

Single in the Suburbs: How Match.com sells your wife post marital spinsterhood.

Dalrock | 24 February, 2011 | by Dalrock

My wife is constantly finding absurd relationship and dating advice columns offered to women and sending them my way. She finds them whenever she logs into junos.com to check our old spam filled email address, but most of what she finds there is listed on the [MSN.com](#) portal as well. Both sites feature content from match.com.

One column in particular titled [Single in the Suburbs](#) by Sara Susannah Katz caught my wife's attention. She received a teaser for the column as email in the junos account. In the column Miss Katz shares all of the gory details of her online dating experience following late life divorce:

Here I am: The 40-something mom of two, living in a tidy Midwestern suburban subdivision and working at the local university—and, at this moment, sitting here in front of my computer, determined to find a date. I'm searching within a 60-mile radius of my zip code for a single guy about my age who doesn't smoke, is reasonably fit and, preferably, is not living in his mother's basement.

Sure, I'd like to find the love of my life, my soul mate, my next husband, but I suspect that those goals are a bit too ambitious...

Still, I'm a little apprehensive about all this. I can't believe I'm about to start dating again, after 23 years with the same guy.

She later reinforces her sense of apprehension with:

I admit it: I'm nervous about dating again. I literally have not kissed another man on the lips in 25 years.

Thus starts our intrepid dater. Much to her chagrin, the biker bad boy she picks first turns out to be short, old, bald, and doesn't own a motorcycle. He drives a Taurus, and only posed for the pictures on his friend's Harley. Making things worse, her ex-husband has been tearing up the dating scene:

They'd share accounts of my ex-husband's escapades, which included dating three out of five waitresses at what used to be our favorite downtown seafood restaurant and a romp in the woods with a history professor at the departmental barbecue.

She tells us that her ex's current girlfriend is more than 20 years younger than she is. She dates another guy who is perfect, but he only wants to be friends. Then she dates a doctor who lives in a nearby town and after a dinner date she agrees to go spend the night at his house. After a very disappointing date, she decides to have sex with him even though she isn't attracted to him. Unfortunately, he realizes he isn't in the mood after she takes her clothes off. Ouch.

None of this so far should be particularly surprising to my regular readers. This fits with the findings of the [AARP study](#) on the dating prospects of divorced women in their 40s, and also fits with the real life stories behind [Eat Pray Love](#) and [How Stella Got Her Groove Back](#). It also fits with what I found when I looked into the rosy [remarriage rate statistics](#) published around the web.

The story goes on. And on. And on. I don't see any publishing dates on it but MSN refers to it as a weekly column. With 141 installments!

I didn't read all 141 installments, but my take of it as I tried to click my way through the seemingly never ending story was the usual divorcée drama. Ex drama, kids drama, a health scare, drama with the women at work, financial worries, dating horror stories, etc. I was curious how it turned out though, so I skimmed through [the summaries](#). Here is how it turns out:

She meets a hunky handyman named Ethan and starts dating him. Then her husband decides he wants her back. He confesses that he was an idiot for letting her go, and that all of the other women he dated only convinced him that she is the “sexiest, smartest, most loving person [he has] ever known”. He eventually begs her to marry him again, only to realize that she has a new life with Ethan and tells her that he is glad she is so happy even though he is miserable that he can't have her. She gets laid off from her job and is at risk of losing her home. Tension builds. Then Ethan the hunky handyman tells her that he wants to spend the rest of his life with her. After professing his love for her Ethan reveals that despite the fact that he is anti-capitalist and trades handyman work for food, he is secretly a multi-millionaire. Then she gets a call from a publisher with an offer to write an extremely long and drawn out 141 part column on her experiences dating online after divorce, preserving her status as a strong independent woman. The end.

Do any of you buy this? The kicker is, **match.com isn't calling this fiction**. Check the [link](#) yourself on match.com's site, or check out the series on [MSN](#). You can also find references to the series at MSN under [their list of articles on dating](#). Moreover, they have a [Q&A column](#) (also on [MSN](#)) with Miss Katz where they ask her about her experience with online dating. This is the first item listed under [advice > love online](#):

From her very first date to happily ever after, we've followed Sara Susannah Katz through all the twists and turns of being single in the suburbs. Now that her column has come to an end, we asked her to share her insights and advice about online dating.

They have another article where [she responds to reader emails](#):

Merlie, who describes herself as a “displaced housewife,” wrote: “I am Sara's age and the stories helped me survive through so many nights I cried. Her attempts to enter the dating world mirrored mine. Instead of being sad or frustrated, I knew I could come home and read her articles. All of a sudden, I was laughing at myself and feeling like I wasn't alone.”

and later:

Many of you felt bolstered by my weekly chronicles. Gigi wrote that she discovered “Single in the Suburbs” while contemplating her own “divorce/renewal/liberation project,” adding, “When I found myself ready to make the bold/scary/crazy dive back into the dating world (especially the online part, which was not around when I got married), I was able to draw so much strength and comfort from a soul sister who was blazing the path.”

It gets better (emphasis mine):

It's worth noting that, while **my story inspired some readers to get divorced**, it also convinced others to stay put in their marriages. “Reading this column reminded me how horrible the dating world can be,” wrote Karen. Instead of leaving her husband, she decided to work on her marriage. “We're still together and happier than ever.”

It would be bad enough if this story is actually true and inspires women to divorce. It would be unconscionable if it was fiction presented as fact. Either way, the story presents an extremely unlikely ending given what we know of the actual experience of women dating later in life. Match.com must

know this, since their competitor [okcupid is practically begging men to date older women](#), luring them to date the neglected older women on their site with charts showing older women are more willing to engage in frequent sex, casual sex, blow-jobs and threesomes with other women!

According to the author this series inspired married women to divorce and try their hand at online dating. How many [kids will be harmed](#) because mommy read this fantastic story? How many women have made an irrevocable decision which the AARP study found often leads to a life of celibacy for women, with a surprising number not even receiving hugs from the opposite sex? It is bad enough that we have [ordinary media outlets](#) encouraging women to divorce, but **here we have a company selling divorce to married women which is in a position to directly profit from it.**

[I contacted the match.com media room](#) 24 hours ago to ask if this series is fiction:

Hello,

I write a blog about relationships, including dating after divorce. I'm writing a post to tell my readers about Sara Susannah Katz's multi part column "Single in the Suburbs". I noticed that she has written a similar series titled "The Devil Wears Dockers", but that series is flagged as fiction. Your series appears to be presented as non fiction, including an interview with the author at the end of her experience. Can you please confirm if your series is fiction or not?

Best regards,

Dalrock

So far I haven't heard back. In the meantime, here is what I have been able to find with a little searching. As I mentioned in the message to the Match.com media room, the author (pen name) later wrote a series very similar to this titled [The Devil Wears Dockers](#). Unlike *Single in the Suburbs*, the *Dockers* series is clearly labeled as fiction: *The Devil Wears Dockers is entirely a work of fiction and any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely coincidental*. Sara Susannah Katz also wrote a novel titled [Wife Living Dangerously, which was published outside the US under the name Debra Kent](#). According to [Debra Kent's linked in page](#), she also penned [a similar series for Redbook](#) from 1996 – 2005 titled *The V Diaries* under the name Valerie Ryan, *an independently wealthy single mother and a total chaos magnet*. Redbook doesn't state that *The V Diaries* series is fictional on their website, even though [it does state this for selected other series \(one of which is a spin-off from V Diaries\)](#). However, Debra Kent [repackaged and expanded on the series](#) publishing it under her own name as a fiction trilogy.

Also, per the linked in bio she does work for a mid-western university and have an employment gap from May 2009 to January 2010, so at first glance that part of the story would seem to match up. However, the [reader comments article](#) included a note from a reader who started reading the story in January 2009:

Adele wrote, "In December 2008 my husband left me unexpectedly. Not more than a month later I stumbled upon this column.

Given that the events in the story are supposed to have happened before the series was published, this doesn't fit with the story after all. For understandable reasons, her linked in profile doesn't confirm or deny the existence of an anti-capitalist secret multi-millionaire hunky handy man who is madly in love with her.

It is theoretically possible that this woman happens to have experienced the same kind of incredible events which she has written before and since as fiction, in the same first person series format. I can't prove it one way or another, so I'll let you be the judge. I'll write a follow on post when/if I hear back from match.com.

Note: While researching this I found [another very similar serial](#) by the name *Single in the Suburbs*, ostensibly written by a woman living in Marin county named Nikki Silverstein. I didn't see any reference to the series being fictional, and Nikki Silverstein responds to reader comments and also writes [current events](#) articles for the paper.

See Also:

- [Match.com responds, and a new pic of the author.](#)
- [Google censors my match.com exposé](#)

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