



BY AMANDA SMITH

Forget endless swiping, sleezy DMs, and getting ghosted. Elite companion matchmaking puts women in control of their love lives. Welcome to the world of luxury dating...

Anyone immersed in the hellhole of modern dating will tell you that it's jam-packed with unspoken and unconscious arrangements.

Scrolling through dating profiles and judging a person in five pictures or less is transactional, whether we want to admit it or not. By setting your radius, applying your filters and laying out your desires and deal-breakers in your bio (men under 6'2 need not apply), you're creating your own set of T&C's that are way more complex than anything Verizon could ever come up with.

It's from this landscape that alternatives to traditional dating - ethical non-monogamy, poly, 'girlfriend experiences', OnlyFans, hook-up culture etc - have burst forth like the Graboid worms in *Tremors*. And it's into that arena that luxury companionship has stepped a well-shod foot, offering an experience that puts the terms of mutual encounters right out in the open for all to agree on.

In luxury dating, women set the terms, and when they don't have to burden their relationships with the mundane, it paves the way for a magical experience. When it's the woman who determines where to go, what to eat, what the man will wear and all the finer details, the paradigm shifts - she knows it, and he definitely knows it. Everyone's happy.

Bridget Collins, CEO of Cowboys4Angels, an elite escort service agency with a presence in 20 cities and US states, including Los Angeles, Florida, New York and Nashville, says that while the agency provides time and companionship with an array of gentlemen to suit all tastes, what they're really selling women is control.

"Booking an experience with our cowboys feels affirming, sexy, exciting, and structured," she says. "For the longest time, these women have dedicated their lives to families, households, and corporations. They're no longer in a position to bend to the will of others, and are ready to explore themselves, without compromising."

Imagine an expert personal matchmaker on speed dial, a companionship concierge who

plans dates with beautiful men in beautiful locations. That's Collins' job. She knows each and every contractor, who she personally puts through a rigorous process of personality assessments, identity checks, and emotional tests. So, when a request comes in, Collins instantly knows the best cowboy for the date.

Always starting encounters with a meet and greet to test the comfortability and chemistry, she once even planned an entire trip to Morocco for a client and a gentleman. The woman simply had to show up because all the practical and emotional labor was done.

Women used to need men. Like, really need them in order to survive. Women couldn't own their own property, work* or open a bank account without their husband's say-so. Hell, even voting was initially only 'given' to married women. And due to the way the pack had been stacked, men didn't have to be likeable, nice, kind, make an effort or treat women well. Women relied on them for their very existence, so the male species could do and say what they wanted and still hold the power.

Over the past decade, but particularly noticeable post-pandemic, there's been a seismic shift in the way women are living their lives, professionally and romantically. Perhaps not since after WWII when the women who had been drafted in to fill the men's jobs as they went off to war refused to relinquish their roles for the returning menfolk and go back to the kitchen, has the change been so palpable.

So, here we now are and here's the thing: men now have to be (yikes!) likeable. Decent, kind, nice, attentive and all the trimmings, because simply having a penis no longer cuts it. We can open our own bank accounts, thank you very much. And as any women playing the dating game in 2023 will tell you, finding a guy with those attributes is... *whoa, chile!*

Womens' experience of financial and personal freedom was addictive and they wanted more. A ball that was set rolling years ago has today created a greater sense of urgency from women

to live life and not put off buried desires for another day. The preference for elite companions is more about control than connection. It's women discovering, gaining, and asserting their power.

"I had a client express that she felt broken and lacked confidence after getting out of a 20-year relationship," Collins shared. "She said she met many fun people with elite dating but the most important person she met was herself. Now she knows how to call the shots when she returns to traditional dating."

From spicy one-nighters to a consistent companion over the years, elite companions aren't just for singles. "In our sister agency for queer women, SapphicMoon, the women are in a primary relationship with men. They're interested in the same components as Cowboys - control, boundaries, and safe sexy experiences."

Some women want fun, novel experiences, whole others are explicit in their desire for a certain type of man - wealthy, successful, and educated. So, where are this 1% who aren't on Tinder? They're on platforms like *Seeking.com* - which has over 200,000 men earning over \$10 million.

"Elite dating, or Dating Up, is actually somewhat more conventional than it appears," said Emma Hathorn, Seeking's dating and relationship expert. "It's actually about self-respect, attraction based on success and intelligence, and the elements of sapiosexuality. Dating is going to become much more deliberate. We're going to see a certain logic to dating."

Whether dating up or dating out of one's comfort zone, romance is getting a rebranding, and rebelling against society's constructs is a form of absolute freedom.

Get it, girl.

* Before you think things have changed, in the words of Han Solo: "Don't get cocky kid". There are still 18 countries in the world where a woman cannot get a job without her husband's permission.