

## GIRLTALK

**L**ike most little girls, I grew up collecting cute shoes, pictures of wedding dresses and lots of Barbie dolls (and one Ken). Moving into adulthood, my collection is pretty much the same. Although the Barbies in my life are metaphorical now, they still outnumber the Kens. Among my friends, there's every type of "Barbie" you can find – executive Barbie, party Barbie, virgin Barbie – and yet, only a handful of them have found a Ken, a real man who happens to be a real love too.

This, I'm sure, prompts the boys out there to ask the inevitable question: why do girls have to have a Ken? Why can't we be happy with a GI Joe, or an Action Man? And the inevitable answer is: because we're searching for The One... our soulmate, our Prince Charming, our Romeo. And *He* is definitely not someone who prefers war-painting his face and dodging make-believe bullets to spending candlelit dinners with us.

The next question on the tip of your tongue is, why are women so infatuated with finding the ideal man to live happily ever after with? Isn't life about the journey, the adventure, the unknown?

The pathos-inspiring truth is this: guys grow up dreaming about sports cars; girls grow up dreaming of their wedding day.

Even the feminist, self-proclaimed-as-independent women out there cannot deny this. They just decided to rebel against the notion of needing someone to take care of us – sorry, I meant *wanting*... because us soul-searching, 21st century gals don't need anyone or anything to make us happy within, right? Except maybe our vibrators?

But that's exactly my point. Of all the things a vibrator can do, it cannot tell us we look gorgeous and give us a daughter with blonde curls and blue eyes. While most men seem to presume that a family



# Finding The One

Will all the Kens out there please raise their hands... Barbie's looking for a real man

will one day fall into their laps, the majority of women regularly calculate how many clock-ticking years they have left before they'll have to give up on the dream entirely.

Which begets worry. Which inspires analysis of every man, to ensure we don't waste time on GI Joes who may have whimsically decided to take a detour in between adventures and seduce us with arms made for swinging from tree vines. Only to decide they preferred the jungle after all.

To stretch the figurine analogy to its limits, this type could be labelled a "Joe in Ken's clothing" – disguised Ones who leave us pouting about the tragedy of lost chivalry and our reduced chances of finding The One in this romantically-inept society.

But who or what is responsible for filling your girlfriend's head with such Utopian, picket-fence images? We cannot blame Ally

McBeal and her fellow TV singletons – they are merely reacting to the reality of disguised Joes and elusive Kens. Hollywood? It's a tired cliché, but we do naturally aspire to the fantasy of *Sleepless in Seattle*-like happiness.

Whoever's to blame, the fact remains: the search for The One will continue. It may be punctured by disheartening events – like the news that after 43 years, Ken couldn't commit to marriage and he and Barbie were splitting up, leaving us to wonder if we're destined to end up like Bridal Barbie: tossed aside in a toy chest, clutching the bouquet we dived for at our best friend's wedding. Eventually, though, we'd rationalise that the break-up simply means there's another One on the market. Just because Barbie couldn't tame him with her 39-23-33 figure, doesn't mean *we* can't.

The final question you're dying to ask is, how do you know if your girlfriend views you as a Ken or a Joe? Well, if you're lucky, she sees you as a bit of both – Ken when you meet her mom, Joe when you take her clothes off.

But the simple answer is: if you're still with her, take comfort in the fact that, even though you may not turn out to be The Ultimate One, you're definitely The One For Right Now. And surely that's better than a lifetime of hanging out with the forest chimps?

BY ANNEMARIE LUCK **MH**

## 4 steps to Kenhood *Prove you're not a "GI Joe"*

**1. Be a man** Yes, we want to be your equal, but we also want to feel like a woman. So open doors, pull out chairs and pay for drinks. It shows that you were brought up well – and that you'll probably bring your own children up the same way.

**2. Don't try too hard** But don't neglect her either. She doesn't want you spamming up her inbox, but she would like to see your name there every now and again.

**3. Buy her tampons** What I mean is, show you're not embarrassed to buy things

like pregnancy tests or condoms. It proves you'll support her through thick and thin.

**4. Keep your promises** There's not a girl in this world who hasn't been disappointed by a silent phone. If you have no intention of phoning, don't promise to.