



Sexually, I'm More of a Switzerland: More Personal Ads from the London Review of Books

David Rose

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From the nation that gave us Victorian virtues, here is another irresistible collection of brilliant, bawdy and often absurd personal ads from the world's funniest—and smartest—lonely-hearts column. These ads prove that even if you're lonely, you don't have to be boring, as advertisers in this book demand much more than long walks on the beach from their potential mates. Arranged by theme ("The Usual Hyperbole and a Whiff of Playful Narcissism"), and including footnotes to obscure references, *Sexually I'm More of a Switzerland* promises to be, like its predecessor, "a bracing splash of cold reality in the flushed face of romance" (*Chicago Tribune*).

Sexually, I'm More of a Switzerland: More Personal Ads from the London Review of Books Details

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Gillian Kevern says

Sexually, I'm More of a Switzerland is 5% introduction, 32% index, 27% references and only 39% personals. I know this because I got the kindle edition (4% a brief history of the Miss World competition -- actually very interesting). For me, only 39% personals was disappointing ... but then again, I loved the first book in this series so much I actually got a year's subscription to the London Review of Books purely for the personals. 3.5 rounded up because how can you not love these lonely hearts?

Caution: since finishing this book, I have been mentally describing things in terms that might appeal to a LRB's reader. Even something as boring as tidying my apartment produced a personal (Mean load of laundry (F, 30s) WLTM keen vacuum user to share housework. You wash, I'll dry). This side-effect might only happen to singles but I thought I'd mention it.

Amanda [Novel Addiction] says

This was fun, and interesting, but it's one of those books that you can't read for very long before your eyes cross. There were definitely some highlights, and it's nice to know there are other people out there with a similar, sarcastic sense of humor as me. It's also nice to read this and realize how perfectly normal I am sometimes!

So bonus points for that.

H says

Book, 194 pages, looking for reader who enjoys British sense of humor and references. Need to know how to read and turn pages. Contents include things to laugh at and ads that make you be glad you are not those lonely hearts. Ideal night together includes a cozy fire (but not too close) and your complete attention focused on me. *Sexually, I'm More of a Switzerland*. Apply at your local library or Tesco.

Melissa says

Were these suppose to be funny? A part of me was really questioning if these are actually real ads. If they are then I understand why they probably do not get replies and are probably still single.

Askwhy says

Some of the personals are just sterling.

Inken says

This isn't really a book that you finish. It's one of those that you keep on your bedside table for occasional dipping into when you're feeling down and need a hilariously cynical pick-me-up. Another book that only the English could publish, *Sexually I'm More of a Switzerland* is the collection of wonderfully dark, naughty and ridiculous personal ads published in the *London Review of Books*. These are the antithesis of the desperately and nauseatingly cheerful ads that you see on US dating websites. For example:

"I'm everything you ever wanted in a woman. Assuming you're into fat 47-year old moody bitches who really don't enjoy the mornings. Stop talking and pour the Bloody Marys at box no. 1908"

If you don't have a dark and witty sense of humour, you won't get this book at all.

Margie says

These are marvelous. Best loo reading ever.

If you have an appreciation for British humor, these lonely hearts adverts will have you laughing. A lot.

Saara says

Less laugh-out-loud and more sympathy-inducing than I expected. The self-deprecating humour in these adverts touches something inside a fellow socially awkward penguin, British or not. Recommended for absolutely everyone, but especially for those who are more comfortable dealing with inanimate objects than fellow mammals.

Gemma says

Very funny, can't believe some of these are real! Nice bit of light reading and the kind of book you can pick up anytime and still find funny!

Roz Warren says

LAUGHING AND LOOKING FOR LOVE

"Sexually, I'm More of a Switzerland" is the second collection of personal ads from the *London Review of Books*, and a more entertaining series of outrageous little paragraphs you will never encounter.

Culled by editor David Rose from among that weekly's more ordinary adverts, these seekers of love are smart and literate (there are footnotes!); their clever, lighthearted prose is equal parts courtship and comedy.

Most of these scribes are middle-aged and older, with a few “youngsters” in their thirties weighing in. Which makes perfect sense -- if you regularly read the LRB, chances are you're neither young nor stupid. You're older and wiser, and capable of penning a little gem like:

“Man, 46. Animal in bed. Probably a gnu.”

Or beginning an ad with:

“All humans are 99.9% genetically identical, so don't even think of ending any potential relationship begun here with “I just don't think we have enough in common.”

These voices are erudite, witty and, frequently self-deprecating. Where the average personal ad is packed with lies, these folks not only refuse to hide their flaws, insecurities and eccentricities -- they lead with them:

“I'm not as high maintenance as my highly polished and impeccably arranged collectiOn of porcelain cats suggests, but if you touch them, I will kill you.”

“Tax-evading, nervous asthmatic (M, 47) seeks woman not unused to hiding under the kitchen table when the doorbell rings.”

“Think of every sexual partner you've ever had. I'm nothing like them. Unless you've ever slept with a bulimic German cellist called Elsa.”

There's an impressive range of human experience here, from the “angry organic window farmer” and “Scottish historical battle expert and BDSM fetishist” to the “scintillating sex monkey,” as well as the more modest “someone who knows how to stop the oven from beeping.” What do they seek in a mate? Everything from a “dangerous, tank-top wearing chemist” to “a bloke who doesn't spend 15 hours a day pretending he's a heroic blacksmith killing stuff in some other-dimensional village resembling Cottingsley, West Yorkshire, circa 1902.”

Many of the ads are self-referential:

“I'm placing this ad against my better judgment. But then the last time I listened to my better judgment, it told me the only way to find a well-read articulate man over 45 was to hide in a bin outside his flat until he arrived home from work, then lunge at him as he struggled to put the key in his door.”

It's a diverse crowd. Men. Women. Straights. Gays. What they all have in common is the desire to find that special someone. And a good sense of humor.

“I wrote this ad to prove I'm not gay. Man, 29. Not gay. Absolutely not.”

“I'm not Edith Wharton, but then this isn't the Riviera.”

“Some men can only beloved by their own mother. Not me, I've got Mr. Snugly Panda. Male, 36 and Mr. Snugly Panda, also 36.”

“If I wear a mask, will you call me Batman? Just asking.”

Some of the ads are so silly I wondered if the writer was actually looking for love or just clowning around. Probably a little of both. But, really, who cares? If you must look for love with a personal ad, why not have a little fun with it?

"I am Mr. Right! You are Miss Distinct Possibility. Your parents are Mr. and Mrs. Obscenely Rich. Your Uncle is Mr. Expert Tax Lawyer. Your cousin is Ms. Spare Apartment on A Caribbean Hideaway That She Rarely Uses. Your bother is Mr. Can Six You Up A Fake Passport For A Small Fee."

The ads may be playful, but it's easy to sense, between the lines, a serious longing for connection. When you've laughed your way through this little book, you'll put it back on the shelf hoping that all of these folks will find true love.

Or at the very least, a fabulous fling with a nervous asthmatic or a Scottish historical battle expert.

(www.rosalindwarren.com)

Jazzy Lemon says

35 years ago I used to read the personal ads in the local paper, not because I was looking for a date, but because of their inventiveness. I will always remember the man who listed his favourite activities as 'watching people get haircuts and reading soup can labels.' I came across "Sexually I'm More of a Switzerland" in the library sale for a quid a few months ago and since starting reading it, have discovered it is actually Volume 2 of these personal ads from the London Review of Books, so if anyone has Volume 1 "They Call Me Naughty Lola" they would like to lend me, let me know. F, Box 6331.

Valerie says

Impossible to put down. I could easily be at least three of these people....

Sample: "Ball-breaking, irrational F (52). Very probably just like your mother...."

It helps to be English, but there are useful footnotes.

Lee says

The Goodreads Lonely Hearts Column

A man walks into a bookshop. Plucking up his courage he asks the lady behind the till for a date. She says sorry, we don't sell fruit here. That's funny, right? Right?! I'm funny, right? M, 54, seeks F with convincing fake laugh to reassure him of an evening. Box no. 0002.

A (different) man walks into (the same) bookshop. Fancying a good belly laugh he picks up a collection of

bizarre entries to the world's most intelligent lonely hearts column. M, 27, found dry amusement but still seeks book to make his belly laugh. Box no. 0003.

I'm seeking my antiderivative, so I can lay tangent to your curves. Smooth M, 43, seeks continuously differentiable F to 40, or on the whole real line. Box no. 0005.

I like the footnotes. David Rose has clearly had fun with them. They're often played straight, pointing out the numerous esoteric cultural references used by the advertisers. Then, out of left field, he'll "helpfully" define some passing comment about "the Train of the Damned" as possibly referring to a particular Virgin Train line, "which is shit." M, 27, was seeking the Caversham branch of Waitrose, but that's in a footnote too. Box no. 0007.

Roses are red, violets are blue, Asclepias tuberosa are orange. M, 31, seeks F who knows a good rhyme for orange. Respondents can expect an awesome poem about flowers in return. Box no. 0011.

See appendix, says one of the footnotes attached to the phrase "Former Miss World." Really? I thought. Really. There's a list of all the previous winners of Miss World along with any interesting trivia about that contestant or that year's competition. It's surprisingly intriguing. M, 27, probably won't seek book about the Miss World competition. That'd probably not help find a F. Box no. 0013.

Sarah Tipper says

The success of this book relies on people being willing to write something that is unlikely to get a single reply but which is very funny. Some are hilarious, some are so creepy it makes me glad to be married. Most could be met with the question "Why on earth did you think that was a pertinent thing to mention in a personal ad?"

If scary, angry women make you hot then you might combust because they are very well represented in these pages. If men that sound as if they've been wearing a sock plus sandal combo for decades are your weakness then you are in for a treat. Most of the footnotes were very useful but a few seemed unnecessary (I'm confident I could work out what a cup-a-soup was even if I'd never had one).

Anna says

Collected personal ads from the *London Review of Books*. Made me laugh a lot but also made me very glad that I am not out there looking for love.

"I am not as high maintenance as my highly polished and impeccably arranged collection of porcelain cats suggests, but if you touch them I will kill you. F, 36. Likes porcelain cats. Seeks man not unused to the sound of sobbing coming from a bedroom door from which he is strictly prohibited. Tell me how attractive I am at box no. 1123."

"No beards. F, 38. Box no. 6956."
