

THE WRITE PLACE

A newspaper dedicated to the Greater Montreal area writing community



Dating 2.0: Looking for Love in all the Wrong

~~Singles Groups Companion Ads Online Dating Sites~~

by Ellie Presner

“True love is like ghosts, which everyone talks about and few have seen.”

François de la Rochefoucauld (1613-1680)

Dating. After my marriage ended, this was a whole new concept to me, having been with only one person since the age of 17 until we split when I was 30. I spent a year or two mourning the loss of a partner, and then, in 1977, BANG! I was ready-set-go to find a new one.

My first false start involved someone I met at (ironically) a wedding. I was smitten, but he – unfortunately for me – eventually went back to his first lady love. Here was a valuable lesson learned: Never date someone who is merely “separated” from their significant other.

“The fields of love are fraught with peril.”

Who said that? Me! (1945-)

Okay, so the peril isn’t really found in the *fields* of love, it’s in the roads or lane ways leading to it. But “the lanes of love” doesn’t hit quite the right note in spite of its lovely alliteration. In any case, such has been my love quest, fraught indeed, over the past thirty-something years.

After my 1977 misstep with the still-attached man, I tried joining a couple of singles groups. At the time, it was the only market – I mean venue – for unattached men and women to meet. I did seem to spark a dollop of interest in *some* men in these groups. The only problem was that they weren’t quite what I was looking for, since the idea of almost immediately hopping into bed with a stranger didn’t quite float my bod, er,

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Whatever you are,
be a good one.

—Abraham Lincoln

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IF YOU’RE IN THE MOOD FOR AN ENJOYABLE, LIGHT-HEARTED EVENING, JOIN TERRY “AISLIN” MOSHER, RE-KNOWNED AND RESPECTED POLITICAL CARTOONIST FOR THE MONTREAL GAZETTE, ON TUESDAY, MAY 17th, 2016, AS HE REGALES US WITH STORIES OF HIS CARTOONS AND THE WAY HE HAS MANAGED TO USE THEM TO FIND THE HUMOUR IN THE HEADLINES WE READ EVERY DAY.

**PLACE: HAROLD GREENSPON AUDITORIUM
5801 CAVENDISH BLVD.
(ACROSS FROM CAVENDISH MALL)
CITY OF COTE-ST-LUC**

TIME: 7:00 PM—9:00 PM



AT THE END OF THE EVENING, AISLIN’S PUBLISHED WORKS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE, AND HE WILL HAPPILY SIGN THEM FOR YOU. COME JOIN US. IT’S FREE!

MEETING LUCY AGAIN *by Rosalie Avigdor*

Lucy Ravinsky and I have known each other for many years. Lucy attends our Canadian Writers Society meetings whenever possible.

Many things have gone on in your life You have had many interesting careers and have the unique ability to push forward and reinvent yourself successfully time after time. Please explain how you came to hold your present position as General Director of The Musicians of the World Symphony Orchestra (MWSO).

I met many people, in various music fields, through my spouse, Joseph Milo. One of those was Sharon Azrieli, a known soprano who introduced me to the Brott family in Montreal who managed the McGill Chamber Orchestra. They needed their deficit erased and I had many ideas of how to achieve this. In return, they taught me how to manage an orchestra, with all the necessary help, personnel and tools I needed to learn my executive director's position well. It was an excellent arrangement and I walked away with the knowledge I needed to manage an orchestra of my own.

You work together with your husband, Milo, a conductor, and have performed in many different places. Could you give us a short description of your orchestra?

The MWSO is composed of 50 musicians. About 75% of its members are from 12+ countries around the world. The remaining 25% are native Montrealers who have successfully facilitated the integration of the

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Submission Guidelines

An eight- to twelve-page B&W news magazine, dedicated to the English-language community of the Greater Montreal Area, will be published every three months. Submissions for entry into the paper will be accepted from any writer, with preference given to those resident in the Greater Montreal Area.

There will be no compensation to the writer for any work that we might publish. All submissions will be reviewed by our team of editors. There is no guarantee that any submission will be accepted for publication, nor that any accepted submission will be published. Submissions can be made a number of ways:

by e-mail : the.write.place@hotmail.com (subject line: Submission)
 by fax : (514) 383-6683 (with a cover page)
 by snail mail : The Write Place, C/O 9770, boulevard Saint-Laurent, Montreal, Quebec H3L 2N3

Please include, with your submission, your name, an e-mail address where we can contact you, and a short bio that we might include with your story, if it is accepted. If you have a picture, please feel free to include it. If you want your snail mail submission returned, please enclose a SASE with sufficient postage. Any submission you provide should try to stay within a reasonable limit of these word count guidelines:

Short story :	500-2000 words	Postcard story :	250-500 words
Poetry :	3-50 lines	Book reviews :	500-525 words
Articles (by experts in the field) :	500-1000 words	Letters to the Editor	50-250 words
Advertisements:	increments of 1/8 page (contact us for rates)		

THE WRITE PLACE

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Send submissions to our e-mail with "Submission" in the subject line. Snail mail will be accepted as well. Please include your name and address in all correspondence. There is no compensation to the writer for any work that may be published. All submissions will be reviewed by our team of editors and we reserve the right to edit all material received. There is no guarantee that any submission will be accepted, nor that any accepted submission will be published in the next issue.

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Intensive Care by Hannah Sklar

Every event in life is a learning experience for me. On August 14, 2015, I had surgery. Complications associated with the procedure required me to be in the intensive care unit of the hospital for four days. As I regained my senses, I became acutely aware of my environment. There were no distractions ... no television, no radio, no computer, nor did I have the ability to read. The only computer screen that I saw measured my vital signs.

The visiting hours were very strict. The days were interrupted by the occasional family and doctor visits. This was a time to heal. Days were long. Nights were even longer. The only people constantly by my side were the nurses. I could not sleep, afraid to close my eyes. I might never open them again. My coping mechanism was to talk and express my feelings. My three primary care givers became my best friends. Our relationships grew very intimate and very intense. They looked after me physically, managing my pain, dressing and undressing me, even washing my whole body. Nothing was off limits. Our conversations reflected the same level of intimacy ... everything was on the table.

My day nurse was young, pregnant, and of Japanese origin. Her husband was French, and this is how she came to live in Montreal. We shared our experiences as mothers. The afternoon nurse emigrated from Russia ten years ago. That bonded us, since I came from Poland. I visited Russia as a child and still remembered the language to some extent. We related to our immigrant experiences. The overnight nurse came from a long line of doctors and nurses. Her father was a surgeon and her mother a nurse. She was sensitive and caring, but felt self-conscious about her weight. Her boyfriend belittled her, due to her girth. Having lost some weight, I knew how she felt. Diets were on the menu.

I was curious about these individuals. What induced them to choose this vocation? When you see these caring professionals as people, they respond to you as a person, not simply as a patient. For each and everyone of them, it was not a choice, it was a calling. They never considered any other career. They respected and cared for their patients, regardless of color, race, religion, age, or sexual orientation. They asked nothing in return. They seemed fulfilled and happy doing their job. To me, this is the essence of human nature. Giving is living. When we keep a tally, we can never be happy.

The nurses and I shared a commonality as people. We all related. The saying that we are more alike than not holds true. It just takes time, interest and patience to search for it. As a patient, I understood it all. Worthwhile, meaningful relationships are intense. They deserve to be nurtured and cultivated. These bonds are eternal.

Out of intensive care now, my focus is on growing and learning from my intense relationships.

The **CANADIAN WRITERS SOCIETY** is a group of writers, both aspiring and published, who believe in sharing their works and ideas with other like-minded individuals. Society activities include:

"Reading and Feedback" evenings, where members are asked to bring in a short piece they have written, to be read in front of the members present, who will then constructively comment on the piece;

"Imagination" evenings, where members are only asked to bring their imagination and quick wit. They will be asked to write short pieces on the spot, either given a single line to embellish, or a topic to expound upon. Once finished, each member will read their piece for the other members present;

"Match Game", where members get to fill in the blanks of phrases and compete to match other members;

Workshop evenings, where selected authors or publishers animate a hands-on workshop of techniques and tricks intended to help and enable members in their craft;

Round Table Discussion evenings, where selected authors, publishers and other members of the industry come together to discuss topics of interest to members;

Lecture evenings, where members can benefit from the wisdom and knowledge that selected speakers are able to impart on topics of member interest.

At present, we hold one meeting a month at the Cote-St-Luc Aquatic Centre on Parkhaven. Our year starts in January and ends in December, with a break in July for vacationers' pleasures.

We usually request a small donation of \$2.00 per meeting to cover the cost of coffee and cookies we supply.

(Dating 2.0 continued from page 1)

boat. I won't tax your patience with stories of my fending off these uncouth male specimens. Let's just collectively go "tsk, tsk," wag our fingers at them retroactively and move on.

At the time, I moved on to single dads, figuring we'd have a lot in common. But it turned out that, with the ones I met, that's *all* we had in common.

Those disappointments led me to try a promising new strategy: newspaper ads. Back before the Internet, "Companions Wanted" ads in our major daily newspapers were very popular. I used to scour them every weekend... but to no avail. Finally I decided to place my *own* ad. I whipped up a little piece that caught (I thought) my essence. Sense of humour – check; off-beat interests – check; deep thinker – check; seeking same – check.

This was fun! It was like ordering merchandise, hoping for the right fit. How exciting it was, seeing all the letters crammed in my post-office box, sorting them ("yes!" "no!" "maybe!") and choosing the prize-winners that merited a reply.

Then I met a few of them. Well. It turned out that the written word is no substitute for meeting someone in person. Five feet, seven inches tall turned out to be five feet one. "I look like Jeff Bridges" – not so much. (By the way, I could never understand why someone would lie about his appearance, when you would meet and the truth would rear its, um, ugly head.) (By the way #2, any brickbats I throw towards men could of course be equally applicable to women, if the situation were reversed.)

You'll know this isn't the best way to meet a mate when, as you're waiting in front of a resto to meet him, you're thinking, "Please let that not be him, oh pleeeeeease..." You'll know it's not the best way when you're chatting on the phone with him, and you hear him making groaning sounds that are something other than "So, what movie would you like to see?" You'll know it's not the best way when you meet him at a bistro, and, at the table, he yaks for fifteen minutes with one of the waiters – in a foreign language – and never introduces you.

One apparently perfect match ended after several months of dating when his dark side began to show through the cracks: narcissism, a complete lack of self-awareness, and no sense of humour whatsoever. He sulked while I watched a TV show at his house about a folksinger I loved... and he knew beforehand that I was planning to watch it, yet had insisted I come over there anyway. Sigh. His was one of the *good* ads.

"A girl can wait for the right man to come along, but in the meantime that still doesn't mean she can't have a wonderful time with all the wrong ones."

Cher (1946-)

Well, let's see... apart from the bad choices I met through the ads, I met some Mr. Not-Rights all on my very own: at a country bar, a film festival, and while indulging in my hobby at the time, BBSing. (BBSes, or Bulletin Board Systems, were sort of early-90s forerunners to online dating sites; they were more than that, though – I wrote about them in my blog post, *Before the Internet*.) I cannot describe these dalliances to you, because my children might read this. Okay, my "children" are in their 40s, but hey, if they want to see their mom as a perennial sexless saint, let them, I say! What they don't know, won't hurt them, haha! No, I admit that not one of those men was chosen with care. When I met them I was either: slightly tipsy; blinded by the lighting in the dives clubs; tipsy; deafened by the loud (disco!) music; or very tipsy.

I was also, I must confess, feeling somewhat desperate. I wanted a man in my life, darn it, and tried everything to find one. It never occurred to me that perhaps men can *smell* desperation, and, when they encounter it, will run the other way.

By the mid-90s – this was after an ill-fated four-year relationship with a guy 20 years younger – don't ask – I decided I needed a break from my search. No more, at least for a while. I would focus on other things. I threw myself into work and friendships. Amazingly, when I landed I didn't hurt myself.

"True love cannot be found where it does not exist ..."

Torquato Tasso (1544-1595)

And then... I started feeling lonesome for male companionship. And *then*, I discovered online dating sites in the early 2000s. This new medium for the lovelorn had now come into its own. I've tried my luck on a number of them over the years: Match.com, Lavalife, JDate, Mingle2, POF (Plenty of Fish), eHarmony and, most recently, Ourtime.

There are others I never joined which shall remain nameless, as some have a reputation for being rather racy. On the more mainstream sites mentioned above, you can *choose* what sort of relationship you want, e.g., casual, romantic or intimate. Are you looking for marriage? A serious relationship? Occasional dating? A one-nighter? You can be specific.

By now, in my search for Mr. Okay-Enough, I was getting a tad long in the tooth (in my 50s, since you ask). Not really a prime age for dating, but never mind! I was game! I liked the idea of constructing an attractive profile of myself and uploading the best selfie photos I could drum up. And I enjoyed (at first) the process of skimming through the scores of men's profiles. It reminded me of the old days of newspaper ads, when I would wade through the letters like a queen choosing a courtier.

On dating sites, if you don't feel up to emailing a person (anonymously via your 'username'), you can get their attention with a virtual nudge, poke or hug. You can invite one to chat – or not, as your mood strikes.

Over time, it became clear to me that each site had its quirks, drawbacks and good points. Well, not all had good points... not good for me, that is.

For example, on certain sites it seemed that many men who would be appropriate for me age-wise were instead seeking much younger women. It always amazed me how a guy who seemed to be anything but a prize – as self-described on his profile – wanted to find a perfect woman twenty years (or more) his junior. So I dropped out of those sites, as I apparently had "aged out" of them.

In contrast, I've been on other sites where I often attracted boys – well, young men in their 20s or 30s! Maybe they wanted a teacher... or a mother... or a

grandmother! But since I'm not looking for a student, son, or grandson...

There *is* a dating site that's actually a cut above the others, in the sense that it attempts to have members delve below the surface of what they're looking for in a relationship. I'm talking about eHarmony. My only problem with them was that the matches their algorithm found for me inevitably lived thousands of miles away from my city. Since I was not keen on long-distance dating or relocating, that didn't work for me. It's true that this was in their early years. It could be that more local people have signed up since then; but I have no energy left to go back and find out!

All in all, I did manage to wrangle a few dates from my online searches. And I made myself a rule: no alcohol at the first meeting (unlike my early years of dating), which could cloud my judgment. But my soulmate remained elusive.

What about giving singles groups another go? Well, the ratio of women to men is horrendous, and worsens the older I get. If you're a guy, mind you, go for it!

Matchmakers? Too expensive for me, I'm afraid; my dental and optical bills are priorities.

I wish I could say that *somewhere* in the past four decades I met men who were polite and generous and considerate and respectful and calm and intelligent and solvent and not addicts etc., but unfortunately I can't. If I *had* met one like that, I would probably be married to him by now (if he would've put up with *me*)! But here's the thing. I would rather be quasi-alone with my affectionate lapcat, family, good friends, writing, reading, work, movies, music, good TV shows and travel, than be with someone who has intolerable character flaws or lifestyle dealbreakers.

I have finally stopped looking for love out there; instead I seem to have found it where it was all along.

"True love doesn't come to you; it has to be inside you."

Julia Roberts (1967-)



Andy's House Treatment Centre is Montreal's foremost private residential treatment centre, with a committed staff, serving members of the English community, in Quebec, for more than 20 years. It is a non-medical facility, offering addiction recovery services to its clients.

I had the pleasure of meeting with Andrea Bronfman to discuss Andy's House. This facility, in its present location, opened on May 26th, 2015. Her son was her primary inspiration. I questioned her about this project that is so close to her heart.

What sets the services of Andy's House apart from those of other treatment centres?

Services are provided in a homey atmosphere. There is an open door policy for those who attend a meeting a minimum of once a week and remain sober. There is aftercare every Thursday night and at least one meeting a week for those who have already completed the program.

Can you describe what clients can expect in one of your programs?

A daily routine starts at 6:30 am, continuing until 10:30 pm in the evening. The first two months are "in house", with the 3rd month on their own, in order to transition and integrate into the community in a healthy and productive manner, without a safety net. During the first week of the third month, meetings are within the buddy system. If our professional team feels that the resident is not ready to be on their own, it will suggest that they stay a fourth month. The honour system prevails, with a reference.

Sobriety for two years is a condition for those who have not gone through Andy's House.

Residents are required to sign a contract, promising to follow the full program and rules of the house. A participant who refuses to abide by the contract might be asked to leave. Certain conditions might apply.

Andrea went on to explain some very important facts.

Andy's House is not government funded. There is a fee for this service.

When the previous location had to close, I undertook to hire their staff of professionals, encompassing over 20 years of practical experience. They are very professional, highly qualified and educated in the trials and tribulations of addiction, both for the family and the addict.

Family meetings are encouraged once a week, with a professional, with or without residents.

As a condition of acceptance, all applicants are required to go to an affiliated clinic.

When there is space available, and a special request is made by a professional because someone has a great need for our help but cannot afford the fee, the situation will be assessed and we will do our best to accommodate that individual.

Andy's House is a work in progress and is coming together very quickly, with Andrea and her dedicated staff of professionals and volunteers. As Andrea says: "Lawyer, director, etc ... we are all in it together, pro bono ... we are all equal partners."

Anyone interested in becoming a sponsor or a volunteer, your help would be very much appreciated.

For further information as to the cost of the 90-day program and the two-year follow up, please call: Montreal: 514-867-7277 or toll free: 1-844-689-2639.

(Meeting Lucy Again continued from page 2)

newcomers. To date, the orchestra has entertained Montreal audiences with over 80 performances, including several benefit concerts, as well as having produced several recordings. The orchestra has also been selected as the subject of four documentary films.

You have also, over the years, featured many different talented individuals from all over the world. This has to require a great deal of work and practice. What is your favorite memory of any performance?

Brigitte O'Halleron is a greatly gifted soprano who is as charming and lovely as she is talented. She hosted and sang at the Plateau School a few years ago, to 500 children who were in advanced music programs. They seemed to love each other. She sang songs to film material while we had trailers on a screen behind her. It was delightful.

I know the loss of your young brother many years ago had a profound impact on your life and you were inspired by this event to write a book about dealing with a terrible loss. Could you share with us a favourite memory of your brother?

Michael (Mathew in the book) was an adorable, beautiful and super smart boy, with whom I had a very special relationship. Sweet things we did together would include playing 'airplane' on the floor or the bed, comparing skin softness, running my hands through his hair, him admiring me and saying things like, "You're more beautiful than the girls on the Miss America pageant." He was sunny wonderful!

Writing the book has taken you many years to accomplish but, like all else in your life, it has recently come to fruition. Was it very difficult to complete?

The first draft was very difficult to write, as it was done in pieces and out of chronology. It brought to the surface the agony of it all. As I wrote, however, it felt as though I was exorcizing much of my grief and therapeutically treating myself. Coming to terms with his death was not something I believed was possible, but as I continued to look into the subject, as well as to find a great family to live with, I somehow got better. It was indeed difficult to finish, but the personal work is ongoing. As I say in my final conclusion, some things we just never get over, but knowing that and being happy goes a long way to grant a more peaceful place to live with the tragedy.

Who or what encouraged you to forge ahead with this huge undertaking?

I was married to my first husband at the time. He was an enormous emotional support in believing my need to try and write the book, encouraging me always.

When we spoke, you said that the completion of this book about loss gave you the most satisfaction. Did you find that, having confronted your own loss, this book could help others?

I believe that, because of the journey being finally completed, and with all the work that went into my evolution to peace, so to speak, I could be of great help to others knowing how I arrived at that place of peace.

***Sibling Loss: A Sister's Journey from Despair to Celebration* by Laura Prince (pseudonym).**

available on Amazon.com

Sibling Loss is a first-person account of one of the most devastating and least talked about subjects: a child's, or a young person's, loss of a sibling. Laura Prince shares her decades-long process of healing that is, as she claims, a lifelong struggle. This is, however, a book that brings hope. The author both shares her story and her many insights into the web of grief that surrounds such a loss. Recovering from the sudden death of her beloved brother over the course of many years, Prince openly and candidly examines the pitfalls and surprising triumphs of grieving. She offers readers a window into her world and allows us to share in her sadness—and in the eventual celebration of her brother as she slowly works her way into a place of quiet joy and gratitude.

Tangle or Tango? by Mary Brauner

Relationships are one of the many mysteries that make us wonder who we are and how we tango in the world. A relationship is like a dance, one led by passion, which becomes the music of love and sets the rhythm. In a romantic relationship between a man and a woman, both partners entertain the riddle of romance. They dance to a series of beats and find rhythm as they stare into each other's eyes. Their eyes communicate the connection of ebb and flow of footsteps that they weave as they dance in sync with each other. This is the rhythm of communication.

What happens when we tangle instead of tango? It starts when couples stop dancing. Words are used instead of moving to musical beats. Rhythm stops and arguments begin. Strangely enough, men and women are like bookends in an argument. As they interpret angry words, they tangle with each other. They both come from opposite ends of a perspective to the middle of a conclusion.

When a man speaks, a woman actually hears the emotion first, which she interprets instantaneously and assigns meaning before she hears the actual words he is saying. Yet, when that same woman speaks, a man hears the words she is saying literally before attaching an emotional interpretation and reaching a conclusion. Words clash and they both tangle their way across the argument. A certain emptiness and distance replaces a once close connection.

So how do we tango again instead of tangle? Each partner must accept his or her own beats to create the common rhythm of the relationship dance. There is a bond created between male and female energy on the dance floor. The momentum begins again with the ebb and flow of footsteps, focusing on the common rhythm. In doing so, the relationship resumes the role of communicating passion. Passion is the fuel of connection, the dance of tango among partners.

So, the next time an argument happens, remember to look into each other's eyes and tango.

The most powerful
antidepressant in the
world has 4 paws and a
wagging tail.



I tried to form a gang once,
but it turned into a
book club.



someecards
LAME GIFTS

Canadian Writers Society

For the Love of Writing

Rosalie, Joseph, and the members of the Canadian Writers Society, would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our contributors for their work. For the next issue, we'd like to get a wide variety of submission, from young and old alike! You don't have to be an author to be a writer!

We look forward to receiving your SUBMISSIONS . . . short stories, poems, articles, book or movie reviews, letters to the editor. We know you can do it. Let's get your name, and your work, out there for the public to enjoy! Be a part of our new and exciting plans!

NEXT ISSUE — Deadline for submissions for our next issue: **August 15th, 2016.**