

A Primer on Romance from a Legendary Lover

By Nicole Jordan

As an historical romance author, I'm amazed by the changes in our Valentine's Day celebrations over the years. Our current holiday devoted to All Things Romance has undergone a remarkable transformation from its inception in Ancient Rome, where young Roman men would use strips of goat's hide dipped in sacrificial blood to slap both women and field crops to encourage fertility the following year. Nothing says romance like dead animal skin, right? Now, don't judge, ladies! I know many of you would be thrilled if your beau came home with some new leather pumps or a hot little snakeskin purse for your Valentine's surprise!

Although the ancient Roman's gesture of love was . . . ahem . . . interesting, thankfully the romantics of the Regency era improved markedly with their Valentine's Day offerings. By the middle of the 19th Century, it was common for friends and lovers in all social classes to exchange small tokens of affection or handwritten notes, often on delicate lace paper featuring hand-painted motifs, or with novelties such as a tiny mirror, an origami puzzle, or a concealed lock of hair. The beauty of these gifts was the time and thought put into the sentiments.

I can't help but long for those romantic days of old when I'm faced with our modern-day Valentine's commercialism and the celebration of said holiday via social media. Somehow a Tweeted, "Luv u, QT!" just doesn't set my romantic heart aflutter. We live in a fascinating time, complete with mind-boggling technical marvels. But from what I've observed, when it comes to 21st Century men being well-versed in romance, with a few magnificent exceptions (like my own dear husband), I'd say our modern guys could stand a lesson or two.

With that in mind, I've turned to Ashton Wilde, Marquis of Beaufort—the first hero in my new *Legendary Lovers Regency* series (*Princess Charming*; Ballantine Books, on sale 1/31/12). I asked Ash to provide a few simple tips to our present-day heroes-in-the-making. And thanks to Nook downloads, you can share his wisdom with the men in your life who could use a tutorial in the romance department.

Nicole Jordan: Lord Beaufort, thank you for joining me and for providing your valuable insight into how a modern-day man can best woo his contemporary lady.

Ashton Wilde, Marquis of Beaufort: Of course, I'm happy to help! You are my author and creator, and I would do anything for you, darling. Now pray dispense with formalities and call me "Ash." On to the matter at hand The way to a woman's heart is neither mysterious nor magical. In truth, it's quite simple: Discover what means the most to your lady and incorporate that into your plan. For example, my lovely Maura has a consuming affection for horses—one horse in particular, Emperor. During a recent picnic in the park, I packed a few carrots for Emp among the cordials and other refreshments for my lady. I confess, I had not planned it as a romantic gesture, but one would think root vegetables were 24-carat gold, given the thanks Maura showered upon me. It did wonders for my relationship with her over-protective horse, too! So in this instance, the way to my Regency lady's heart was quite literally through her horse's mouth.

NJ: Speaking of Maura, since you've recently taken on the daunting role of Prince Charming to an elusive, independent-minded Cinderella, I hope you'll be able to advise our contemporary men on how to become legendary lovers themselves. There will be some who read this and say legendary lovers are nothing more than fodder for fiction and that they simply don't exist. What say you?

AW: Drat, does this mean I'm a figment of my own imagination? Actually, I shouldn't mock anyone who believes this, for I was similarly mistaken before I learned the truth from you.

NJ: Like Maura, we 21st Century women have fiercely independent streaks, and I fear we sometimes confuse our beaux as a result. Please don't coddle us, but do let us know we're worthy of your time and attention. Beyond the typical flowers, chocolates, Facebook posts, and Tweets, how would you propose a man show his undying commitment to his beloved?

AW: There is certainly a place for chocolate and flowers, but put forth some effort, gentlemen. Use your wits to contrive an imaginative twist. Bypass your local flower vendor and plant a flowering tree in your love's honor instead. During each Spring's new bloom, she'll remember your thoughtfulness and repay you in kind. Cordials are sweet, but imagine the possibilities if you fed her fruit dipped in chocolate by your own hand. And this Facebook you speak of? I love a good tome as much as the next fellow, but how are you to capture her attention if her face is buried in a book? As for the Tweets, I agree. A nice songbird is a lovely gesture.

NJ: Oh, I'm afraid you misunderstand, Ash. Never mind—I'll explain social media another day. I know you're a busy nobleman, what with your wooing of Maura, but we appreciate your taking the time to pass along a few useful tips for today's legendary lovers.

AW: I assure you, the pleasure was all mine. Now off with you, fellow gents! Time to try some of these tips on your own leading ladies.