

YourLife

- **PIXIWOOL:** Get the glow without the glare
- **COLEEN:** My sister's ruining her son
- **BEAUTY:** Crazy celebrity anti-ageing tricks
- **RUSSELL GRANT:** On love, sex and cash

I've dated more than 50 married men, but I don't steal husbands, I just borrow them for a bit

This is the story every married woman must read. Karen Marley is a self-confessed serial mistress, who has dated more than 50 married men. She views a wedding ring as an aphrodisiac, a wife as 'the other woman' and the old mantra 'never date a married man' as a joke. Here, Karen, a 45-year-old writer, who lives in Richmond, North Yorkshire, explains why being a mistress only gives her sleepless nights... when she's not alone.



MISTAKE: Karen and her ex are still good friends



CHEMISTRY: Karen says she's fun, unlike most wives

66 On a personal checklist for my ideal man I'd tick the box "married". Married men are better trained. Married men have had all their rough edges sanded off by their wives and know how to behave around a lady. And married men are better in bed. I've learned that a single man in his 40s is single for a reason. Either he has no social etiquette whatsoever or he's a player, just looking for his next wrestle. A single guy I was on a date with licked his plate in a restaurant. A married man would never do that because his wife would knock his head off his shoulders. I do still occasionally date the odd single man in-between to prove a point to myself. I give them a really good chance on the date. But then I get back to married men. And I like dating a few at a time. One of my guys lives in Geneva and sees me every three months. Well, I'm not going to live like a nun while I wait! I always have a team of men on the go and some on the subs' bench. I know some women will despise me. But I am not the temptress here. I am not the evil mistress or a home-wrecking b****. I am not the girl in the tight skirt in the office who bends herself into an S-shape and says 'Do you fancy a bit?' to a married man who has never thought about having an affair. As a member of IllicitEncounters.com, the dating website for married people, I see men who are actively seeking affairs. These men pay £134 a month to

the site to find a date, so they are definitely looking for someone on the side. If it wasn't me, it would be one of the other hundreds of women registered on it. These men have well and truly made the conscious decision to have an affair. And their wives should be grateful when it's me their husbands choose. Because I am the perfect mistress. I am never going to ask them to leave their wives for me. Most mistresses do, but not me. If I asked him to leave his wife, in every argument from then on he'd say: 'Do you know what I gave up for you?' I don't ever want to be part of that.

In fact, when one of my men confessed about me to his wife and told me his marriage was over, I finished our affair. I was horrified. I don't want to steal someone else's husband for good, just borrow him for a while. I know how to behave as a mistress - and I don't just mean in bed. I would never ring one of my married men at home at 2am or at the weekend because that's their time with their family. I would never throw a hissy fit if they don't spend Valentine's, Easter or

Christmas with me. We both know exactly where the goalposts are. That's the beauty of it all - we're both open and honest with each other, which must sound ironic, considering my men are not open with their wives. But that's how it is. And yes, I have been confronted by a couple of wives. They called from his phone and said: 'How do you know my husband?' I would never be honest and say I was having an affair with them, because that is cruel. I said they needed to have a discussion with their husbands about why they had a friend's number that they kept secret. Usually they have that conversation and work things out and that's marvellous. I don't just date any old married man. I don't pounce on my friends' other halves. I mostly stick with the men on the site because, since it costs so much to join, I get a certain quality of man. Not that I'm a gold-digger, because I have my own money and am not interested in presents or fancy dinners. But I am interested in a certain type of man, usually a businessman who is charismatic, successful, ambitious and passionate about life. They have a certain way about them. And for me that's more acceptable than dating a single, unemployed man in his 40s who eats mainly in McDonald's. I don't do slobs. When husbands are on loan to me they almost revert back to being in their 20s because

that's often the last time they dated. We go to the theatre and do all the things married couples no longer do because they've already done it. I hear all their best stories because their wives heard them 15 years ago and have stopped laughing. Men come back to life with me, not just because I can jump-start their sex lives. Our conversations are full of chemistry, flirtation and fun and not boring whinges about gas bills or the type of humdrum moans that drain the colour from marriages. Men with me endure no drudgery, no arguments, no grief. And in return I see them at their very best. So I never feel like second best. In fact, I get the good bits of married men. During our time together, it's the wife who is the other woman. I get 100% of my married date's attention and he gets 100% of mine. We are the most important people in each other's world at that time. Until the date is over. Then I accept that I'm not the sole person occupying his thoughts. We both have our lives to get back to, our own friends and family. And I love coming back to my country cottage, which is entirely my own and has no men's hairs in the bath or underpants in the wash bin.

My life is my own. I don't have to watch football. I can wear jimjams and have a glass of wine in the bath without the worry of my bloke saying: "Karen, you're not looking your best at the minute." I know the boring, bland ruts many married couples fall in to because I was married. We divorced 11 years ago because we just realised that we were much better as friends. We were best friends and we still are. He is remarried now but we still keep in touch. I know now that married life isn't for me. But I know that married men have the qualities I'm looking for. OK, so I probably won't find Mr Right the way I conduct my love life but who says I need one man to live happily ever after? I love my single life. Single women are not daft or desperate. They have got it right. Most people feel sorry for me when I turn up at a wedding or party alone - or they just don't invite me. But I'm not the one who should be pitied. My married friends, caught up in the boring domesticity of kids and dull sex secretly envy me. There is

nothing I hear about married life that I envy. The majority of married men I see say their wives don't have sex anymore or don't pay them enough attention. They don't talk to anyone about their marital problems until they sit with me. And when they talk their woes through they almost solve them in their heads. They go back to their wives and sort things out. I don't claim to be a therapist or provide a counselling service to help people mend their relationships, but I do think many of the men I date have better marriages after being with me. Dating 50 married men doesn't mean I've slept with 50 married men. I'm not a trollop. Some are looking for a friend. Does my heart get broken by dating men who will never really be mine? Sometimes. But I've learned to pull away from the ones I start to fall for, no matter how much I care for them. I've been a serial mistress for six years now and I love it because I've found I'm so good at it. I have had more than 100 dates with married men so far. And I'm definitely not finished yet.



As told to Julie McCaffrey



SINGLE: She likes married men and not marriage

I'm the perfect mistress - the wives are the other woman

DATES: With one of her Illicit Encounters

Have you ever been 'the other woman'?
We could pay you for your story on publication in Your Life. Email yourlife@mirror.co.uk or telephone 0207 293 3175