

CHIVALRY AIN'T DEAD

At least, not *totally*. Here's how to reconcile old-fashioned manners with modern-day expectations.

BY SABLE YONG

W

WHENEVER I feel a kiss coming at the end of a good first date, I give the guy the Look—you know, the one that says “*embrasse moi*” in the sultry French accent I don't have. But despite my attempts to say yes with my eyes, I often see him hesitate before making a move, like he's doing an AP Calc equation in his head.

This confusion could easily be solved with a simple question: “Can I kiss you?” But that's not really cinematic canon, is it? It's clunky and vulnerable. It *is* confirming consent, however, which is important. I know plenty of men and women who are either horrified at the idea of someone lunging at their mouth or else horrified at the idea of being cringingly asked if it's okay to kiss them now. Does this stress you out? It stresses me out.

Sweeping a woman off her feet in a society that values gender equality can feel as complicated as learning a new TikTok dance. If chivalry were still alive and well, this wouldn't be an issue—that dance has been around since, what, the Middle Ages? Imagine wooing someone at a time when 90 percent of the work involved getting her dad's permission and the remaining 10 percent was dropping a couple of *fair maidens* here and some *miladys* there—you know, back when you got a lot of mileage out of *milady*.

But chivalry met its demise as humankind evolved over the centuries. We got more woke. And the things our society craved—equality, egalitarianism, freedom of expression—couldn't seem to coexist with such a traditional concept. Still, I have to admit that every time I go on a date, I subconsciously tick off boxes for “gentlemanly” behavior: opening doors, picking up the tab, checking that I got home safely. There's a “playing house” taboo in the ceremony of chivalry—in letting a man really lay it on thick when it comes to old-fashioned courtship. It makes me think chivalry can still be sexy, even though it's got one foot in the past. You just have to do it *right*.

Starting with how you initiate the date. The difference between “Would you want to go out sometime?” and “I'd really like to take you out sometime. Would you be into that?” is massive. There's nothing technically wrong with the former, but it's slightly passive and could easily garner an equally passive response—much less enticing than the idea of going out with a man who's already made it clear that he is into me and that I'm in for a wooing. Of course, the prospect of putting yourself out there to potentially get rejected is scary, but trust me when I tell you there's nothing hotter than a man who makes it clear he wants you, and then goes out and gets you (respectfully and with your permission). You gotta throw down to get down, so to speak.

NOW, HOLD UP: If men and women are to be treated equally, why should men put in most of the effort and capital to pursue women, you ask?

I'm not suggesting you do these gentlemanly things because women deserve different treatment. Do them because it's a cruel and lonely world out there, and basic gestures of kindness are the easiest ways to foster human connection. Do them for the same reason you'd go out of your way to do anything nice for *anyone*. (The same applies no matter your partner's gender.)

Chivalry is, after all, a code of conduct. It's not about what you think someone deserves but rather how you choose to conduct yourself. If you find the idea of broaching a first kiss uncomfortable, imagine how it feels being kissed by someone who doesn't mind helping themselves to your lips without express permission. And by all means, open the door, but I'm not about to tolerate a man making any kind of decision that affects

my quality of life, like how I should dress, how much makeup I should wear, or what I should be doing for a living.

Cherry-picking which parts of chivalry are acceptable (picking up the tab) and not acceptable (assuming sole ownership of our joint finances) isn't actually all that complicated. I just want to be politely courted and treated as a precious person while retaining full social, physical, and sexual autonomy over my own body and mind, you know?

In chivalry's golden age (18 whole centuries ago), courtship involved actual courts, its rules were clearly defined, and everyone got married around the same age, which feels irresponsibly young to-day if not illegal. Luckily, we have plenty of time to practice now that we're all getting married later in life, which leaves tons of years to date casually, seriously, and all the kinds of dating in between.

Taking the time to figure out who the hell we are as individuals and what we actually need in a partner (swipe smarter, not faster), and then figuring out how to be our best selves for that person, is the real chivalry 2.0 glow-up. In finding ourselves as individuals, we're gaining a clearer sense of what we want as opposed to what society has always told us to want, which includes how much of the past's values we deem worthy to accompany us into the future. You cannot buy love the same way you cannot buy time, but in a pinch, chivalry can definitely boost your prospects. ■



Shutterstock (knight), Adobe Stock (phone).

Netflix (Always Be My Maybe, The Lovebirds), Shutterstock (Easy A, The Apartment), Alamy (2 Days in Paris).

The Heat Index

Actually Good Rom-Coms

HILARIOUS 🤪

THIS WILL GUT YOU 🍷



ALWAYS BE MY MAYBE
Comedians Randall Park and Ali Wong will make you do that weird thing where you laugh so hard you start weeping.



THE LOVEBIRDS
Kumail Nanjiani and Issa Rae go on the run after witnessing a murder. Weird, yes, but awesomely so.



EASY A
Come for Emma Stone spinning lies about her sex life; stay for Stanley Tucci and Patricia Clarkson as her hilarious parents.



2 DAYS IN PARIS
A dialogue-heavy, rabbit-hole descent into ghosts of relationships past. Fun, though!



THE APARTMENT
It's a wild and brutally honest romantic satire from 1960 that's free of schlock.