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PEOPLE

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■ O.J. Simpson was arrested in Las Vegas after claims about a robbery. P. 2



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Tick, tick, tick

How do you find Mr. Right? **Story, P. 4**



• Photo montage by Rob Krust, 24 hours

What's a thirtysomething woman to do? Can a professional help her find Mr. Right or is fate alone enough to send her into the arms of a perfect – or almost perfect – stranger? We asked four women to take different paths to find a soulmate. Only time will tell which one works. We've given them until Christmas. P. 4.

The Dating Game: Week 1

We decided to follow four women in their 30s as they take a proactive approach to finding that special someone. Three of the women are using different dating services to increase their chances. One is not – think of her as “The Control” in this experiment. Every Tuesday, we’ll check in on our participants to see how much closer they are to reaching their goal, which is to find a man by Christmas. Game on. Please note: In order to protect the privacy of unsuspecting men, we’re using code names for everyone involved.

- By Sarah Rowland



Codename: **Business Betty**
Age: 34
Occupation: Corporate Communications
Dating Service: It's Just Lunch



Codename: **News Nun**
Age: 35
Occupation: Print Journalist
Dating Service: Executive Search Dating



Codename: **Mother Looking for Another**
Age: 31
Occupation: Writer
Dating Service: Lavalife



Codename: **The Control**
Age: 34
Occupation: PR
Dating Service: N/A

Relationship history: Uninspiring. WTF? I mean I was like, popular in high school. Sixteen whirlwind years, and several close-but-no-cigar relationships later, I find myself wondering if I should've settled. Mind you, I wouldn't have traded those years for a split-level in the burbs, but there is something to be said for finding a mate in your 20s. It's not so much that I have problems meeting men. If I do go out, I usually meet people. However, I do have a spot of trouble finding someone with whom I don't have to fake-smile my way through a conversation. Now, I'm experiencing low-grade panic attacks when I do the math. When does “single” just mean “spinster”?

What I'm looking for: Someone with soccer-dad potential. Someone who can keep up.

Why a dating service: It's honestly the last option I ever imagined for myself. But if the last few boyfriend-less years are anything to go by, I clearly can't be trusted to do this on my own. It's time to call in for reinforcement. Outsourcing. Everyone's doing it. Plus, it's just Lunch owner Jacquie Brownridge says fall is a good time to get started. Apparently, “it's raining men.”

Relationship history: Since I started my career late in life, I had a lot of catching up to do professionally. Ergo, I put my love life on hold for five years. In hindsight, that probably wasn't the smartest (or healthiest) way to go about it. So now I find myself in that not-so-unique position of looking at my watch thinking, “Okay, enough's enough – where is he?”

What I'm looking for: John Cusack circa *Say Anything*. Falling that, I'd settle for a sweet, enlightened, loving man who wants to father a couple of brats (preferably with me). Humour is good, but not in that “ba-dum-bum” clownish way – more like someone who likes to laugh a lot (particularly at my jokes).

Why a dating service: To be honest, I was on the fence about this one. My biggest fear was if I joined a matching-making service, they would set me up with Beige Bob in sales. And instead of John Cusack, I would wind up with John Tesh. But last week, I asked out the cutest little SoMa scenester. We had an amazing time – I haven't laughed that much in eons. Then he called and said, “I play for the other team.” It was at that point, I warmed up to the idea of trained professionals headhunting on my behalf.

Relationship history: One seven-year marriage, which was fantastic and tragic all at once. This bittersweet union recently ended when he decided he wasn't ready for the baby we had hoped and planned for. So he left me pregnant to go off with a girl 10 years his junior. Prior to that, I had a five-year relationship and many dates throughout and in between.

What I'm looking for: A loving man with great charm, wit and style. He must want kids as I'm hoping to pop out a couple more and must not be work-shy. Wealthy would be nice, but I'll settle for happy in his career. No more boys in their 30s – men only need apply (on second thought, in their 30s is fine, so long as they act like it). It is essential that the man I end up with is happy in his life, and has everything but the girl.

Why a dating service: Because I'm so busy and I have limited time. Also, I have a baby, so I can't be trawling through bars every weekend, and I don't really want to. Besides, it seems like when I do go out, there are 10 girls to every guy. It just seems so much easier to post a shopping list of what I want online and have guys come to me.

Relationship history: Periodic dating, when forced by friends; a relationship in the post-grunge era (that's the one after Paleolithic) and one currently in negotiations. Talks had broken down, but recently resumed on trial basis. Whew ... excuse me, I need a cigarette. Dating? Me? Unfortunately, it's finally dawned on me that it's almost impossible to get around it in the process of finding a mate. Disney Classics, thou hath forsaken me!

What I'm looking for: Someone to eat dinner with. Someone to have a fun life with. Someone who will stick around even when it's not so fun. Someone who can reach the stuff on the top shelf.

Why not a dating service: For now, I like to have something in the back pocket. What would I do if all hope was lost? Let's just say, a lot of stray cats would find a home. And that home would be stocked with nothing but bon-bons and Nina Simone's “My Man's Gone Now” would play in a loop (stuck on “Tellin' me that I'm old noooooow”), as I lay in the fetal position on the floor drinking vinegared wine in the dark. I need there to be hope. I need there to still be a last resort. That said, an imminent panic may “encourage” me to try a dating service.



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