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...

Belle de Jour's Guide to Men

Written by Belle de Jour

Published by Phoenix

All text is copyright © of the author

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

BELLE DE JOUR'S GUIDE TO MEN



Belle de Jour



PHOENIX

CHAPTER 1

Attending to your own needs first

— or, A Man is For Life, Not Just For Christmas



Before diving in to the world of Man, a few items must be considered. First, do you have the available resources to support a Man? While they may appear undemanding, they require a lot of care and attention, particularly at the training stage. Even choosing a Man is an investment of time.

Be certain never to underestimate the amount of space and exercise a Man requires. While you may be happy to – ahem – 'walk the dog' twice a week, a young, healthy Man may demand more physical engagement than you are able to spare. And his energy must go somewhere – you might come home one day to find an unattended Man has made a mess of your slippers all over the kitchen floor, or even broken out and is mounting the neighbourhood bitch. Ideally, he should be provided with alternative entertainments to ensure this never happens – a video games console is a popular choice.



A relationship will not solve your problems…

The lights are turned down low. Everything is just where it should be – gleaming candles on the table, pillows and other soft furnishings scattered about. Music plays softly from the stereo. You're primped and primed. All that's missing is…

A Man?

It's the old rom-com cliché we all know and love. Girl has fulfilling, if slightly lonely life, replete with gorgeous flat, mysteriously undemanding job, hilarious friends and multiple costume change montages. Girl meets Boy. Boy completes her. And they all live happily ever after. Right?

Erm, not exactly. You'll have noticed, for instance, how nearly every story offered for the entertainment of women – from fairy tales to Bollywood to the shiny supplements in the Sunday papers – ends with a romantic clinch, and preferably a wedding. What they fail to describe is what comes after.

Because frankly, figuring out what to do with the man once you've got him is one difficult summabitch. And if the divorce rates are anything to go by, many people would be just as well off not having gone for the wedding registry, frothy gown and I Dos in the first place.

So before even embarking on a manhunt, it is well

worth considering what, exactly, you mean to get out of it. Would a man – or this man in particular – add anything valuable to your life, apart from a live alternative to a vibrator and an increase in dirty socks on your floor? Is a relationship what you actually want, or even need at this point in your life?

Most of what women are taught throughout their entire lives is not to question the hegemony of coupledom. You meet a man, you throw yourself at a man, and you wait for him to choose you, to get down on bended knee/knock you up/suggest a shared mortgage (delete as appropriate). And whether you believe it right now or not, doing so simply isn't always the best or most appropriate route to happiness.

It may be an old saw, but there is much truth to the saying that it is impossible to love someone else until you love yourself. Anything less, I am sorry to say, is co-dependency. Or as my father (being genetically averse to therapy-speak) put it: be the person you want to be with.

If the list of qualities for the sort of person you want to be with goes a little like:

1) works hard
2) plays hard, and
3) enjoys sex,

then be the person who works hard, plays hard, and enjoys sex. Not the person who sits at home draining a bottle of white every night and listening to her cervix cobweb over.

Similarly, if the sort of person you want to be with is

serious-minded and refuses to get involved with someone unless it has long-term potential, then be the person who is serious and refuses to get involved with someone unless it has long-term potential. Unless you are actively seeking Friends With Benefits (FWB) and one-night stands, don't play with those situations and then wonder why you haven't attracted a long-term relationship. It sounds obvious, but maybe it isn't always so obvious: don't play at being all sex bomb unless that is what you really want.

And finally, have a set of standards, whatever your relationship preference is. Don't 'end up' with someone, CHOOSE HIM. Don't wait for someone to pick you over the other three girls he's juggling, MOVE ON. *Engage your self-respect gland already.* Enjoy life, do things you enjoy, and don't do things you don't. It really is that simple.

…And sex shouldn't be causing you any

I for one think we should be having more sex, more enjoyably, with more partners. Preferably continuously. But then I am biased. Not to mention, often called a slag. Thing is, if you want to call me a slag I'll agree. I'm a slag. And I don't see the problem with it. Why this shame about sex? It is what we're built to do. It may not work for everyone, but it works for me.

It was Philip Larkin who said that life is first boredom, then fear.

If you are at some point bored of a weekend (if anything like me, around 3pm Sunday), take a moment to

consider the things you're afraid of, and how that affects the sex life you have.

When you don't go up and talk to someone who catches your eye, because of fear of what the reaction would be… when you don't pick up the phone to talk to someone because you don't want to break 'rules' about how many days between meeting someone and saying hello… when you stop yourself having sex with someone simply on the grounds of what other people might think, or because you're afraid of what someone in a hypothetical future might think about your 'number'… why be frightened of attraction, of flirting, of sex?

> *Men*: Every time you don't flirt, don't phone, you pave the road for those who do – and then, no doubt, you whinge later on about why girls don't fall for a 'nice guy' like you.
>
> *Women*: When you play games, send mixed messages, give with one hand and take with the other, you pave the way for someone to think twice about approaching you or calling.
>
> *Non-heteronormative individuals*: just fucking CALL someone and do it already.

In short, it's an infinite feedback loop of people not getting what they want because they're too scared to ask for it.

And the status quo is bollocks, you know it is. They don't hand out Olympic medals to people who only went down the ski jump once in their lives. They don't

give awards to the ones who turned up in a load of expensive gear but didn't fancy getting it dirty. What, exactly, are you saving yourself for? Love? Love is love regardless of whether you've slept with one person or one thousand. Love (and I'm sure this is just what Paul wrote to the Corinthians) don't give a shit. So it would please me no end if we finally grew up and stopped equating purity with ability to love and be loved. How many – or few – partners you have in the course of your life is, frankly, your own business. I for one am not going to get to the end of my life and think 'If I could do it all over again, I'd sleep with fewer people.' And if I wouldn't, why should anyone else?

If you're reading this and relate to what I'm describing, make this the weekend. Go to a bar. Chat someone up. Get a number, and call it. Or if you have called, see that person. Tell him you think he's sexy, and you know you are, and that's that. Take him to bed and do it right. If you're already in a relationship, take your partner's face in your hands and say 'I am going to fuck you until both of us can't walk, because you're mine, and I'm yours, and that's the way it is.' Because the only thing between us and the yawning abyss is the warm, wet, willing bodies we meet on the way.

You know what they say – an awkward morning beats a boring night.

Know your relationship preference

One thing that is very important before approaching men is to know your own mind. Are you really up for a

relationship, or just a bit of physical comfort? Is a one-night stand your true aim, or are you secretly hoping for the Girlfriend Conversion?

In seeking masculine company we must first practise radical honesty with the toughest judge out there: ourselves. I know it can be difficult to admit what you really are after. However there are extreme risks to not doing so, and they end up on Jeremy Kyle every day. Go in with a clear agenda, and you might be disappointed, but you will be prepared. Go in blind, hearts will be broken and paternity tests may be required. And we wouldn't want that, right?

Right?!?

Fuck buddies, flings, and one-offs

Obviously, as I specialise in extremely short-term (i.e. one hour) relationships, a question often asked of me is should I embark on a Friends With Benefits situation, and if so, how best to handle it?

Men, for some reason, don't need to be told what the rules are. Women do. Why? Because regardless of our natural inclinations, we all know it's not what nice girls do.

Now, you don't necessarily have to be a paid up member of the call girl profession to want a piece on the side. Normal girls experience this feeling too. Believe it or not so do archetypal 'good girls', though they tend to keep it on the down low.

Provided you are fully comfortable with your own situation and your sexuality, however, there is no

earthly reason why a nice girl shouldn't. But keeping in mind the requirements of your self-respect gland, there are of course issues to consider.

Case 1: You are both single

Congratulations! You are about to embark on what could be a most excellent adventure. Provided, of course, you follow these simple ground rules:

* *The Sex.* Must be good. Otherwise, why bother? This person is not going to raise children with you.
* *The Companionship.* It helps if this is someone you get on with and see around socially. Puts a nice ending on all those group nights out when it looks like you aren't going to pull (or, pull anything decent). You've pulled before you even arrive. What if he's pulled and you haven't? Even better – take them both home!
* *The Gossip.* (No, not the band, the tittle-tattle.) People who see you out together will assume you're a couple. Get your stories straight and nip this in the bud.
* *The Jealousy.* There shouldn't be any. If you suspect this is someone whose dalliances with others you might be even remotely miffed about, move on, it's not going to work.
* *The Talk.* Must be open and frequent. Nothing sucks quite like finding your fuck buddy has secretly fallen for you.
* *The Protection.* Never forget he has carte blanche to fool around, and so do you. Regular does not equal clean.
* *The Foreplay.* Don't play the whole 'I'm drunk, club's

shut, didn't pull, I know you're home alone' booty call shtick. Not more than half the time, anyway.

* *The Threesomes.* With luck, there should be plenty. My FWB standby man N is kind enough – even when we're not fucking – to ask women he's with if they would like to sleep with me, too. Say it together – awww!
* *The Others.* If a potential amour asks if you're sleeping with your fuck buddy, don't deny it. Disclosure might send a third party running, but you were going to have to lie to someone like that to keep the peace anyway. You don't have to be explicit – 'Yes, and just this morning I woke to him wanking on my face.' Just be honest.
* *The Goodbyes.* You must behave like adults. And don't ring him three weeks later from Africa and say you'd marry him if he'd have you back. It's a lay, not a life.

Case 2: You are single, he isn't

Here is a representative sample of the sort of situation I mean:

> *Dear Belle,*
>
> *Can you give me some advice about shag buddies? The man in question and I have already been friends for some time. We've done it once now and I would like more. Oh, and he has a girlfriend.*
>
> *Signed,*
> *A Reader*

Ah, civilians. Got to love them. Seriously though, this goes to show:

1) one great reason why people are so fucked up when it comes to sex, and
2) one great reason why hookers exist.

This is a clear situation which you should avoid, avoid, avoid. He already has a girlfriend, for one thing. Which means, unless you are an exceptionally unusual woman who can't commit, or unless you are a whore (and therefore being paid to leave the premises), it is unlikely that any such liaison will fail to spark some sort of desire for a relationship in you.

Reading between the lines in many such letters, I can see what the writer is usually after is not a 'shag buddy' but a Friend-With-Benefits-to-girlfriend conversion. She thinks that by luring the man in with sex, she can ease her way into his heart as well. Which is ignoring one simple truth about men: they are better at separating sex from love.

Realistically we all know once you've gone this far down the path, then it is going to be hard for you to be friends. If what you really want is a relationship, then honesty is your friend. You should put your cards on the table and be fully prepared to walk. But similarly we also both know you're very, very unlikely to do that. And so the cycle of fuckupedness continues.

However, it is possible. And the success of such an undertaking depends *entirely* on your emotional honesty – and your willingness to be the Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca* of this story.

So, in order to have a successful FWB situation and avoid anyone getting hurt, you have to think like a

whore. Put aside any ideas about a relationship – there isn't going to be one. And if you want to remain friends as well, there are a few commandments to always follow, particularly if there is a girlfriend on the scene:

* *The Matter of Conscience.* Granted, he's the attached one, so he's the more morally suspect. But all that makes you is the accomplice. If you can handle that, fair dues. But if you are secretly hoping for a fuck-to-girlfriend touchline conversion, you can't.
* *The Friendship.* Respect the friendship, as above, always. Don't think the sex entitles you to more than you have had from him in the past, but don't cut him off either.
* *The Distance.* Respect his space. Don't think of reasons 'just to ring'. Don't make things difficult for him if the girlfriend's suspicious. Don't cause scenes.
* *The Meetings.* Meet somewhere neutral for both of you. Hotels are good.
* *The Nitty Gritty.* Use barrier methods of protection, duh. This should be, as our American cousins would say, a no-brainer. You already *know* he's sleeping with at least one other person.
* *The Outcome.* Be realistic. As Sir James Goldsmith said, when you marry your mistress you create a vacancy. Remember that, and keep your ambitions in check.
* *The Truth.* You are an unpaid whore. I'm not judging you, incidentally. Simply a statement of fact.
* *The End.* Let go lightly. It is incumbent on the mistress to be the classy one if – no, when – it goes

wrong. I know, few are. That is why it is even more important.

In short all is not fair in love and war, and the more you play against that rule the less you'll like it.

That Guy I'm Seeing, boyfriend material, and potential partners

When it comes to something a bit longer-term – and here I leave that up to your own discretion – the ground becomes exponentially more slippery. One rule applies across the board, though: for goodness sake, make certain you are both single! There is nothing worse than being painted as the scarlet woman who stole some poor girl's man, even if he was on his way out the door anyway.

So, a rule: if he really is about to get a divorce/move out/split up with her, that's fine. Just say: 'Great, I look forward to hearing from you when you've sorted it,' and walk away.

The bottom line is that any man worth keeping is honest from the start. Life is messy, entanglements happen, but someone who keeps one eye out for the next better thing is not someone you want in your life for longer than a week, because baby, he won't be. Be understanding of any situations – we've all been there, no one's to blame – but firm. Respect your boundaries, first and foremost. Protect your own heart above all.

But… what if he finds someone else in the meantime? you ask.

Trust me, no man can resist a woman who has the inner strength to walk away from him and demand a relationship on her own terms. If he is really serious about being single, I assure you, once he is, you will be the first person he calls.

Now, a few things to look for that sort the wheat (potential boyfriend) from the chaff (all others):

* *The Honesty.* Must be there, as discussed. He needn't be compulsively honest – I really didn't need to know that, in fact, those jeans did make me look fat – but Month 6 is not the ideal time to find out about his three children, either. Aim for somewhere in the middle of that.
* *The Friendship.* If you don't like the guy, there's no point falling in love with him. Really no point at all.
* *The Time Together.* Look for warning signals here, and watch the ones you're sending out. Joined at the hip too soon? Expect drama. Disappears for weeks at a time with no contact? Same.
* *The Laughter.* There's a reason women like a GSOH. It's because it makes the down times, emergencies, and stressful days infinitely easier to handle. Someone who can laugh when you start stropping with PMT? A feckin' keeper.
* *The Sex.* Three times daily, or once in a blue moon: it's rare that people are perfectly compatible in sexual taste and desired frequency, but being roughly on the same page – and willing to discuss and come to some happy agreement when not – goes a long, long way.
* *The Future.* Don't sit him down for The Talk, but don't

ignore this either. If he happens to drop into conversation that he never wants children when you were hoping for a litter by the age of 30, *believe him*. If he coos over towheaded toddlers when you need a free and clear decade to establish you career, don't ignore that.

* *The Cold Feet.* If at all possible to do so discreetly, try to find out how his other significant relationships ended. Is he a stayer, or a goer?

I know, it all seems so clinical, which is anathema to love—or so we've been told. You should fall organically or it isn't 'real'. Apparently opposites attract or something.

But that's bunkum. When you are compatible with someone, this doesn't mean you are identical, but neither should it mean you have no common ground. And I happen to be in the camp that believes that falling in love is the subconscious recognition of the embodiment of our most cherished ideals in someone else.

When I met my current squeeze, I didn't know explicitly that his experiences and attributes dovetailed with mine in so many ways – I didn't go down the tick list as such. But when I was single I did spend a bit of time thinking about the qualities that I would appreciate in a partner. So when we met and I noticed that something about him felt right when we were together, the more I saw how that was true. He likes to be up early and bring a cup of tea into bed; I like to wake up to a cup of tea and sleep in. He likes carrying heavy things around; I have a lot of heavy things that need to go up the stairs. We both enjoy frequent kinky sex. And so on.

It doesn't make things perfect, but having a good

mix of interests in common as well as things you can teach each other helps relationships progress more smoothly. And when the drama-meter is reading on the low end, that provides a good base from which it is possible to fall in love.

Know your manhunting style

Be certain not to skip this bit, it's important for the rest of the manual!

Are you at your best in a skintight mini, prowling the clubs looking for fresh meat? Or are you more likely to be found making eyes at the cute student over the top of your cat's-eye glasses? Your preferences in approaching men will tell you a lot – not only about the kinds of men you will encounter and expect to attract, but also how best to handle them. So which type are you, and how should you proceed? Let us take a little quiz and find out…

1. *You are generally introduced to men…*
   a. by family, friends, and co-workers
   b. by the internet
   c. introduced? Who waits long enough to be introduced?

2. *The best part of a good date is…*
   a. shared ideas and values
   b. easy conversation and laughs
   c. sexual chemistry

3. *Your idea of a perfect date is…*
   a. romance and quality time together
   b. hanging out and being comfortable, whether in or out
   c. one-on-one… note the operative word, 'on'

4. *When it comes to planning dates, you prefer…*
   a. a cast-iron plan, complete with maps, itineraries and GPS
   b. a rough framework, but nothing set in stone
   c. to play it by ear… who knows where you'll end up?

5. *After a first meeting, a man probably has…*
   a. your name
   b. your number
   c. your knickers

6. *When you're seeing someone, your preferred contact level is…*
   a. daily. Gifts and flowers preferred
   b. random and flexible, as and when
   c. minimum one hour's warning, for waxing purposes

7. *Your commitment motto is…*
   a. if you kiss me, you have to marry me
   b. let's start slow and see where this goes
   c. all's fair in love and war

8. *You know it's over when…*

a. the police escort you from the premises
b. the twelve-hour marathon heart-to-heart winds to a close
c. there has been no contact for a week. Next!

SCORING:

Were you mostly As? Congratulations, you're a

Good Girl (GG)

Also known as: the high-maintenance girl. If you ask men straight out, they will say this is their nightmare woman because she has both rules and expectations. But the reality is, someone who knows what she wants and is not prepared to settle for anything less usually manages to strong-arm her chosen man into submission (and a morning suit). Therefore, most likely to find success in a few, well-chosen dating scenarios and eventually marriage.

Advantages: All women like flowers and gifts. The GG, simply by *expecting* that these are her due, manages to attract more of them than any other type. Men realise, either through instruction or instinct, that this is a lady who requires keeping in the manner to which she is accustomed.

Challenges: Most men really cannot be bothered once they find out about your rules (most of which you probably expounded on at the first meeting). In addition, the ones who do make it through that barrier are probably not alpha-male enough for your tastes. Get used to the fact that your type will be few and far

between, and it will be smooth sailing once you do identify them.

 *Example specimen:* Kate Middleton

Did you tick mostly Bs? Well, hello there

Plain Jane (PJ)

Also known as: the girl next door. Contrary to what the name implies, Plain Janes can actually be rather hot – but always in an understated way.

Flies in under the man's radar and generally manages to stay there through a combination of stealth and inertia. Most often finds herself in a series of monogamous relationships, probably lived with at least one boyfriend, and can expect marriage in her 30s.

Advantages: PJs experience the least disruption to their lives as the result of starting dating and relationship patterns, for the most part because they are rarely single. Serial monogamists, this is your natural peer group. There might be the occasional long dark night of the soul wondering whether jumping from one boyfriend to another is strictly a good idea, but it does help keep the loneliness of the modern world at bay.

Challenges: The Plain Jane has been one half of a couple for so long, it can be difficult to remember her name not yoked to someone else's ('Who's Helen? Oh, you mean *David-and-Helen!*'). Is also so addicted to ease and comfort of just going along to get along that will rarely speak up for what she wants in everything from sex to marriage.

 *Example specimen:* Jennifer Aniston

Inevitably, if you scored mostly Cs, you are a

Scary Bitch (SB)

Also known as Shedloads of Fun. But blatantly, to a man's point of view, not marriage nor even cohabitation material. Which is fine; it probably wasn't even her priority – that man might not go with the (expensive, deep pile) carpets. If she marries it is late and strictly for a practical reason such as sperm donation, cash donation, or a severely younger model expected to toyboy now and caretake later.

Advantages: The kind of sex you want. Not always when you want it, not always with whom you want it, but sex is out there, on tap, and easy to come by. So if a SB has a single thing on her sex to-do list still unticked, it is entirely her own fault. Also, not having to argue with someone about whose turn it is to do the washing up is the very definition of bliss.

Challenges: No one else ever does the washing up, unless you hire a (very understanding) cleaner. In fact, be prepared to pay for loads of things people who prefer long-term situations take for granted… instead of a steady boyfriend, you have an accountant, a virtual PA, a car mechanic, and a GPS. And of course the inevitable stash of sex toys.



Example specimen: Jodie Marsh

Keep in mind that just because you test as one type now doesn't mean you will still be the same type next week, next month, or next year. By all accounts I was some-

thing of a GG up until I finished school, then a bit of a PJ through university. It was only later that I realised my full potential as a SB. However, what with settling down and all, I expect to revert to good old GG at some point in the not-too-distant future, keeping the SB antics strictly for my man and in the bedroom. So it goes.

You might also find it rewarding to play against type from time to time. Tired of men looking past your PJ charms at the SB in the middle of the room? Realise that inside every woman beats the heart of a vamp, even if it's only for an hour. Fed up with being treated like a piece of meat instead of a princess? Think GG, not SB, my friend, and get thee to the nearest Laura Ashley.

Like with all good dressing-up games, whichever way you seem when manhunting is only what's on the outside. Only you know what really goes on in your heart.

Now on to the good stuff…