



ONE WOMAN THREE MEN

A NOVEL ABOUT MODERN LOVE AND SEX

POULINE MIDDLETON

Praise for *One Woman Three Men*

One Woman Three Men explores a different perspective on romance with an eye to blending philosophy, fiction, and real-world relationship concerns. Nothing is perfect or easy here, whether the goal is traditional or alternative in nature—but in the course of following the diary writer’s life and revelations, readers gain a better sense of the sexual and psychological differences between men and women and the ideals and realities that can come between them . . .

A spicy, thought-provoking read steeped in entertaining moments and intriguing blends of psychological and philosophical inspection: a perfect romantic alternative to one-dimensional, singular novels about relationships.

—D. Donovan, *Senior Reviewer, Midwest Book Review*

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A Novel About Modern Love and Sex

POULINE MIDDLETON



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All characters and plots in this book are a work of creative fiction.
Any resemblance to current or past persons and events is strictly coincidental.

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SATURDAY, APRIL 11TH

Dear Diary

I'VE BEEN A NICE, well-behaved Danish girl for years, believing that my good behavior would help create peace in 'Palesrael,' equal wages for men and women, and reduced poverty in Africa, while I waltzed into the Copenhagen sunset with my prince, till death do us part. Well, none of this has happened. They're still insisting that war is the way to peace, that women aren't good at negotiating and that's why we don't get equal wages, and that money must continue to flow to support dictatorial regimes even if they have no intention of reducing poverty.

And on a personal level my love life has been blown to pieces yet again, leaving me with no clue as to how to find that prince and move on.

My last love disaster happened right after New Year's . . . Thomas and I were walking on the beach and I was savoring the wind in my hair. He had just flown in from Barcelona where he had gone to sell a painting. I was certain he was on the verge of a big artistic breakthrough. He was painting more and more, using the new oils I had ordered from Milan, and they were helping him with the depth of color and nuances he'd been seeking.

He was not usually one for taking walks as soon as his plane touched ground, but on the way home, he parked at Amager Beach Park right outside the airport, saying he needed to get some fresh ocean air after the stuffy flight. I remember that as we started walking, I slipped my arm into the crook of his, but instead of pulling me closer to him like he usually did, he just kept walking, as if he was trying to get away from me. I reckoned he was

tired, and I felt overwhelmed with love for him after what I thought was his grueling three-day trip away.

He was really the best thing that had happened in my life, ever since my divorce from Sebastian, another artistic type whom I was certain I could help. Sebastian and I had met at his band's concert in Berlin when I was 24 and I had been crazy about him. I felt drawn to his intensity both on- and off-stage. He was so sensitive that beautiful music actually raised the hairs on his sexy forearms! When I was seven, I had seen the same thing happen on my father's arms during a Bach organ concert. But while my father is an eccentric though astutely perceptive research scientist, Sebastian turned out to be a rather conventional bass player who spent all his time dreaming about his band's eventual fame, which never happened.

After the divorce, our daughter Mille (age 6 at the time) became my everything. Luckily I only had to be without her every other weekend, which was all that Sebastian could handle of her, the cad. Over time she got used to the arrangement. One morning she looked up at me and said, "Mom, you look tired." I glanced in the mirror, and saw that my kid was better at identifying how I felt than I was.

The next day I enrolled in a Goddess school that my girlfriend Rebecca had been raving about. I wanted to get away from a 'me' I no longer recognized. It took half a year of creating art with emotion, eating unknown foods with all of my senses, soothing my skin with wonderful fabrics from India while listening to other women's stories and sharing mine with them to reconnect with my Goddess self. Little by little, I felt my dreams, wishes and needs rise to the surface again, like a plant that had been submerged in heavy rain lifting itself upwards to the newly reappearing sunshine. Slowly, I regained my pride in being a woman.

Then I dated around for a while, until I met Thomas. He was so refreshing and, well, metrosexual, the first man like that I had ever met. As a struggling artist, he didn't feel threatened by my executive position, and we never fought about money or competed with each other. Mille loved Thomas, too; she even called him Daddy just three weeks after meeting him. The only exception to our smooth relationship were my books, which he felt were everywhere, taking over the house. He pointed this out to me at regular intervals with different levels of frustration in his voice.

Walking there on the beach with him, I was so grateful for our life and the fact that he was so sweet to my girl. But Thomas walked quickly, and I

had to make an effort to keep up with him. I felt rushed but didn't pick up on what was coming. He led us toward the pier and turned right. I finally asked if he had had a good trip and managed to sell the painting.

"We need to talk," he said, as he continued walking straight ahead. The thought crossed my mind again that I would have liked to go to Barcelona with him, but Thomas and his French friend Jean-Paul have been going there together every January for years, and I didn't want to break their tradition.

"Something happened in Barcelona," he finally blurted out. He kept walking. "I'm sorry, Elizabeth."

I looked at him. He seldom called me by my full name rather than my nickname, Dixie. My whole body tensed; something was coming.

"I went there with a woman that I've been seeing the last six months. I meant to tell you about it, but it was difficult," he said.

What?!? Then his words, his implication, hit me like a baseball bat from behind. My arm fell from his and I slowed down. He kept walking, saying something I couldn't quite understand. I caught up with him and heard him repeating, "It wasn't supposed to happen like this, but she and I are getting serious, so I have to tell you about it. I'm really sorry."

I walked as if in a trance, my throat tightening. Everything around me seemed to freeze in time and I was unable to do anything to stop it. I blinked in slow motion until I couldn't open my eyes anymore, my tears starting to well up in the corners. The cold wind blew right through my clothing like a sieve. The only thing I could hear was its howl growing louder and louder.

Thomas stared straight ahead and strode directly into the wind as if he needed to get some place. Rage welled up inside me; I seized his arm, trying to make him stop. He tore his arm away, but the force of my grip surprised us both. He stopped and turned away from me. I wanted to scream, but instead I just stood there, glaring at the back of his head.

"She is also an artist," he murmured. "We have a lot in common."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you know," he said.

"No I don't know," I screamed at him. "You need to come home and paint so you can be ready for a show!"

Tears were now streaming down my cheeks. Suddenly I was 12 years old again. It was early morning and the dim grey Danish winter light my mother loved was filtering through the windowpanes. I was supposed to be leaving for school, but if I left, I knew my mother would stay in bed all day and

miss the sunlight that made her so happy. The inner urgency I knew so well made me set down my bag and enter her room. She was still in bed. Gently, I pulled her out of bed and helped her get dressed and brought her over to the studio. She slipped from my arms, landing on the floor with a thud. I lifted one of the unfinished canvasses that was leaning against the wall, pointed to a deep cerulean blue and praised her. She stared at me blankly. I set the painting on her easel and suggested she use it for inspiration, and then I gave her an encouraging smile for the umpteenth time and left for school with a knot the size of large melon in my stomach.

When I came home five hours later, I entered the house filled with anxiety and found her sprawled out on the studio floor, holding an empty bottle of vodka in one hand. The painting was torn to shreds, and she lay with her head resting on a bit of cerulean blue canvas. The sensation of distress I knew so well filled me. She was always on the verge of checking out, and I was convinced it was my responsibility to prevent her from doing it. I raced over to her and felt her wrist. Her pulse was weak but it was there.

“We need to talk,” Thomas insisted again, bringing me back to the present.

My tears kept pouring out. This wasn’t the Thomas I knew. My Thomas loved me more than anything on earth. I’ve been supportive. I’ve done everything I could to help him see life’s possibilities instead of its obstacles. What the hell was he thinking, ruining everything like this? Who was this woman to make him do something so stupid? And why had he brought her to Barcelona and not me?

“Come Elizabeth,” he said. We were standing next to the car, but I couldn’t remember having walked there. I turned around and started heading back to the beach.

He followed me and shouted, “Come on, we’re going home.”

“Get out of here!!” I hollered. “You stupid shit!!!”

He ran back to the car, got in and sped out of sight.

I was stunned. I collapsed on the ground where I stood. Thinking about it now, I remember feeling the coldness of the sand, but I didn’t notice it that day. I sobbed. Without intending to, my mind once again went back to my mother’s studio on one of the many days I found her lying there. I immediately started to bring her back to bed before father got home, and I barely succeeded. When he asked me where Mom was, I told him that she’d gone to bed with a headache; he was furious and roared that her

incessant illnesses had to stop. I sighed and made coffee and whipped cream to serve with cake, and by the time he had eaten, he had calmed down, somewhat. I put Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* on the record player for him and went to my room. I believed I was doing the right thing to keep everything from falling apart. Just like I had done with Thomas. I supported, consoled, encouraged, praised and took care of the practicalities so he could make his true potential flourish.

It's been three months now since I last saw Thomas. I've cried and cried, I've talked to my best friends and a number of other people about his infidelity. It really hurt me that he had been seeing another woman for six months. Six months when I thought it was him and me together standing up to the world and then me finding out that I had been all alone. That hurt. I've also talked with people about love to try to understand where it goes wrong. Why in the world is it so difficult?

I'm 34 years old, my daughter lives mostly with me, I love my job helping entrepreneurs become successful, and I long to find a partner that I can have a deep loving relationship with. I want to be part of a relationship where we can both support and challenge each other in becoming our best selves. I want love to be an active partner in my life and not an adversary as has been the case so far. And I'm now prepared to do something different from what I've done before, since that obviously has not worked!

A RADICAL NEW APPROACH TO DATING AND ROMANCE

A spicy, thought-provoking read steeped in entertaining moments and intriguing blends of psychological and philosophical inspection: a perfect romantic alternative to one-dimensional, singular novels about relationships.

—D. DONOVAN, Senior Reviewer, Midwest Book Review

Based on the author's real life story, this is a provocative and intelligent novel about a strong, independent woman (Elizabeth) who decides that the traditional paradigm of dating needs a revolution. Following a divorce and a breakup with a new lover, she decides that trying to get all of her needs fulfilled by a single man just doesn't work in today's world. What she needs is 3 men—one for conversation, one for sex, and one handyman to work around her house. Set in Copenhagen, what follows is a riveting, sexy, saucy tale about her year-long search for three men willing to fulfill those roles—and how this new 1W3M model helped her finally find true love.



POULINE MIDDLETON has been a Modern Love coach since 2010. Danish by birth, she holds a M. Sc. in Economics and formerly worked for companies around the world, having lived in Paris, Algeria, Hong Kong, and traveled to 36 states in the U.S. Her personal experiences of having three men brought her love and she is now married to one man.

Visit her at www.modernloveandsex.com



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