



# Cupid, Find me a man!

Wary of fake online dating profiles, **Alison O’Riordan** decided it was time to find love the traditional way – by asking a matchmaker for help. Photography: **Marc O’Sullivan**

**I** knew from the start that I wasn’t going to find romance online. And, it appears, I’m not alone. Misleading profiles and too-good-to-be-true photos have driven many daters back to the traditional matchmaker.

If I’m honest I didn’t think that a matchmaker would find me love either but I decided to give it a whirl anyway.

I got in touch with a private introduction agency and set up a meeting with Jennifer Haskins, founder of the Irish matchmaking service Two’s Company.

A previous member of a dating agency herself, Jennifer knows all the pitfalls and used that experience when she founded her own exclusive agency four years ago.

It’s an alternative for people who can’t bear the thought of posting invasive profiles on dating websites.

“All too often profiles on the internet are not genuine. Among the things that people lie about are age, height, weight and status, and many have profiles on several internet sites,” explains Jennifer.

“We create a more effective way for unattached men and women, whether they are single, separated, divorced or widowed, to meet while respecting their right to privacy.”

And privacy is of utmost importance. Jennifer says many of her members are urban professionals in the public eye, including TDs, TV personalities, musicians and successful business people.

So, how am I going to find Mr Right?

When we meet, Jennifer begins by asking some routine questions, jumping from my interests to my values, and then whether I am a smoker and how often I drink.

Much like a relaxed interview, she makes me feel at ease. She inquires about my likes, dislikes, pet hates, current relationship status, hopes and aspirations.

It’s all fairly straightforward, but it soon gets trickier and somewhat nervy as the in-depth consultation

begins. As she sits there with her clip board and pen – no computers here – the trickier questions start to come fast and furious.

“What religious affiliations are you willing to consider? Catholic, Protestant, Christian, spiritual, other?” she asks.

“I don’t know. Put me down for any, sure,” I blurt out.

“What levels of education are you willing to consider? Secondary, Third Level, not fussy?” she enquires.

Another question comes my way before I have time to think.

“What body types do you find attractive? Slender, about average, athletic/toned, a few extra pounds?” she asks.

I’m hardly going to say my preferred partner would come with large rolls of belly fat and thunder thighs.

“Finally, is it okay if your partner has children?” she asks.

“Yes,” I reply.

“Yes and they live away from home, or yes and they sometimes live at home?” she perseveres.

Hesitantly, I tell Jennifer it doesn’t really matter and she tells me she will be in touch in a few days with details of a potential partner.

I leave everything in her capable hands.

She then takes my picture, as the agency requires a recent photograph “for office use only”, she stresses.

**T** rue to her word, Jennifer rings me a few days later telling me she had found a compatible match and I will be getting a call from a guy called Steve (second names are never given for introductions as privacy is a huge thing) from the North but who lives in Cavan.

On the phone she gives me a comprehensive outline of his profile, such as his hobbies, interests, profession, marital status, age, height, build and character.

So far so good.

Jennifer suggests that our initial

meeting is a coffee or a drink in the evening and not to expect dinner, as that can get complicated with who pays.

She also discourages inviting people to a person’s home on the first date and instead advises meeting in a public place.

Most importantly, she encourages me to keep an open mind.

The next day, I receive a call from an eager and bubbly 38-year-old Steve, who has been described by Jennifer as an entrepreneur, a gym enthusiast, a non smoker, a good cook and a great personality.

It’s a rule of the dating agency that men must make verbal contact within 48 hours of getting the number, which Steve does.

He is very friendly and we

strike up a brief conversation.

He suggests we meet in the Shelbourne Hotel for our romantic encounter the following weekend.

When the night arrives, Steve texts me to see what I will be wearing. I tell him jeans and a pink jumper.

I’m feeling a bit anxious, and when I arrive at the hotel Steve is waiting eagerly in reception. He pounces out of nowhere, which takes me unaware. He’s dressed in a floral, expensive-looking shirt.

First impressions? He is appealing to the eye; not too short or too tall, with an athletic physique, nice skin, a friendly face, a good head of hair and, most importantly, whiter-than-white teeth.

As we sit down in the Horseshoe

Bar, I think everyone knows that I’m in the company of a man from a dating agency, but as the conversation intensifies the feeling soon evaporates.

He orders two cocktails for us and we begin chatting about where we are from, our jobs and our backgrounds.

**S**traight away I make up my mind: there is no chemistry or fireworks on my side. Also, the initial physical attraction soon wanes – he is quite a bit older than me. So I treat it as a bit of fun.

We aren’t long getting to the subject of his past experience with introduction agencies. He explains that online dating is not an option for him and has proved in the past to be a complete waste of time.

I form the opinion that he is in a hurry to find love and companionship and that he is a regular on the dating scene, which I do not like.

He explains that at this stage of his dating experience, he has a fairly good idea of the type of person he would like to meet, but that he needs a short cut, someone he could trust to find the right person, hence Two’s Company.

He treats the dating mechanism very much like a business transaction: “For me to have a matchmaker make a connection and introduce me to suitable vetted potential girls is very much like a business approach. It suits me rather well,” he says.

“After all, if you wish to purchase a house, you approach the auctioneer. In my case, I am looking for my goddess and I have approached Two’s Company and am having fun along the way.”

Not necessarily my approach to love, but I stick with his train of thought.

It is the second time he has used the services of an introduction agency. I ask him to explain his experiences with the first agency, and am not expecting his reply.

“I was introduced to a lovely girl on a Thursday night and we got

**Dating for dummies: Alison had an in-depth interview with an introductions agency before being set up on her first date**

