



## Helen Croydon

THE MERITS OF THE OLDER MAN

*Each month Helen shares her Diary of a Commitment-Phobe. This month, she prepares for the launch of her debut book*

It is much nicer to be writing than to be written about. It is much more secure being the interviewer than the interviewee, and it is much more fun being the selector of quotes rather than having quotes selected from my rambling mouth.

These last two weeks I have found myself on the other side of the media circus. It has been most insightful, even if it did involve going in with the lions.

The subject matter? My confessional memoir **Sugar Daddy Diaries: When a Fantasy Became an Obsession** (Mainstream Publishing). Style Magazine in **The Sunday Times** gave me a whole three pages of serialisation – quite nice of them really, even if their juicy selection did mean I had to phone my mum early that Sunday morning before her paper boy arrived.

Then – everyone’s favourite – Jan Moir from **The Daily Mail** came to interview me. For two hours. She asked me all sorts of awkward questions like ‘so you used to be a tax consultant. Did you declare all your ‘gifts’ from your sugar daddies?’ Then, ‘what are your hobbies and interests now?’. Like everyone who faces that question, I panicked that something as boringly ordinary as having a busy job, going to the gym three times a week and having a healthy social life isn’t enough. I need a **hobby too!** So I told her I was learning about wine (which is actually true but I focus on the practical – not the theory – I don’t memorise my premier crus every night). Her next question was what five wines I had recently discovered and enjoyed. Well that was embarrassing wasn’t it?

Thankfully, the interview was never used so I got a lucky escape. Though it was a lost book publicity opportunity.

So I’ll take one here instead if you don’t mind very much.

Four years ago, I sat on my sofa with a glass of wine – a little like now, only then it was a Blossom Hill or something equally chemically alike to paint stripper, whereas now, I'm drinking a – hold on – a Dourthe No 1 2005 Sauvignon Blanc. As I drank the said paint stripper, I typed into Google: 'younger women, older men, dating.' I blushed even though I was on my own. You see, I had always had a thing for older men; it was their maturity, wisdom, confidence, their bold outlook on the world. And their physical characteristics. Those delicate crows feet around the eyes – gets me every time.

I was fresh out of three-year relationship and love was the last thing on my mind. Christ, that was the relationship which made me *become* a commitment phobe. I had this wicked fantasy of meeting a man at least a decade older than me, in an Armani suit, who'd take me to one of those bars with tall velvet bar stools that serve cocktails with jumbo olives, then to a hotel with a lift manned by a butler in white gloves and into a suite with panoramic London views. He'd then bang me senseless, with his Fendi briefcase in the corner.

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So, I joined sugardaddie.com. It was supposed to be a few fun glamorous dates until I got the 007 fantasies out of my system. Then I imagined I'd go back to looking for a conventional boyfriend my own age, like everyone else.

But I didn't stop for nearly four years. I became addicted. I had suddenly been awakened to my sex drive. I was 29 and it was the day I split up with my boyfriend (New Year's Eve would you god-damn-believe-it). My hormones hatched from where they'd been cowering inside a protective cocoon. I'd always taken a vanilla approach to sex. But suddenly I could think of nothing else. I didn't want love – ugh, what a sickly turn off! I wanted a suited, booted, distinguished gentleman. One on a business trip would be best, then he wouldn't try to put any other claims on my time. Newly single, I felt like I had got my spark back. I was Helen again, with my own views, outlook and ambitions – not part of a half of someone else. I also had a

crush on a boss at work, a senior figure more than twenty years older than me. He represented all those aphrodisiac qualities of power. He would tease me with reciprocal flirting but it was his ultimate unavailability which led me to seek my own sugar daddy.

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My first date took me to Tower 42, a decadent Champagne bar on the 42<sup>nd</sup> floor of a City building. He was married but didn't disclose that until the date. That was the first shock to my sheltered little world. My second date took me for exquisite seafood, then on to his football pitch sized bachelor pad off Hampstead

Heath and gave me my first taste of an assertive, confident, experienced lover. Oh how the evening whirled around in my head in the following days!

But he rocked my world in another way too. He told me that the last girl he met on the site had asked him for £1,500 a month. He laughed that he 'didn't need to write a cheque for a girlfriend' but he didn't think the proposition was too unreasonable. My naïve little jaw hit the floor. I was brushing with the **escort** world. How forbidden. How risqué. How **intriguing!** Subsequent dates made me more aware of that subculture. Many said girls' emails would drop in references to 'rent' or 'help with school fees'. I was propositioned directly too. I would get messages such as 'Like your profile. Am looking to meet 6-8 times/ month. Can help with tuition fees/rent etc.'

At first I deleted them. I never questioned my logic over this moral boundary. I was just conditioned, like all young modern Western women, that accepting money from men is **wrong**. But over time (three years to be exact) I did start to question whether that ingrained moral value has any logical grounding.

First, I got invited to New York by a Canadian who wanted company on his business trip. I had never even met him. I said no. But his witty, intellectual messages intrigued me and eventually I agreed. He flew me first class. I remember sipping Pommery before take off, reclining the chair up and down ten times just because I could; I never knew airplanes actually

stocked anything other than plastic cutlery before.

On our first day, he took me shopping, insisting we go into designer shops asking me whether I preferred Balenciaga or McQueen. Naturally I hadn't a clue; I was a bit of a Primark girl back then. He took me to Prada – the New York flagship store – known as much for its amazing architecture and basin-like basement floor as it's clothes. I walked out with half a new wardrobe – the bill was five figures.

I had a striking intellectual bond with the Canadian. We talked into the early hours but there was no particular sexual spark. We had sex on both nights but not in an I-want-to-rip-your-Calvin-Kleins-o way: more because we were sharing a room and it felt appropriate to have sex. I didn't consciously acknowledge it, but that was the first time I had made a sexual trade-o .

Shortly after my return, I comforted a friend left feeling degraded after a one-night-stand which she thought was more meaningful than he. "Do you know how dirty I felt!" she sobbed. "Doing the walk of shame home after I'd given him the best blowjob of his life! It's alright for you getting taken to posh restaurants, being kitted out in Prada." I knew then that what I was doing was far less damaging than putting myself through the hell that we call conventional dating.

The final nail in my coffin (but far from being my last nailing) was from Munich Man, so nicknamed because he split his time between London and Munich. He took me to a Rubber Ball after buying me the most fabulous latex outfit and feeding me a cocktail of Class A drugs. We had public sex in the 'couples area' and with post-coital hormones added to our chemical high, I went to the ladies to freshen up. His blackberry was in my bag (rubber shorts don't have pockets you see). A text came through as I was shoving a fifty-pound note into my nostril. It was a girl, prompting him to transfer their monthly arrangement into her account. It hit me that that this man, who I was genuinely attracted to, would have been willing to pay for what I had been offering willingly for free.

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I genuinely wanted a low-maintenance relationship and I didn't care for exclusivity. Given that half of the older, successful types I was attracted to were willing to pay to preserve that dynamic, it now seemed logical that I should seek the half who were prepared to pay. They were simply time-poor, cash-rich men who viewed a financial investment a sound substitute for an emotional one. Isn't that a much more honest model for non-committal types to take?

Once I was at ease with the idea, I joined SeekingArrangement.com, which makes far fewer excuses for canvassing the system of pay-as-you-go-relationships. Over the next two years I went on to have several 'arrangements' with sugar daddies from the site. My first paid me monthly with a loaded Selfridges store card. It felt less irksome to us two first-timers than cash. But it wasn't long until gifts became allowances and allowances became more transactional encounters with one-off dates as well as longer-term sugar daddies.

I had a Malaysian Sugar Daddy who I visited twice. I went to Colorado skiing with another. There was a Chicago ad executive staying at The Lanesborough, who introduced me to his entourage of alpha male friends fresh off a week on a yacht in the Mediterranean. It suited me. I could keep my freedom but I still had the fun of dating gloriously intellectual men with fascinating, glamorous lives.

Until, that is, the motivation shifted from genuine thrill and novelty to the material rewards. Their highflying worlds and their Armani briefcases gradually lost their intrigue. But I couldn't stop because of the holidays, the Chloé handbags, the money. Any man who flirted with me in the real world was now an irritation. Why would I want to go through the hassles of a dating ritual when I could have a less time-consuming alliance with sugar daddies, and be paid?

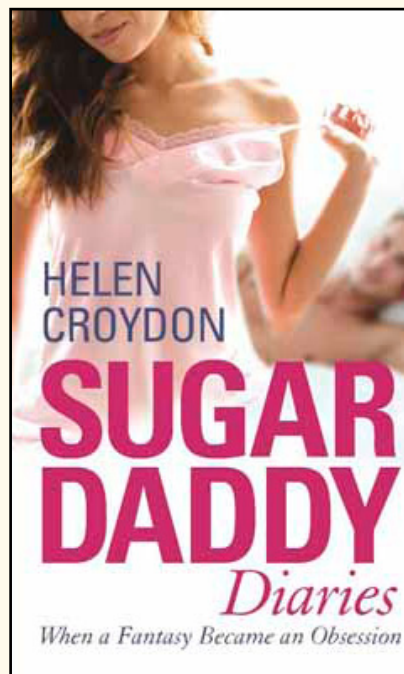
Thankfully, a series of events unfolded which alerted me to this growing sense of arrogance and my resistance to genuine affection. I realised that like every other normal human being

on the planet I did actually crave the magic of a genuine emotional bond and the heart flutters of real romantic attraction. I had barricaded myself against love because it would have threatened my luxury lifestyle. I don't regret any of my journey because at the time it suited what I wanted from a relationship. But I learned that eventually we all have a need for something deeper and if you deny that side of yourself it can have toxic consequences. ✨

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***Sugar Daddy Diaries: When a Fantasy Became an Obsession* by Helen Croydon.**

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## William Packer

SIGNIFICANT FORM (2)

*Tamar & Judah: like a nice time, dearie?*



**T**he Wages of Sin are Death, we well know, and of the Cardinal sort, Lust (Lechery, Fornication: take your pick) will always come high, if not highest on the list. For, bad enough taken on its own, in combination it colours each of the other six. As for the dark deed itself, it is, as old Sir Thomas Browne, himself a medical man, once said, 'the foolishhest act a wise commits in all his life, nor is there any thing that will more deject his cool'd imagination, when hee shall consider what an odde and unworthy piece of folly hee hath committed.' Which altogether seems to rule well out of order that