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Get Me to the Church One Time

The Matchmaker will find your true love



by Robert L. Pela

Internet, Schminternet. Bonnie the Matchmaker says the best way to meet your one true love is by exploiting her peculiar talent for tying people's knots. Miss Wills, who disdains online dating services (her Web site,

her Web site, bonniethematchmaker.com, doesn't provide hookups), is responsible for hundreds of marriages -- so who are you to scoff?

New Times: Does the world really need matchmakers?

Bonnie Wills: When I moved here in 1994, the statistics said there were 700,000 singles in the Valley. And I started hearing horror stories about dating services, because the city is filling up with educated professionals who can afford fine dining but there's no one to take with them. They're not going to go troll bars looking for someone who wants to go to a five-star restaurant and maybe get married.

NT:But it's the 21st century. What about bagging a spouse on the Internet?

Wills: Let's don't talk about the Internet. But I'll tell you the difference between a matchmaker and a dating service: A dating service will take anybody whose credit card will go through. You're just another number and you have to do the work yourself. They'll do a video of you and then you go in and pick out someone else's video and hope that person wants to go out with you. There's no matchmaking involved.

A reputable matchmaker knows their client and it's a close-knit relationship; they're literally holding hands with the client from day one. It's like being a mother, a social worker, a confidante. I'm describing one of them to the other.

NT:What sort of things do you tell them? Bank balances? Shoe size?

Wills: I never use words like "beautiful" or "sexy," because that's in the eye of the beholder. More important than the looks is the personality. If all you want is someone who looks good, go to the Internet or go to a bar; you don't need a matchmaker.

NT:So matchmaking is a good way for ugly people to hook up.

Wills: Well. Let me just say that physical attraction is important. Anyone who says otherwise is a fool. But pictures unfortunately are one-dimensional, and not everyone photographs as good as they look.

NT:And so ugly people . . .

Wills: Okay, wait. Define ugly. My clients are educated, working individuals, height and weight proportionate. Non-smokers.

NT:So smokers get the boot. You won't even talk to them.

Wills: Well, it's not a moral judgment. It's just in today's market it's too hard to place a smoker. And to take money from someone and not have dates for them is just not right. But when you talk about ugly people -- people come to me who need a shave; they need a haircut or a better outfit. That's something they need to work on before they come to me. There are really no ugly people -- just like there are no ugly babies.

NT:Of course there are. Lots of babies are ugly. Now, what do you do with a really attractive, well-dressed, articulate client with terrible table manners?

Wills: (Handing over sheet of paper.) I give all my clients the matchmaker's rules of etiquette.

NT:The first thing on this list is, "Never ask a woman her age." Do you really have to tell men this?

Wills: Yes, yes, yes. It is such a problem. One guy, the first thing he wanted to know was her height, her weight, and her age. Usually it's some guy who was married for 30 years, his wife died, and he's forgotten all the rules of dating. I tell men, "If she's 10 years younger than you and she looks like your grandmother, do you want to go out with her?" Age is just a number you don't need to know.

NT:Do married people call just looking for a quick hookup?

Wills: Yes, and I can always tell. One woman called to see what was out there in the way of husbands before she filed for divorce. I said, "Honey, get yourself a psychiatrist." That turned my stomach.

NT:Why is it so hard for people to meet?

Wills: Phoenix is one of the most difficult cities to be single in. It's a boom town. People come here from other places, and everyone has this attitude, "I'm new here, I'm re-creating myself, so you're only going to believe what I tell you about myself." Plus we're spread out, so it's not like the inner city where you bump into someone in a candy store or on a bus. On the other hand, it's difficult to find your soul mate anywhere -- it's not like, "There's this little town outside Chicago; if you go there, you'll meet him."

NT:Oh, no. You didn't just say "soul mate," did you?

Wills: Soul mate is an overused term, but it describes the person you most want to be with. It's not necessarily who you end up with, though. One thing you can count on, though, is that your soul mate doesn't look anything like the person you envisioned.

NT:Mine does. So, how do you know you're not hooking someone up with a psycho killer?

Wills: I do a criminal background check on each client. I can't, unfortunately, check for idiosyncrasies. I can't check for stuff they haven't been arrested for. I have a good sense of people, though, and I've learned to tighten up my rules.

NT:What if your client maybe just has a bunch of parking tickets?

Wills: No big deal. What I'm looking for is DUIs, bankruptcies, judgments, liens, deadbeat dads. Someone who has stalked his last three girlfriends. People who have something to hide will disappear after I mention the background check.

NT:Your Web site claims, "Our clients have no trouble getting dates." So why do they need you?

Wills: If a person has a problem getting a date, there's something -- probably psychological -- that they need to address about themselves. Most normal, healthy people can get a date. If they can't, there's some other issue. My clients are usually working too many hours to sit on the Internet, or go to bars, or to go out with a person three or four times to find out the person isn't right for them. I do the screening so they can have fun.

NT:But someone who's that busy might make a lousy spouse -- they'd never be around! Don't people get married so that they'll have someone to watch TV with?

Wills: You're kidding, right?

NT:Maybe. Do you do arranged marriages?

Wills: I think there are plenty of positive things to say about arranged marriages. Don't laugh. Arranged marriages are rare these days, but they used to be done between two families with similar economic and moral values, who related well with one another. And those marriages usually stuck together, because they were between people already on the same level. The families were already bonded. This won't work in today's Hollywood-based society, where people want to fall in love with fireworks and violin music in the background.

NT:Do you do homos?

Wills: I would have no problem with matching up gay people, but I don't have a resource for them. It would be no different in terms of the questionnaire or the interview. As far as gay marriage, the whole thing has been blown out of proportion. There's no reason for this discrimination. Most gay couples have been together longer than straight couples.

NT:Everyone wants to be married. But what about just being lonely as an option?

Wills: Not everyone is meant to be married. You have to get happy with yourself before you can do it. Everyone's parents want them to grow up and get married; however, not everyone needs to be married. When people come to me in their 40s or 50s, I think, "Why'd you let your prime years go by?" They're so into living on their own, why would they want to change that at this point?

NT:I'm guessing you don't tell potential clients this.

Wills: Not me. I've been fixing up people all my life. I'll be that little old lady on the porch in a rocking chair yelling, "Honey, I've got someone for you! Granted, he lives in Southeast Asia, but not to worry. It's a small world."

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