

The Dreamer and the Fantasy Relationship



Stop Being Drawn to
Unavailable Men and
Have Better Relationships

NATALIE LUE



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How to have happier relationships and stop being drawn to unavailable men

By Natalie Lue

12-minute read

Synopsis

The Dreamer and the Fantasy Relationship (2012) is aimed at women who expect too much from unavailable, unreliable men, and want to change their ways. By examining the reasons that women delude themselves about men, as well as the specific lies they believe, it ultimately points the way toward happier relationships and more realistic dreams.

Who is it for?

- Women tired of kidding themselves about undeserving men
- Amateur agony aunts who love giving relationship advice
- Unreliable men willing to mend their ways

About the author

Natalie Lue is the author of the hugely popular relationship blog *Baggage Reclaim*. Born in London and raised in Ireland, Lue has written a number of books, including *The No Contact Rule* and *Mr Unavailable & the Fallback Girl*.

What's in it for me? Discover why your imagination can leave you romantically unfulfilled.

The phrase *fantasy relationship* might sound bizarre. What does it mean? Is it dating an imaginary friend? Or dreaming of a whirlwind romance with your favorite actor?

Not really. In these days of one-night stands and casual romances, many women are living off emotional breadcrumbs. Saddled with unavailable men who refuse to commit, they resort to fantasy and mentally exaggerate the strength of their relationships.

If you're starved of emotional connection; if you're sick of unreliable dates and broken promises; if you want to set fantasy aside and find something real – if any of this sounds like you, then these blinks may be just what you're looking for.

In these blinks, you'll learn

- why women are drawn to unavailable men;
- how relationship “hooks” stop us moving on; and
- why an affair is just another type of fantasy.

Certain types of men make it natural for women to fantasize about the future.

You know the type of man. One moment he's planning a future with you, the next he won't discuss plans for the weekend. One day he texts you every ten minutes, the next he won't even open your messages.

As women, we often blame ourselves for becoming overinvested in these iffy “relationships.” But what else are we to do when the men we're interested in give out such mixed messages?

When the facts are so unappealing, who can blame us for getting lost in dreams?

The key message is: Certain types of men make it natural for women to fantasize about the future.

These days, lots of men try to enjoy all the benefits of having a girlfriend, without actually committing to a relationship. If this is something that's happened to you, you'll probably have noticed that this type of man likes to keep you in limbo for as long as possible – promising great things, but only delivering the bare minimum.

In fact, he has a few tricks up his sleeve to keep you fantasizing. Strategy number one is what the author calls *fast forwarding*. Instead of taking things slow, gradually working up to greater intimacy, this man takes the opposite tack – he whizzes through the early stages, often over text, and wants to make things sexual before truly getting to know you.

If you're a natural dreamer, this can be flattering. It's easy to convince yourself that you've inspired some extraordinary passion and that taking things slow is for other, more boring people. More often than not, though, it's just a ploy, and this “extraordinary passion” doesn't last long.

That's where strategy number two comes in. Mr. Unavailable, to give this Romeo a name, also likes to use a tactic called *future faking*. Every time you begin to get sick of his unreliability, he'll talk about what you might do next week or next month, dangling some idealized future in front of you like a carrot.

To give him his due, Mr. Unavailable may not even mean to be deceitful. Often, he just speaks recklessly, believing that he's doing you a favor by saying what you want to hear. But the net result is the same: his grand plans fail to materialize, and you are left disappointed, fantasizing once again.

Fantasies have a lot in common, but don't let that fool you into thinking they're all the same.

Whether you daydream about owning the perfect home, having the ideal career, or just being fit and healthy, there's nothing wrong with letting your imagination run wild from time to time.

When it comes to relationships, however, fantasies can be unhelpful, especially if they blind you to reality. Do you really think the man who wants something “casual” is going to change his mind? Sorry, but you're dreaming. Are you hoping that this time he really will introduce you to his family? Think again.

Fantasies are, by definition, unrealistic. And the types of delusion often look similar, preventing you from seeing what's right in front of you: that things aren't going to work out.

The key message is: Fantasies have a lot in common, but don't let that fool you into thinking they're all the same.

Not all of our romantic dreams are alike, and not all of them are equally unrealistic. But if you pay attention, you'll find that most romantic fantasies fit into a few broad categories.

One very common type of fantasy is the *virtual* relationship. This happens when most of a romance is conducted online – for example, via dating apps or over email.

A virtual relationship isn't always clear-cut fantasy – after all, you really are in contact with someone – but it becomes unrealistic when, despite all evidence, you expect it to morph into something more. If you've been kept waiting for weeks, it's time to recognize a real relationship might never happen.

Another type of fantasy is the *crush*. We've all had crushes, of course, and many relationships start off as secret infatuations. But crushes become fantasies when you're always nurturing your dreams but never acting on them.

Finally, and most problematically, there are the fantasies that spring from *infidelity*. This might mean that you're cheating on your other half, or that Mr. Unavailable is cheating on his. Either way, these liaisons are often chock-full of unrealistic thinking.

For example, you might believe that, unlike your current relationship, everything would be perfect with the man you're seeing on the side. Or you might fantasize that Mr. Unavailable will eventually leave his partner for you – a dream that, as all spurned lovers know, rarely comes true.

Exaggeration, projection, and hooks are what keep you chasing bad relationships.

It is impossible to fantasize without being disappointed now and then – the more outlandish your dreams, the more likely you are to be let down. So why do you keep deluding yourself? Do you truly believe that Mr. Unavailable will change?

Probably not. In your heart of hearts, you know things won't work out. You've been fooled and disappointed too many times, despite promising yourself that you'll have higher standards. So why do you keep going back?

As you'll see in this blink, there are a few simple factors that keep you from changing your behavior for the better.

The key message here is: Exaggeration, projection, and hooks are what keep you chasing bad relationships.

There are three major traits at play in the world of relationship dreamers: exaggeration, projection, and what the author calls *hooks*.

Exaggeration and projection work in tandem to keep you interested in relationships that you know will never work.

Let's take exaggeration first. One of the hallmarks of dreamers is to take Mr. Unavailable's good points and magnify them beyond recognition. He's not just kind, he's a saint. He's not just handsome, he's the sexiest man alive. Exaggeration stops you from evaluating relationships even-handedly. Even if you see Mr. Unavailable's faults, his strengths will always trump them.

And here's where projection comes in. Because it's not enough that the man of your fantasies should have good points, he's also exactly what you've been looking for to make you complete. When you consider Mr. Unavailable, you *project* onto him everything that you

think you need in life. He becomes the solution to all your problems – emotional, sexual, financial, you name it.

Of course, this kind of thinking is highly inaccurate, but it's convincing enough to keep you interested. After all, you're a fool to let a man go if you truly believe he's everything you've always wanted.

Finally, there are hooks. Like exaggeration, hooks are based on a man's genuine strong points. Typical examples include good looks, power, kindness, and wealth. You get the picture. However, unlike exaggerations, hooks don't necessarily magnify these qualities. Instead, they make you forget that all the good points in the world don't make up for an unsatisfactory relationship.

A man might be successful, popular, funny, and handsome – but if he doesn't make you feel loved and secure, his hooks shouldn't count for anything.

Dreaming about unavailable men satisfies your own insecurities.

You've heard about the types of fantasy relationship you might be dreaming up, and the different ways in which you can delude yourself – but there's still one big puzzle. Why you?

It's a fair question. Why do some of your friends seem to find relationships so easy, while you only meet with trouble? Why do you always seem to make the wrong choices? What is it your friends know that you don't?

Well, it's probably not a question of knowledge. Unlike you, your friends likely gravitate toward available guys. They probably also expect better treatment from their partners, and are unwilling to accept excuses, half-truths, and empty promises. So why do you?

The answer might surprise you.

The key message here is: Dreaming about unavailable men satisfies your own insecurities.

If you're frequently drawn to flimsy relationships with unavailable men, the real answer is that it's probably because they're all you can handle right now.

There's a reason that dreamers get entangled in relationships that can't survive without frequent injections of fantasy. And, more often than not, it's because dreamers fear intimacy, just as unavailable men do.

It sounds counterintuitive, right? What upsets you is that the men you like won't commit and be intimate – so how can you possibly fear intimacy yourself?

Think about it like this. If you really wanted a man who was open to commitment, wouldn't you just date one? They're not rare! Most guys aren't like Mr. Unavailable.

What draws you to the few men who are is that you use them to shield your insecurities.

If you fear intimacy, a relationship with an unreliable man is ideal. You know deep down that it'll never work out and you sense that he'll keep you at arm's length. By opting for Mr. Unavailable, you're opting for a distant, fantasy relationship – one without the risk of real emotions.

Avoiding intimacy keeps you from getting hurt. As you'll see in the next blink, if you want to go beyond that, it's time to accept your vulnerability, not hide it.

If things don't work out, don't treat it as a rejection.

As you've discovered, pursuing unavailable men can be a way of avoiding vulnerability. After all, if the men you date are never truly intimate and honest with you, you put less on the line emotionally. And the less there is at stake, the less rejected you feel when things eventually end.

In a way, this is the crux of the problem: most of your discomfort with intimacy and vulnerability boils down to a fear of rejection.

But, things don't have to be this way. You don't have to dwell on feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy every time a relationship runs out of steam.

The key message here is: If things don't work out, don't treat it as a rejection.

Flirtations, dates, and relationships don't all lead to fairytale endings. And the brilliant thing is, they're not meant to! Some people aren't right for each other. In fact, the majority of relationships don't work out – and that's okay. It doesn't mean you've been rejected.

Step one in getting over your fear of rejection is dropping that very word from your romantic vocabulary. You weren't rejected by someone – things just didn't pan out for you two. Accept the disappointment, if you are disappointed, and move on. It doesn't say anything about your desirability as a partner.

It's also important not to blame yourself when things end. Relationships don't work out for hundreds of reasons, and the so-called problem rarely lies with one person. It's better to think of a relationship as something that you co-pilot. If you're well-suited, you cooperate well; but if not, it's not a reflection on you – you just don't have the right dynamic as a couple.

Next time you reflect on a breakup or unsuccessful date, resist the urge to think of it as a rejection. The relationship didn't stand or fall by your personality. Once you grasp this, the prospect of intimacy and emotional honesty becomes far less daunting. Soon

you'll see that a relationship ending says nothing bad about you at all.

Remembering a few simple things can help stop your fantasies and encourage a return to the real world.

Up until now, you've been a dreamer. You've accepted less than you deserve from unreliable, unavailable men, and you've resorted to fantasy to puff up your disappointing results.

Maybe you exaggerated his good qualities, and let yourself believe his empty promises. Or perhaps you contented yourself with a few flirtatious messages from time to time. Either way, enough is enough.

From now on, you're not seeking out men like Mr. Unavailable. You're going to accept that intimacy can be risky, and that things don't always work out. You're going to take a chance on an available man.

The key message here is: Remembering a few simple things can help stop your fantasies and encourage a return to the real world.

So how do you make sure to steer clear of unavailable men? How do you know whether you're deluding yourself?

Above all else, never fall in love with assumptions. For dreamers, it's all too easy to become infatuated with a man, and assume that he's right for you in every way. Don't. Instead, adopt an attitude of wait and see.

Think of the man you're dating as a Lego figure – it's less silly than it sounds! The more time you spend together, the more bricks you have with which to build a picture of him. Instead of forcing a ready-made form onto someone you hardly know, spend time with your date and let him emerge gradually – brick by brick – from what you observe.

And note the word *gradually*. That means absolutely no fast forwarding. It's easy to keep up appearances for days or weeks at a time. It's only after a longer period that you really get a sense of what someone is like. Rushing into a relationship is a recipe for exaggerations, assumptions, and, ultimately, more fantasies.

When you let things progress at a sensible pace, you can pay attention to what you notice about your date. If something bothers you, don't dismiss it and don't minimize it. Is he rude to waiters? Take note. Always late but armed with an excuse? Alarm bells should be ringing.

The whole point of taking things slowly is that it gives you time to form an accurate and unsentimental picture of the person you're spending time with. If you don't pay attention to what you see and hear, then you're relying on nothing but fantasies.

Final summary

The key message in these blinks:

Relying on pipe dreams is a clear sign that unavailable men have left you unfulfilled. In the future, choose to embrace your emotional vulnerability and take a chance on a reliable man. Just remember to take things slowly and read the signs instead of believing your assumptions. Happy, lasting relationships are grown bit by bit.

Got feedback?

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What to read next: *The No Contact Rule*, by Natalie Lue

Convinced that fantasy relationships are no good, but still find yourself stuck in one? Try our blinks to *The No Contact Rule* and discover how to end things when you realize you're with the wrong person. Understand how to break up for good and how to stop yourself going back for more with straightforward rules that will keep your breakup healthy, clean, and firmly in the past.