

HIS BEST FRIEND IS FEMALE

SO, NOW WHAT?

Play it right, and his female friend could be your best ally (and she might offer to powder your face, too).

Before declaring his intimate circle a no-girl zone, consider embracing the other woman in his life. His BFF might just be your New Best Friend. BY LAURA BOND AND MAVIS NGUI

Unless your guy is a blokey-bloke, who vanishes if he hears the words “Kardashians” or “feelings”, it’s likely he’ll have other women in his life.

Perhaps he has an unofficial agony aunt, whose advice he seeks on what to wear. Or maybe he’s formed a close bond with his female boss, who’s helping him scale the career ladder. These women will play a role in his life you can’t fulfil, and while you might resent the time your boyfriend spends in their company, you should consider the benefits.

“One of the advantages is that your partner gets a ‘female perspective’,” says Andrew G Marshall, author of *Help Your Partner Say “Yes”: Seven Steps to Achieving Better Cooperation and Communication*. “So, on subjects such as sex, he might be getting sensible thoughts from them rather than his mates.”

You might loathe the idea of him discussing sex with another girl, but thanks to her, he knows the importance of foreplay and neck kisses. Really, when you think about it, she could be your NBF in disguise.

Make New Friends

“Enlisting his female bestie as an ally can provide you with a friend you’re likely to have lots in common with,” says Li Kun Qi, a relationship and life coach. “After all, you even like the same guy, just in very different ways.”

When Huimin*, 26, started dating Jack, he had two female best friends and they were really close. “I went out of my way to befriend them and I’m glad I did,” she says. “In no time at all, they were calling me before they called him. Now he calls me a ‘friend stealer!’”

So how do you tell the difference between a potential mate and a boyfriend snatcher biding her time? “If this woman is a true friend, she should let him go a bit when you’re on the scene,” says Li.

On Your Turf

Janice, 28, quickly learnt that dating Steven meant dealing with Emily, his university friend. “Every time we hit the clubs, she’d insist on dancing with him. She’d go, ‘This is our song!’ and drag him off! She’d also keep pulling him away for private chats.”

According to Marshall, this is cause for concern: “Trading secrets is often the currency that builds from an innocent friendship into something that could tip over.” That boiling point came for Janice when Steven spent the night out partying with Emily before he went on his three-month exchange trip.

“After we split, Emily called to console me, and I said, ‘You’re Steven’s friend, not mine.’ Looking back, I should’ve given him an ultimatum and asked to choose just one of us to be close to, but I guess I was afraid that he wouldn’t pick me.”

Draw The Line

“If his best friend is starting to strain your relationship, you need to have a proper conversation with her,” says Li. But before you start pointing fingers and looking like an obsessive girlfriend, reflect on your own emotions first. “Often, jealousy

stems from your own insecurities. If she’s very attractive, work on your own personal grooming to boost your confidence.” Your imagination can be your worst enemy, causing you to worry unduly: “Most of the time, it’s likely that she’s not as perfect as you expect.”

The bottom line? If you embrace his other women and set realistic boundaries from the start, you might enjoy sharing the relationship load. But while experts agree that no “one” person can fulfil our every emotional need, you still need to feel like his number-one girl.

When Huimin got engaged, the first person her fiancé called was one of his girlfriends. “I was totally cool with it,” she says. “After all, I’m the one walking down the aisle with him.”

*Names have been changed.

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Turn over to meet three friends who make it work!

JUST THE THREE OF US

While you should be on guard with his female BFF, there's no need to be overly paranoid. *Mavis Ngui* meets a couple and their best friend who built their relationship on trust, love, and tons of fun.



THE BOYFRIEND
Kai Ng, 31,
Real estate consultant

ON JILL: "I met Jill at a party through mutual friends, and she drew me in right away. Even though we only had a short conversation about our jobs and random things we liked or abhorred, I was hooked. We started texting, and a couple of messages a day became a constant exchange. Then we had our first date. I love how she laughs — she's so comfortable and at ease with herself that it's sexy. Jill puts her family above everything else and I respect and admire that about her. On her birthday last year, I decided to propose. Anything that could go wrong went wrong on that day. After a posh dinner at Sentosa, I got her to walk along the bay with me. When I got down on one knee, she ran away! It was quite embarrassing — I had to chase after her before she eventually said yes."

ON GERI: "I know it's hard to believe, but in the three years we've been best friends, I've never harboured romantic notions towards Geri. I met her at work, and we only got a lot closer when she confided her troubles in me. At that time, we were both going through bad breakups, and while that sounds like the beginning of a rom-com, nothing happened between us. Now, we've been buds for three years. A couple of months after I met Jill, Geri got together with her current boyfriend, whom I approved of. I don't mean to vet her boyfriends, but she had an ex who treated her poorly and I simply didn't want to see her get hurt again. Our friendship is very independent — we don't need frequent meet ups to cement our bond. We try to meet up at least once a month to catch up and when we do, we can just jump in from where we left off. I'm very comfortable with her and I share all my thoughts, opinions and problems with her."



WHAT'S THE DEAL?

Jill and Kai are currently preparing for their wedding, accompanied by a third wheel — Kai's female BFF, Geraldine (affectionately known as Geri). In their strong unlikely relationship, Jill is the caring one who remembers everybody's birthdays, Kai the calm and cool advisor and mediator, while Geri is the planner who organises all their get-togethers.

Geri was like a sister to me. Even though I expected them to get along, I was really happy when they did. I don't take sides ... much. For instance, if we're hanging out and Jill wants to eat somewhere but Geri doesn't, I'll get Jill to give in since she's my girl and Geri's our friend. Even though she understands, she still sulks — and I level things out by letting her decide on our plans after we've eaten."

Kai's Tips To Making It Work: "Keep a healthy balance between your girlfriend and your best friend. Never neglect one for the other."



THE GIRLFRIEND
Jill Seah, 26,
Freelance events coordinator

ON KAI: "If Kai hadn't made the first move that night, I probably would have. I felt that we really connected and that he'd be someone I could count on when the going gets tough. I'm really grateful I met him and that we're starting a life together. Even though he spoils me, he also keeps me grounded by making me think through my decisions. The foundation of all strong relationships is trust, and I trust Kai entirely. Unless, of course, he develops non-platonic feelings for his female friends ... but I'm quite a detective at picking up such vibes. I'd like to think it's my super instincts, but men are just really careless and tend to leave a trail behind every indiscretion."

ON GERI: "I was wary about how things between us would turn out because 1) she's a girl, 2) she's his best friend. Kai was always saying that we are like two peas in a pod with our crazy, loud personalities, so I really wanted to bond with her. I had nothing to worry about since we hit it off right off the bat. We come from similar family backgrounds, share the same priorities in life, and even joke on the same frequency! She also has the biggest heart. We now like to hit our favourite shops together on the weekends."

ON KAI AND GERI: "Of course, anyone would have insecurities about meeting someone so ingrained in your partner's life. Will she like me? Will she think that I'm good enough for Kai? There was definitely pressure to perform as Geri's almost family to him. I was nervous and made an effort to dress up for my initial meeting with her. First impressions count, you know. Girls care about details and I wanted to be at my best with her — it was really important to him for

us to get along well. When you see platonic best friends of the opposite sex, there'll always be this niggling thought at the back of your head that there's more to it than meets the eye, but now that I'm so close to Geri, I trust the both of them completely. There's nothing to worry about here, folks!"

Jill's Tips To Making It Work: "Be yourself. Make an effort to find a connection to his other important person, and if it's a girl, employ tact at your initial meetings!"



THE BEST FRIEND
Geraldine Yeow,
27, Analyst

ON KAI: "Given how well we get along, it's strange our friendship never veered into romantic territory. Most people deem such relationships idealistic and unfeasible — we used to be mistaken for a couple many times (once while we were at a wedding fair ... with my boyfriend. Awkward!), but any feelings we have between us are purely platonic. Kai's like a big brother who will always be there for me. I count on him for advice and I've never once doubted his friendship."

ON JILL: "From the first time we met, we clicked. We connected on many levels: personality, character and opinions ... it was like I'd found my soulmate. Today, throw us any topic and we'll be on the same page. Jill and I shop together, rant together and complain about work to each other. Our

5 Signs She's A Friend

PSYCHOLOGIST CASSANDRA STURGES, AUTHOR OF *THE ILLUSION OF BEAUTY: WHY WOMEN HATE THEMSELVES AND ENVY OTHER WOMEN*, RECKONS SHE'S ALLY MATERIAL IF:

- 1 She invites you to all functions, parties and events.
- 2 She respects your relationship and need for space by not calling him constantly over trivial matters.
- 3 Your partner is extremely comfortable around her and acts like himself in her presence.
- 4 She doesn't go all out and dress to impress him.
- 5 She introduces you as his wife, fiancée or girlfriend, not his 'date'.

shared indulgence? Katong laksa and Chong Pang nasi lemak!"

ON KAI AND JILL: "Seeing your best friend settle down is a double-edged sword: you're happy to see him find The One, yet you worry that his girlfriend will monopolise him and that you'll drift apart. But I've had nothing to worry about. To be honest, I'm actually closer to Jill now, even though the friendship between Kai and I is as strong as ever. Instead of losing a brother, I gained a sister."

Geri's Tips To Making It Work: "Give them their space, and never, ever, get in the middle when they fight." ■

5 SIGNS SHE'S A FOE

Relationship expert Terri Orbuch, author of *5 Simple Steps To Take Your Marriage From Good To Great*, says you should be worried when:

- 1 Your partner begins to socialise with his other woman on a regular basis and doesn't tell you about it, or acts shifty about it.
- 2 She knows more about him and his whereabouts than you do, and before you do.
- 3 She doesn't want you to meet or socialise with her, and he prefers catching up with her alone.
- 4 You aren't the primary person he shares info with. He prefers her shoulders over yours.
- 5 If he's in a rough patch it's her advice he heeds, not yours.

