware container on her desk, Cali noticed her screensaver was still the one of her wedding day, and thought for the thousandth time that she really must change it. She also must really tidy her desk as her dingy wood-panelled office didn't have room for any clutter.

The one advantage of it, however, was that it looked over well-manicured grounds; she even had a view of the Thames.

Before she even had had a chance to sit down, Louise, the young event co-ordinator at the hotel where Cali was manager of Conferences and Events, began to gabble her not-so-concise handover.

'Ah, Cali … good, you're back early. There's a wedding show at three thirty and a guy checking out The Red Room for his wife's surprise fiftieth at five. I've finished the contract for the corporate cow at Drake & Co. and we've just had a private lunch enquiry from … shit, I've forgotten the company name but I've sent you an email.'

'Why are you telling me all this now? It's only two o'clock.' Cali started grouping papers on her desk.

'I asked you yesterday if I could have a half day.

It's my birthday tomorrow, remember, and I'm getting new extensions put in.'

'Oh, sorry Lou, of course you did. My mind's all over the place today.' She didn't think it right to elaborate to the twenty-year-old that the fact she was so nearing the signing of her divorce papers was actually making her physically sick.

'Right, I'm off. Cali, why don't you come along tomorrow? We'll be in The Swan by the time you're done. The more the merrier. It's a mixed age group, so you won't feel too old.'

'Ha! Thanks. I'll let you know tomorrow, if that's OK. Now, off you go. Enjoy the pampering.'

Lou grabbed her coat off the chair and headed for the door. She turned back and smiled.

'You'll be really welcome. And you never know, Cali, the man of your dreams might be in there.'

Cali shook her head and watch Lou go. With her long, wavy hair and sexy little figure, she was the desire of many a man who graced the corridors of the nineteenth century Bridge Hotel – the hotel that had been Cali's workplace for the last five years.

She should go out. She hated walking into pubs on her own, but that was something she needed to get used to now – plus she was getting slightly bored of staying in all the time rowing with Lady P.

Cali logged into her computer. She thought back to birthdays in her twenties. All of them spent with Jamie. It seemed hard to fathom that she wouldn't be spending any more with him. In fact, she was dreading her next one. She would be thirty-one and bloody single. In just a month's time, too.

Marcus Clarke, the General Manager, broke her

train of thought. All six foot four of him, with his neat salt and pepper haircut and classic good looks of a man in his early forties. Cali thought he could step straight into a Mills & Boon novel. He was a true gentleman, too. He treated every guest with kindness and respect. Well, to their faces anyway! The only downside was he had been married to the very beautiful ex-model Patricia for six years and they had two adorable sons.

'On your own today, Cali? All OK?'

'Yes, all good. It's Lou's birthday tomorrow and she wanted a half day to beautify herself. '

'Surprised she kept that quiet.'

'You know what she's like. She's a funny little thing, doesn't like fuss.'

'Unlike this one.' Marcus winked at Cali as a gangly redhead came scurrying by the events office.

'Anyone would think he'd lost a kidney, not mislaid a bloody tie in his room.' Adam pushed his floppy fringe back. 'Cali, Cali, Cali,' he sang, and kissed her on the cheek. 'Ooh, look at you. New blusher, or just because I walked into the room?'

'Adam, not so loud.' Marcus picked up a file that had fallen on the floor and walked back to his office. 'And when you get a sec, could you give the reception phones a good clean? They look grey rather than cream.'

'I signed up to be a receptionist, not a bloody skivvy,' Adam whispered.

Cali smiled at the young lad. She loved his Geordie accent and also the fact that he was so un-PC. He had helped her through with laughter during very dark times.

‘Adam. Come on. Just do it, you know he’s lovely, really.’

‘I’d do him,’ Adam laughed. ‘And speaking of it, you need to start getting some action soon, too. You’ll heal over before you know it if you don’t.’ Cali shook her head as he started rushing to the door. ‘Cover me; I’m going for a ciggie.’

The thought of sleeping with somebody other than Jamie was alien. Another body to discover after so many years of the same one. She wasn’t sure she’d know what to do. Sex had been so familiar with Jamie. At the start, young love – frantic and passionate. They would do it every which way, whenever they could. Then, as the years went on, with a deeper understanding of each other.

He was the third man she had ever slept with, the first being a four-month fling at seventeen with Ralph Weeks in sixth form, and the second, a one-night drunken fumble with a goth at university, whom she wouldn’t have touched with a barge pole if vodka hadn’t been involved.

She had met Jamie a year later and fell in love with him almost immediately. He was studying business. He always laughed at the fact that she was studying events management, as she was so quiet and never seemed to be very organised.

Jamie was her opposite; he was gregarious and he was loud. He had black hair and dark eyes and was very good-looking when she met him. In fact, he still was, at five foot eleven with an athletic body, and always well dressed.

But now, the twenty-something blonde hanging off his arm was reaping the benefits, and it still gave

her a dull ache in her stomach at the thought.

He had said the passion had gone between them, the spark. He loved her but wasn't *in* love with her. He was sad but he didn't want to carry on a life with her. Shame she didn't see it coming. He had had the decency – if you can call it that – of promising he had not slept with *her* before he told Cali it was over, but it still hurt. Hurt like a bent arrow through her heart.

The fact that he didn't give them a chance to work through it was what had distressed her the most. His answer was that he couldn't believe she didn't feel that things had changed when they got married. Maybe she was just being naïve, or in denial. But underneath she knew it was because he felt pressured about starting a family straight away.

It was her who had suggested a bloody personal trainer too, as he was worried about not being in good shape for their honeymoon. Bloody ironic, really. She had pushed him into the arms of his future lover. What made it worse was that he had obviously built up a relationship with this woman. It wasn't just a flash in the pan, there was more to it. Adam minced in with a duster in his hand. 'Why have you got a face like a smacked arse now?'

'Just thinking about stuff.'

'Thinking about him, you mean.' He shook his head. 'OK, I have a plan. Tomorrow you are coming to Lou's drinks with me. All you need to do is make sure your phone is charged.' Cali screwed up her face as he continued, 'It's time that I helped you forget the ex and get you some sex!'