



Girls Gone Mild

“Men don’t like smart women,” I am told. Should we care?

BY WENDY DENNIS

I’m in a cab the other day and, on the dash, I notice a picture of a beautiful young woman in cap and gown who looks to be about my daughter’s age. Something about her radiant smile and dazzling aura of accomplishment moves me, so I ask the cabbie who she is.

“My daughter.”

“She’s gorgeous.”

“Takes after her mother.”

“What’s she studying?”

“She has an M.A. in forensic psychology and now she’s off to Cambridge to earn her Ph.D.”

“You must be so proud of her.”

“Well, she likes to learn, that one, but I told her to be careful with all those degrees.”

“Why?”

“Because men don’t like smart women.”

This is not true, of course. Lots of men like smart women. I can personally think of two. But, as we all know, numbers are beside the point, because if something is thought to be true, then it might as well be true. And right now a dispiriting perception exists out there that men are so turned off by “challenging” women, those of us with frisky neurons might as well start shopping for cats.

At least that was the moral of a front-page National Post story last spring about middle-aged millionaires hiring a matchmaker to source young bombshell brides with killer bodies, decent educations and limited ambitions. “Most men don’t like successful women,” said Patti Stanger, president of The

Millionaire’s Club (www.millionairesclub123.com), prompting me to wonder why she’d confess to being a CEO. According to Stanger, what men want are “the three Ms: Madonna in the bedroom, Martha Stewart in the kitchen and Mary Poppins in the nursery.” Marie Curie doesn’t make the cut.

woman’s chances of marrying, and reports on female Harvard Business School grads who hide their resumés from guys because admitting to a Harvard education is the “kiss of death.” She observes a trend among powerful men to take up with young women in nurturing fields, such as secretaries, assistants, researchers,



Are beauty *and* brains too much to handle?

It occurred to me that millionaires in need of constant ego-diapering might not be a representative sample. So I picked up Maureen Dowd’s *Are Men Necessary?* (Putnam) and went scurrying for the Zoloft. Dowd cites studies suggesting that a high IQ hampers a

nannies and flight attendants. In fact, she says, a top New York producer told her he wanted to ask her out but nixed the idea: her job as a New York Times columnist made her too intimidating. (Men, he explains, prefer women who seem malleable and awed.) >

Is this true? Are men genetically wired for daycare and worship? Can they really be so insecure? Yes. Massively, thumb-suckingly insecure. But you can hardly blame them. Punishing women for their ambition is the last shred of power men have, and they're workin' it. According to Andrew Hacker, author of *Mismatch: The Growing Gulf Between Women and Men* (Scribner), because women are sprinting ahead in unanticipated ways in terms of status, power and

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income, and because the gulf between the sexes is widening so dramatically, a yawning expectation gap exists between what women want and men can deliver. Boys are being left in the dust at such an alarming rate that, in its July issue, *Esquire* magazine issued a plea on behalf of America's young men. It cited Grade 8 boys' poor reading skills, a gender gap on college campuses (where 43 men enrol for every 57 women) and a five times higher suicide rate for men aged 15 to 24 than women in the same age bracket. There's no doubt about it: men are a mess. A scared, confused, fragile, ego-hemorrhaging mess.

And guess what people do when they feel threatened? They become defensive and project their insecurities at others. Which explains the vehemence of that cabbie's nasty swipe, delivered, by the way, by

glancing over his shoulder and fixing me with a pitiless stare whose chilling subtext still gives me the creeps. You may be winning this race, he seemed to say, but make no mistake – we still have the power to ruin your lives.

Well, yes they do, but only if we succumb to cheap intimidation tactics and take on their projections. Only if we choose to find new and creative ways to demean ourselves so they'll like us. We could seek IQ reduction surgery, consult *How To Get a Guy* for more nauseating dating advice, or create our own reality show called *Girls Gone Dumb*, in which Rhodes Scholars vie to become dropouts.

Or we could refuse to absorb insidious messages designed to crush our spirits, and stop giving a shit what men want. Then we might free up some quality time to focus on what's really important: what *we* want. I realize this is a revolutionary idea but, sooner or later, men will have to face their own demons. Until they evolve enough to quell their primal desire to be the alpha force in a relationship – which is never – we have more important things to worry about, like winning the Nobel Prize.

They won't go quietly, which is why, during this interim phase, we need a plan. I suggest brainwashing them. (We know the strategy works – they've been doing it to us for centuries.) We begin by hijacking the cover lines of men's magazines. Let *them* worry if their asses look fat for a change. If all goes well, they'll obsess about what we're thinking and go crazy for brain candy. If the plan tanks, we'll always have ourselves, which is what counts most in this world anyway. And we'll be far too busy buying condos and achieving world domination to care.

Take that, cabbie.●