

Life health&sex

Owner of a lonely heart?

LOVE EVENTUALLY:

No time to browse online dating profiles or deal with emails? A personalised service promises to do all of the admin for you

I'M a big advocate of convenience. Shops gift-wrapped all my Christmas presents; professional packers helped me move and my supermarket shopping gets delivered. So imagine my excitement when I heard about a scheme that could manage my dates.

Personaldatingagent.com is part-online dating, part-traditional agency. You get access to as large a menu of single hopefuls as you would on a commercial

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site but you receive a professional's input on matchmaking. Don't think it can cut out tedious form-filling, though. To start the process there's a short questionnaire – and yes, you still have to give your eye colour. Next comes a 45-minute phone interview by my very friendly 'personal agent',

Natasha. The questions are – as with all self-promotion forms – totally irrelevant personal preferences that you'll never talk about anyway: my favourite travel destination; my favourite part of London; my favourite film. And the inevitable: What are your hobbies? 'I drink wine and put the world to rights, often until three in the morning,' I tell her proudly. 'And I go to the gym.'

There are more open-ended questions, too, with room for expansion. She asks me whether I'm a romantic (of course) and how an ex would describe me. Uh-oh. 'A commitment phobe,' I reply. There's a pause. 'Is there anything more positive that you can say?' she suggests.

I'm enjoying the interview, though – a whole 45 minutes of indulgent introspection. Natasha's getting me to expand on all sorts of life goals. I tell her very firmly that I'm not looking for long-term commitment – more like a reliable and low-maintenance lover. She tells me that she's never had a request like that but she'll do her best.

Natasha emails her verdict 24 hours

later. She thinks the perfect site for me is Match.com. I shudder. I've always thought that Match.com was somewhere people go to look for husbands.

It certainly wouldn't have been the site I'd have picked but I go along with it. Hours later she emails a draft of my personal profile. It's lively and well-written but I cringed so much it took two glasses of wine before I could read it. Natasha had structured it based on a collection of answers from our telephone interview.

Although correctly quoted, she'd included a montage of life snippets that I would never have considered worth writing up: where I went backpacking at 18 and who my favourite film star is. I rewrite the entire thing and apologetically send it back.

SHE amends and sends a link to my full profile to approve. This is when I realise that somewhere along the line I've shrunk to 5ft 4in, my 'athletic' physique has become 'average' and my interests and activities have become 'seeing my family'. So I sneak into my profile and change all that.

Now it's live – and I'm totally paranoid someone will recognise me. Natasha emails a menu of potential matches. I pick three and she contacts them. There are a few replies – but I don't read them. I leave it all in Natasha's hands. She's very good at flirtatious banter and that's fine by me. Three days later she emails to say she has set up a rendezvous with a nice-looking 45-year-old advertising executive. All I have to do is confirm via text. En route, I realise since I haven't read any of the message exchanges, that I don't know his name. It didn't matter. I stayed for two hours, drank wine and put the world to rights – not until 3am this time. It's certainly time saving but some things – such as choosing lovers – you have to do yourself.



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