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WESTCOAST NEWS

Women apply 'by the hundreds' to meet Mr. Right

VANCOUVER | The chance to date a mystery millionaire draws prospects, some looking sheepish, to interviews at downtown hotel

BY CHANTAL EUSTACE
VANCOUVER SUN

Dating is hard work, says Vicki Howe, who took the day off work Friday to meet with a New York matchmaker in hopes of hooking Mr. Right, an anonymous Vancouver millionaire.

"I'm looking for a companion," says Howe, seated in a waiting area of the Sutton Place Hotel. "Dating is a lot of work. It's like you're interviewing for somebody to be your mate. After a while, you get discouraged."

When she read about Janis Spindel's hunt to find a wife for a 40-something Vancouver millionaire, she says, she felt hopeful.

Howe — an attractive 39-year-old with long, blond hair — says she's tried other dating services in the past without luck.

"At my age it's really difficult to meet a so-called normal kind of guy," says Howe. "It's really hard to meet somebody who has the same kind of interests."

Although she doesn't know the identity of the widowed bachelor, Howe thinks they'll be compatible. Both she and Mr. X are single parents, she points out, and they're both athletic.

"People don't realize, if you're not single, how difficult it is to meet someone," Howe says. "It's really about finding that person that you're happy with, that you

connect with, that makes you laugh."

As we talk, other well-dressed, polished and primed women walk past, leaving a trail of perfume.

Inside the conference room, Spindel and her assistants are busy reviewing applications and applicants.

"We all have a sheepish look don't we," says one Vancouver candidate, a 29-year-old blond who wants to remain anonymous. "I've never done anything like this in my life! I'm feeling a bit awkward."

And hopeful, she admits.

She blushes when she meets Spindel. "You're very organized," says Spindel, accepting the young woman's application. "Does that mean you're anal?"

Spindel says she's had an overwhelming response so far and estimates she's received "several hundred" applicants.

Vancouver is full of "gorgeous, fun, nice, sexy, pretty, smart, single women," she says. But they can't all be selected.

"I make yes piles, no piles, maybe piles and it's up-to-you piles," she says. "A lot of these women are just wrong for him — too old, too short, the wrong religion — just wrong. I'm not wasting his time with them."

Mr. X will then select candidates for dates, she says.

Why do so many women apply to date a perfect stranger?

"Women want to come and meet with

me because they know there's a very heavy-duty chance of me finding them their husband," says Spindel, adding she has waived her usual \$1,000 US fee (for a 30-minute consultation) in lieu of a \$25 "processing charge." (Applicants are also advised to purchase her \$15 book and fill out the questionnaire inside.)

While Spindel won't disclose the identity of Mr. X — who she says is paying her about \$250,000 US to find him a match — she describes her client as a handsome, athletic widower with an eight-year-old daughter.

"I get asked the same question all day long of why such an awesome guy needs you?" she says, shaking her head.

"If you hire a professional, then you get results."

Local matchmaker Jane Carsten of Hearts Canada says dating services are popular in Vancouver. She has about 650 clients, many of whom buy an unlimited membership for about \$1,200.

"It's difficult to meet people, let alone single people," says Carsten. "They don't even know what to do next or where to even go to meet somebody."

She doesn't know who Mr. X is, but says there are "oodles" of single millionaires in Vancouver.

Even eligible bachelors like movie producer Lee Cleary — a 40-something single dad who called *The Vancouver Sun* to dispel rumours that he is Mr. X — find Vancouver's dating scene tough.

"It's very difficult," says Cleary. He is not the mystery man, he adds, despite the ribbing he takes on the subject from friends. "I can understand the guy."

As for Spindel, she's confident she'll find her media-shy client a good match — no matter how long it takes.

"I will leave no stone unturned," she says. "It's just what I do."

And Mr. X? What does he think of all this?

"He's frightened by all the press, to use his word," she says, smiling. "It's a whirlwind."

Spindel will be at the Sutton Place Hotel again today.

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STEVE BOSCH/VANCOUVER SUN

Matchmaker Janis Spindel says Vancouver is full of 'gorgeous, fun, nice, sexy, pretty, smart, single women.'