

Good sex, bad sex



Caroline Phillips reveals the best romantic encounters she could possibly imagine and, when reality intervened, a few of the worst

UNFORGETTABLE: Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr performed cinema's most famous clinch on the beach in the classic movie *From Here To Eternity*

COMPARED to the best sex I've ever had, Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr doing it voraciously on the beach in *From Here To Eternity* appear as sensual as trainspotters on a rainy night in Doncaster.

Against my most sensually charged experience, Jack Nicholson and Jessica Lange clearing the kitchen table for an illicit and torrid liaison in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* seems like the encounter of the anorak and the thermal vest, while Michael Douglas and Glenn Close setting to work on a kitchen work surface in *Fatal Attraction* appear simply workmanlike.

Yes, we're talking jump off a cliff, Heathcliff, time — and take Romeo and Juliet and Lady Chatterley with you.

Oh yes, we're embarking here on tales of a dangerous liaison with a Marcello Mastroianni-style Latin lover on a candlelit dinner table in a restaurant in Rome. Of winsome me wearing a fiery scarlet suit, smouldering eyes and pillar-box suspenders, while flying to sexual ecstasy and New York in Concorde.

When we're talking about my great sexual expectations, it's orgasms the length of feature films and sensual scenes in the crashing surf alongside Australian beaches

with Mel Gibson's better-looking relation.

Choosing my best sexual experience is going to be as easy as counting the number of letters in the Oxford English Dictionary. Or selecting the most romantic line ever written by Barbara Cartland. Except I'm joking.

In reality, things got off to a beguiling start, aged 11, with my sex education. My mother sat me under the apple tree in the garden and gave me a book on copulating banana flies. Think sensual, think banana fly, that's what I say. Later I asked her what an erection was. "It's when they put up a building, dear," she said. I guess she meant when it goes up it's fantastic, but annoying if it falls.

Informed further by *The Joy Of Sex* and practical homework, I realised quickly that a hot night required more than a hot water bottle. Wasn't it Woody Allen who said that sex is only dirty if it's done right?

So I armed myself with the shopping list of prerequisites for good sex: 1. When bathing your partner, make sure the water is warm. 2. Empty the fridge contents on to his tummy and pretend you're in Last Tango In Paris. 3. Self-exploration helps you learn your body's physical responses and allows you to have sex with the one you love.

With maturity, it became clear that

the best sex is something enjoyed out of impoliteness, performed at the expense of no one else and something that doesn't become entangled in an act of God.

(You will recall that much literature is about having sex, but rarely about the product. This is because, generally, once you have the product, you don't have the sex.)

It also became evident that the only people who have exciting romances and good sex without Real

'Informed by practical homework, I realised quickly that a hot night required more than a hot water bottle'

Life sticking its nose in and complicating things are movie stars — on screen.

My best early romantic experience occurred at the 21st birthday party of my then boyfriend, Keith. We stole out into his garden for stolen kisses and happy flushed encounters beneath the night's starred face. In the distance, the twinkling lights of

the party and noise of festivities subsided.

When we returned, it was more Pinter's *The Birthday Party* than Keith's Birthday Party. The assembled guests were silent, all stony faces and pregnant pauses, led by Keith's mother. She'd been waiting for our return with the candles dripping on to the cake.

Next came more adolescent romance in Beverly Hills. Harry and I sipped champagne taken from his drive-in fridge, then sat in the garden beneath the stars in a bubbling Jacuzzi (this was before anyone I knew had a Jacuzzi, or indeed a garden).

Then Harry took me upstairs to his waterbed. He wanted for nothing, except perhaps goldfish in his mattress. But as we started to sway and bob our way to pre-conjugal bliss, Harry fell ill and heaved into the trash can.

Some people feel shackled by marriage. But with these experiences, er, under my belt, I could have wished for nothing more. My husband, Adrian, has given me romantic experiences aplenty.

Even before we married, he whisked me off to Udaipur, regarded by many as the most picturesque city in India. We stayed in the white marble Lake Palace Hotel set on the

placid blue Pichola Lake, considered by many to be the most romantic hotel in India. Adrian had booked one night in a sumptuous suite the size of an Indian restaurant, with marble filigree work and a bed the size of Europe. We needed it that night as Adrian thrashed around, hot and delirious with fever.

We reached our sexual high some years later at our wedding. I walked down the aisle in a heavenly empire line dress, designed by Tomasz Starzewski, sewn by angels and made of hand-painted green silk chiffon with a velvet bodice and dramatic bottle green veil. I married the man of my dreams in candlelight, the chapel heady with the scent of white lilies, roses and a thousand white candles.

Afterwards, 80 of us dined on delicious food cooked by Le Caprice's Mark Hix and celebrated at Moyns Park, an Elizabethan manor and the home of Lord and Lady Ivar Mountbatten, in Suffolk. What could be more romantic? What could lead to better sex? I anticipated a night of passion with Adrian, the best-looking, most clever, funniest man in the world.

But when we went to bed, he needed a ladder to achieve his conjugal rights. Here was a sexual high point to give him vertigo. I was, after all, five months pregnant.