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**Connecting**Cathryn Ramin

**The irresistible appeal
of the 'motorcycle man'**

LATELY, WHEN I TURN THE PAGES of a magazine, I often stop at the blurred, black-and-white photographs that are advertisements for Georges Marciano's rumpled clothing.

I'm not interested in the skintight jeans and bustiers. What fascinates me is the psychological content of these pictures. A fresh-faced blond girl, only hours off the farm, is dressed — just barely — in provocative clothes. She flirts wildly with a man of whom her parents would definitely not approve. Something about the look on her face tells me she's in big trouble, and that she's loving it. He's not a safe, clean-cut local farm boy. He's from some distant place. He's seen things. He has a homemade haircut, a big motorcycle parked out back and a way of moving his hips.

This girl is entranced by him, her first grown man, but there is more to it than that. She turns one eye on the camera and boasts to us. She's not a little girl anymore, she warns. She caught him, after all, and only a woman of some allure could manage to pull in such a big fish. She doesn't know what he's going to do next — not after last night in the bar, anyway, not after their afternoon in the trailer — but she's definitely going along for the ride. Even if he: daddy shows up in his pickup, loaded for bear, she's not going home.

SHE HAS FALLEN for a dangerous man, and although she doesn't know it, she's not the first sweet thing to tumble to his will. Most of the women I know have, at least once, succumbed to the charms of a man they knew was hazardous to their health. The danger presents itself in various guises, some more obvious than others. If he carries a Bowie knife in his back pocket, and talks about the time he did in the pen, only a fool would not take notice. But the dangerous man can also be superbly disguised. He can make you want to turn your back on your family and follow him to some far corner of the world. He can mix kindness with cruelty until you're not sure you can tell the difference, or even want to.

He can lure you into the desert on the back of his Harley and make you glad to be there.

Among the women I know, this problem is called "the motorcycle man syndrome." It is why we fall, as if helpless, for the cowboy, the river guide, the rock musician, the rake and the rogue. It is why we are crazy about Marlon Brando and Mickey Rourke. It is why we cannot resist the man who does not seem to have a mailing address. It is why we invite him to stash his sleeping bag behind our couch.

Most women outgrow the desire to follow dangerous men to the ends of the earth. But sometimes, especially if women get snapped up too early in life, the ache resurfaces at an inconvenient moment. A while back, I had lunch with a refined lady who wore a baggy tweed suit that hit her below the knees. For two hours she told me about her dull husband and her secret desire. She wanted to dump it all and run off with someone who was considerably less predictable, someone who was, in fact, about to get out of prison.

I SUPPOSE WE LUST after the motorcycle man because he represents everything our parents told us to avoid. They waved the virtues before us, and we shrugged. Who wanted that? The motorcycle man is rebellion personified, the epitome of what you do not bring home to Mother, unless you want to kill her.

The people who suffer most, I think, are the kind and gentle fellows who shower once a day and eat their vegetables. They sit alone for years, watching women fall to untrustworthy cads. They lose out, repeatedly, to men who are not nice. They wonder, sometimes, if being a regular guy is the kiss of death.

I'll say this to all of them. You will not wait forever. These women will tire of all the excitement. They will find themselves out walking in the desert one day, quite alone. And then, only slightly the worse for wear, they will be ready for you. ■

Cathryn Ramin's column appears on Mondays and Thursdays.