

Love me, love me not – A2/B1

Two people fall in love. But is their experience real? Or is it just an effect of the medicine they're taking?

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the text and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. a stage
2. fake
3. cute
4. a vitamin
5. a researcher
6. a trial
7. a dimple
8. a side effect

Definition

- a. a natural substance in food that helps your body to be healthy
- b. a particular time in the development of something
- c. a series of tests to discover whether something works and is safe
- d. an effect of a medicine that is not intended
- e. someone who studies a subject in detail to discover new information
- f. sweet and attractive-looking
- g. not real
- h. a small gap under the skin on a person's cheeks that appears when they smile

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Kate looked around the room at the other people: ten men and ten women all around the same age.

'Thank you for coming today and offering your time to help with our research! Limeren, the medicine we're testing, is in the final stage of testing. Previous human trials have shown us that Limeren is completely safe ...'

Kate stopped paying attention. She'd read the information the medical research company had sent her, so she knew that Limeren had already been approved for sale and that they were not testing to see if there were side effects. She didn't know any of the other people in the group. She guessed that none of them had jobs either or they wouldn't be earning money by testing medicine. But otherwise it was impossible to know if she had anything in common with any of them. She hoped so, or four days in the research centre would feel like a very long time.

'... as side effects, we know that some people experience stronger emotions and a feeling of general happiness,' the head researcher said. 'We'll be interviewing each of you and doing tests during the day and night. So if you can all sign the forms, we can start.'

Kate signed her form without reading the information. Hopefully, this was going to be a very easy way to make money.

'I hope the food's better than last time,' said the guy sitting next to her as he gave in his form.

Kate smiled.

'I'm Michael.'

'Kate,' she said. 'Have you been here before?'

'I do these trials as often as they'll let me!' He laughed. 'It's such an easy way to make money!'

She smiled back. Here was someone she had something in common with.

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A few hours later, Kate was eating dinner. She had taken her second Limeren tablet before dinner. She was feeling really relaxed. Maybe it was the vitamins, or maybe it was just because she had so much free time and there was nothing she needed to do. There were books to read, films to watch and even board games and puzzles. At home, she had to send out job applications. Or she had to go to stressful job interviews. After more than twenty applications she still didn't have a job.

She looked up and saw Michael smiling at her. 'Do you want to play a board game?' he asked. His eyes were really dark brown, Kate thought. She hadn't noticed that earlier. She felt her cheeks go red. 'Sure,' she replied. 'But I like to win,' she warned.

'Perfect,' he said. 'Me too!'

Was it her imagination or did his cheeks look a bit pink too?

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For the next two days, Kate and Michael spent hours and hours playing games, chatting and watching films.

'I feel as if I've known you for months, not days,' she said. She already knew he lived nearby, that he was a student studying for his PhD and that he had dimples in his cheeks when he smiled and a cute way of putting a pen behind his ear when he was reading. She wasn't sure, but she thought he was trying to sit next to her for meals and spend time with her whenever he could. Or maybe she was the one who was always looking for him.

'So, do you think you're feeling any side effects?' he asked her one evening. They were sitting on the sofa, watching a film. Michael's knee was almost touching her leg, and if his hand moved just a little, it would be touching hers. Her heart beat faster and all she could think about was being near enough for his skin to touch hers. Her face was red again, she knew it.

'Any what?' she asked, trying to concentrate on their conversation instead.

'The side effects of Limeren that they told us about at the presentation,' he said, moving his hand away. Her skin immediately felt cold, as if his hand had been making the air between them warm.

'Oh, I wasn't really listening,' she said. 'We still get paid anyway, don't we?'

And then he did it. He moved his hand so that it covered hers. A nice feeling travelled all the way through her fingers and across her skin. She turned her hand over and held his hand. He smiled and moved his face towards hers.

'Can everyone come and get their next Limeren, please?' called a nurse. Michael dropped her hand and followed the rest of the group to the nurse's room. Kate couldn't remember ever feeling so happy.

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'Thank you everyone for taking part. You're now free to go,' the head researcher said the next morning as the trial ended. 'Any side effects will disappear over the next few days. If you have felt any strong feelings, and happiness, those feelings will decrease. Fortunately, we don't expect anyone to become depressed. However, we will keep in touch with all of you in the next few days to make sure everything is fine.'

'We can have our first date now,' Michael said to Kate. 'Breakfast?'

Over breakfast, they talked and talked. Kate knew she was in love. It was stupid, but it was true. Michael said it first.

'I can't believe I met you. I've never felt like this about anyone before.'

'This does feel amazing,' Kate said. But she had been worried about something since the beginning of the trial. She hadn't wanted to think about it but now she had to ask him a serious question.

'You don't think ...?'

'What?'

'What if it's the Limeren making us feel like this? What was it he said about strong feelings?'

'There's only one way to find out!' he said. 'If you don't want to be my girlfriend any more after a few days, we'll know it was just the Limeren.'

She smiled at the word 'girlfriend'. 'Maybe your side effects will go away first!'

'Maybe!' He laughed. 'But I don't think so. This feels real to me.'

'Me too,' she said.

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Four months later

A few months later, Kate was thinking about the beginning of their relationship. She had to admit, nothing could ever be as perfect as those first days together. Real life had to start again. She got a job a few days after the trial ended. Michael went back to the library and his books and research projects. She didn't have to worry about money any more but they could

no longer spend all day, every day together. They were no longer at that exciting stage of falling in love. But they saw each other when they could and they met each other's parents. Everyone expected them to get married. When he finally asked her to marry him, she felt that old excitement again.

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Three years later

'I really don't have time for this!' Kate shouted. She hated doing the weekly shopping. Why couldn't he do it?

'Fine, I'll go then,' she said, closing the door hard so that it made a loud noise.

Kate felt as if these kinds of arguments were happening more often. As she walked around the supermarket, she thought about how they'd been before, when they were in love. 'Can it ever feel like that again?' she wondered.

Walking into the health section, she recognised a word on a box of medicine. Limeren. The vitamin's name reminded her of a special time, a time when she was really crazy about Michael. She picked up a box and put it in her basket.

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When she got home, Michael was already in bed so she ate dinner alone, taking her Limeren with a big glass of water. The next morning, she woke up early as usual, but instead of jumping straight in the shower, she joined Michael downstairs for breakfast.

'Good morning!' she said. To her surprise, she suddenly wanted to kiss him on the cheek. So she did, and sat down next to him at the table. He was eating in front of a big pile of books, looking cute with a pen behind his ear. 'What are you doing?'

'I'm applying for money for my next research project,' he said.

'Oh, good luck! What's the project about?'

After breakfast, she thought how nice it had been to see him talking about something he cared about. She'd forgotten how cute his dimples were when he smiled, she thought. Or maybe she hadn't seen him smile much recently. Anyway, she decided to have breakfast with him every day, since it had been such a lovely start to the day. It couldn't hurt to make a bit more effort, could it?

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Two years later

The baby hadn't stopped crying for two hours, but now her little face was peaceful as she slept. Kate felt annoyed. Where was Michael? She went downstairs and found him filling bottles with milk for the baby.

'Well done!' Michael said. 'That didn't sound easy.'

'No!' she said angrily. 'It isn't!'

'You're doing an amazing job,' he said. 'OK, so, I've washed all the clothes, made your lunch for later and I'm going to come home early this afternoon so that you can have some time for yourself.'

Kate managed to smile and say thank you. He really was being very sweet, even if she was too tired to feel grateful or to be nice back. As soon as he had left for work, she picked up the box of Limeren. By the time he came home, Kate felt able to smile back when he smiled at her.

One year later

Kate was putting clothes away while the baby slept. She picked up one of Michael's favourite jumpers and held the soft material next to her cheek. She missed him and he had only been out an hour. Putting it back, she noticed something hard under the rest of the jumpers in the drawer. It was boxes and boxes of Limeren.

They weren't hers! She was shocked to see these boxes. She took Limeren every day, it was true, but Michael? She thought of Limeren as an easy way to those feelings she'd always had for Michael. And it was working. Every day she felt madly in love with her wonderful husband. Everyone said marriage was hard work, but she just didn't have time or energy for the job of marriage as well as her part-time job and a young baby. When she took Limeren, she made more effort to do small things that made their life together enjoyable. If he did something nice for her, she said thank you, but most of all she actually felt grateful. If he wore a new shirt or his hair looked good, she told him he was handsome. She asked him about his day and remembered things that were important to him. She'd seen nothing wrong with doing this. Until now, that is. Now she knew why he had always been so good at doing those same things for her. It was all fake!

Instead of smiling at Michael when he got home, she was angry. Clearly the Limeren only had a limited ability to make everything perfect because nothing felt perfect right now.

'What are all these?' she asked. She pointed to the Limeren packets she'd taken from the drawer and put on the kitchen table.

Michael moved closer and tried to read the small writing on the boxes. 'They're vitamins, aren't they?'

'Don't act as if you've got no idea why I'm asking!' said Kate, even more angry. 'These boxes,' she said, picking one of the packets up, 'are our relationship.'

'Oh!' he said. 'It's Limeren!'

'Yes, it's Limeren,' she said. 'I know exactly what they are.'

He looked confused. 'So why are you asking me what they are? I remember the name now you've said – from the place we met, right? – but I've not taken those for years.'

'What?'

'I just ... I don't know. It's better to get vitamins from fruit and vegetables, isn't it?' he said. 'The research company sent us boxes and boxes of them years ago, but I put them away'

somewhere and forgot to throw them away. We eat a healthy enough diet so there's no need to take vitamins.'

'What about ...' She felt her voice getting louder and louder, but also something made her feel less sure about the words she planned to say. Her idea sounded stupid. 'What about the falling in love part? The side effects! You're always so wonderful, the perfect husband. And now I know why!'

'Er ... thanks?' He laughed. 'I know they told us there were some side effects, but we were just joking when we said we fell in love because of the medicine, weren't we? Also,' he added, turning the box over in his hands, 'they must have changed the ingredients or something because it doesn't say anything on the box about side effects. See?' He held it out for her to look. 'Maybe they changed the recipe after we did that trial. Who knows?'

He gave her a big hug. 'This perfect husband is all natural, don't worry.'

He went upstairs to kiss the baby and then she heard him in the kitchen as he started to make dinner. She looked carefully at the boxes and it was true. There was nothing on the box about side effects, or even on the information inside. They were just vitamins after all. Limeren wasn't an easy way to love and it never had been.

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Tasks

Task 1

Match the sentences (a–f) with the person (1–2).

Person

1. Kate
.....

2. Michael
.....

Sentences

- a. was unemployed when they met.
- b. was a student when they met.
- c. didn't think their feelings were because of Limeren.
- d. said their relationship was not real.
- e. said 'I love you' first.
- f. didn't listen carefully to what the researcher was saying.

Task 2

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. During the trial, the researchers kept the side effects of Limeren secret.	True	False
2. Just after the trial ended, both Kate and Michael thought their feelings might be because of Limeren.	True	False
3. Kate got angrier than Michael when they argued.	True	False
4. Kate's feelings of love for Michael increased when they had breakfast together.	True	False
5. Kate thought Limeren would solve all her relationship problems.	True	False
6. Michael had hidden the Limeren from Kate.	True	False
7. The ingredients for Limeren might have changed since the trial.	True	False
8. Limeren was the reason their marriage was happy.	True	False

Discussion

Did you like the story?

Answers

Preparation task

1. b
2. g
3. f
4. a
5. e
6. c
7. h
8. d

Task 1

1. a, d, f
2. b, c, e

Task 2

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. True
6. False
7. True
8. False