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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

Flirting After Fifty

Barbara Bellman
Susan Goldstein
iUniverse (March 2010)
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A single woman needs a variety of tools to spark and maintain a new relationship when she's crossed the fifty-year threshold. In Flirting After Fifty, co-authors Barbara Bellman (Reaching Woman and Hitting the Right Nerve) and Susan Goldstein (co-author of The Smart Divorce) outline the basics of what women should do to make themselves more datable.

Goldstein is a family law attorney with experience in divorce court, and Bellman founded a brand strategy consultancy. In addition to providing advice on topics from sex to finances, they include case studies to illustrate their points. Although they present few new insights, their book is an empowering pep talk. Women need to have self-esteem, acceptance of their aging bodies, and honesty about themselves if flirting is to lead to a good relationship.

Readers are urged to avoid snap judgments about a potential date based on his job or looks. Character and compatible interests matter more. Successful flirting works best when a woman is comfortable with her authentic self; "there is nothing more right than a confident woman," the authors write. Flirting should not be done out of desperation. It is simply "an opening, a signal, an overture" that may lead to more.

The authors recognize that adults are likely to have had previous marriages and grown children, situations that often complicate relationships. They offer advice on recognizing potential problems and dealing with them.

Bellman and Goldstein offer wise financial caveats: Women need to plan their financial futures and be self-sufficient. They should not flirt just to find a sugar daddy, nor should they be suckered in by a needy man after their money.

Some of the book's best flirting advice comes from a list of tips on moving from a first encounter to the next step: "You smile, tell him how much fun you had talking with him, lightly touch his hand in a seemingly casual way, and mention that you hope you will see him again." The authors note that the opportunity for meeting and flirting with Mr. Right can happen anywhere—parking garages, airplanes, or matchmaking services.

Older etiquette and advice books often suggest "lines" a woman can use in different situations. The authors list their own: "I love a man with a big desk." "I'll bark if you howl." "Great tie." Perhaps these are a little silly, but the authors note that their suggestions are meant to stimulate ideas for starting conversations.

This chatty book would be improved with editing for standard hyphenation, capitalization (as at the start of sentences), and punctuation. An index would be useful, and typos, such as Katharine Hepburn's name, should be corrected.

Editing bumps aside, the authors are on target for letting women of any age know that genuine attraction begins with self-esteem, self-confidence, realistic expectations, and a willingness to take risks to find a good man.

Those silly opening lines just might work.

LINDA SALISBURY (July 1, 2010)

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