

Dating fFor Fun and Profit

Cynthia James

Cynthia L. James

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Author Cynthia James has figured out why men treat their mistresses better than their wives: The current state of marriages breeds apathy and inattentiveness in husbands. As James puts it, “These men valued me much more when they didn’t have me.” She holds that men pick women for their high utilitarian value—good with kids, great cook, etc.—and that women expect to bear the brunt of the household workload. When working full-time, a wife often has 200% more daily tasks and responsibilities than her husband. James holds that men stop trying to prove their usefulness and virility as soon as they land a mate.

The author divorced a deadbeat husband at age thirty-six; exhausted from doing everything herself during the marriage, she wasn’t interested in finding another mate that she’d have to clean up after. She found that when she made a deliberate decision to stop dating, men who were interested in her went above and beyond to help her. As long as she remained a free agent, the men in her life stayed in what she calls “ultraresponsive mode,” the sort of attentiveness that men show only in courtship and with mistresses. These men landscaped James’s yard, fixed her broken appliances, and helped her with her taxes. She realized that having a team of useful men around was the ideal situation; she had both companionship and help.

James has made the gathering of a team of useful men into what she calls DFFP, or “dating for fun and profit.” At first glance, this may seem like a sleazy way of trading “favors” with multiple men, but she is quick to point out that she only expects women to give an hour of their time for an hour of help from the men. Each section of this workbook-like volume starts with facts or scientific notes, and each section has review questions and a summary. James includes appendices that help women decide exactly which traits they desire in a useful male and how the current men in their life score. And since this is supposed to be an equal exchange of time and companionship, there are also worksheets for scoring a woman’s useful traits.

Few women will disagree with James: the domestic workload is clearly skewed in the man’s favor, and such inequity is the breeding ground for many divorces. Her DFFP tactics are groundbreaking relationship advice, as she encourages women to maintain power by diversifying the company they keep. Although the hour-for-an-hour transaction seems like an ideal road to domestic equality, there’s something a little too calculating in James’s numbers game. Early on, she explains that, “If twenty-five hours is the average output of each Useful Male over some period of time, then four friendships will net us a total of one hundred useful hours. How can this possibly compare to one single, solitary romantic attachment during the same time?” She clearly forgot to include love and intimacy in her formula.

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