

8th November, 2008

DESPERATELY SEEKING SOMETHING

DEAR DIARY, my friend Jade wants us to sign up with dating website together. Why God, why? I'm not keen at all, whereas she can't wait! I can't think of anything worse right now. She can see the nightmare look in my eyes but she's choosing not to recognise the pure unadulterated fear in me. I mean... why is she asking me of all people? I'm happy hiding behind juggling work and devotion to my children. To be honest, the whole dating game frightens me. Hell, if I was any good at it, I wouldn't be on the market now would I? Just the idea of putting myself out there, all vulnerable and spelling it out... it makes me want to vomit!!

The internet is not romantic at all and I've got very Western ideas of romance. I'm absolutely sure that when **The Carpenters** wrote the lyrics to the song Close to You, while they wrote the line "...why do birds suddenly appear, every time you are near...", they didn't consider the words You've Got Mail.

Jade says she likes the idea that you can check someone out and if you don't like them, you can move on to the next one and no one gets hurt. Apparently, it's like checking out CVs and holding interviews. I said what if you end up dating a nutter, but she seems to think that it's crazier to meet a complete stranger just once and exchange numbers with him after a fleeting encounter with no background check. She said at least when you check out someone's profile, you know whether he likes reading, going to the cinema, what sort of job he does, how old he is, if he wants children and so on. If I'm being cynical, I'd say he could be a big bad wolf, jazzing up his profile, sitting there with his laptop wearing sheep's clothing. If I'm being practical, I know it's a good idea, I just don't want to admit defeat and tell the world I can't find a date Mills & Boons style.

So what am I supposed to put on this profile because if I'm going to tell the truth, the truth is this: I'm not really a fan of internet dating. I've always thought it was for people who were dull, train-spotting anoraks with absolutely no social skills. Should I add that I'm shorter than the average woman? I'm also full of stretch marks around the stomach area due to having had huge babies in a frame that refused to expand. Also, I've got big man-hands. I like to have my own way. I don't like hearing loud,



The AUGUST MAYFIELD Diaries

dominating tones in voices. I don't like to be told what to wear. Please don't say the word no to me. I don't like to be told my skirt is too short/long/tight/bright, or my hair is too short/long/tight/bright, or my lips are too red and my nails are the wrong shade of whatever. Oh, and by the way, try to keep these words to a minimum: (a) your laugh is too loud; (b) lend me some money; (c) that dress is horrible; (d) it's winter, wear tights or (e) my last girlfriend...! If you do any of the above, we will not get along. Don't ask me how much I earn. Don't expect me to pay for our first date or go Dutch - what a cheek! Don't say anything pervy to me on our first meeting together. You'll put me right off. Oh, and don't bother contacting me if you don't look like Will Smith from the front, the side or even from behind - and did I mention my teenaged sons would stab themselves in the heart with a blunt pencil if their mother decided to date? See! This profile is horrible. I'm horrible. But if I say otherwise, maybe I'd be lying. The poor date would soon find out that I'm a stropky miserable bitch and he'll want his money back from www.do-me-date-me.com or whatever the hell the website's called!

On the other hand, I might get all excited about dating someone who says he's 6ft 2, well built with a good education, he's as cute as a button, rolling in money and funnier than Richard Prior. He's got no kids, no ex-wife and very romantic and when I attempt to introduce myself to him, he backs off and says no way, you're not what I'm looking for. I guess I'm also afraid of rejection if truth be told and I guess that's 90% of the problem - fear! But imagine having to admit to signing up with a dating website for the past 24 months and finding out that everybody hates me with my big man-hands and my stropky unachievable list of do's and don'ts!

It's a minefield! As much as ideally, I'd like to meet my match the old fashioned way one day, he's not here now so I'm keeping busy. To try internet dating, I'm afraid I'd be forcing something which ought to be natural and it seems unnatural to enter my details onto a website, upload a photograph and pay a company to find me a man. Oh Lord Jesus, just saying "upload a photograph" makes me want to vomit all over again!

Everyone's telling me to go for it, saying it'll be fun and I only live once. I just want to run and hide right now because I don't know what to do.

August Mayfield