

Love in Times of Coronavirus

A black silhouette of a man and a woman in a romantic embrace. The man is standing and holding the woman, who is leaning into him. They are positioned in the center-right of the cover, partially overlapping the title text.

JULIA SUMMERLAND

**"Wonderfully written,
captivating from the beginning
and a beautiful tale of love and
emotion." (Jasmine)**

Edition **AVRA**

To Katarina and Maurice

“A compelling tale about looking for love in unsettling times. Julia Summerland’s novel gives you the butterflies and leaves you happy and hopeful. Grab a cup of tea, snuggle up, and enjoy the read.” (Katarina)

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SOME WISE REFLECTIONS

With the exception of public figures, all the characters depicted in this book are creatures of Julia's imagination and any resemblance to any real person is coincidental. Julia was so bored during the time of lockdown that she came up with this book, which is all fiction. However, the events around the Covid-19 pandemic in the first half of 2020 were very real and are described as they happened. During all her encounters, Julia followed social distancing and lockdown rules as they were and are in Luxembourg (except for possibly one kiss...).

In the time of coronavirus, Julia registered on an online dating platform to combat the loneliness she had been experiencing since her long-time boyfriend had left her. In this book, she meets various men. The meetings - sometimes funny, sometimes sad - make up the story. It begins sometime in March 2019 and ends in July 2020.

How will the story continue? Will Julia find love? How will coronavirus continue to spread? Will there be a second, or even a third, lockdown? Will she find love in times of coronavirus? Please read her story!

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR THE LOVELORN

Preface by BM

“My dear Julia,

Please regard this search for a relationship as a business process. Imagine you are looking for someone to do business with. You have to go through ten disappointments to get one deal closed. The same way you do not take the failure of a business deal as a personal failure please do not consider all these efforts as personal failures either. The same way you have been ‘hit’ in your relationship after so many years of investment in it, those males who are contacting you have also gone through a similar process. They are also ‘survivors’ of great disappointments. Failure in relationships is a result of a combination of states of mind of two people who are scared to death and who are eager to re-establish their self-confidence.

In your coming meetings with your future potential partners, please try to listen for around 75% of the time and talk for about 25% of the time. You will be surprised how well it works. People like to talk about themselves. Try to be positive throughout the conversation. Do not explain and do not complain. Your potential partners will be mesmerized by your positive attitudes and they will become positive too. Spending 5 hours in a pub with a candidate for future relationships, as you have indicted in your last letter, is a sign of weakness. It reflects badly on you as if you have nothing better to do than sitting in a pub. You should cut short your first five meetings with a ‘new’ person and leave after a maximum of 75 minutes with a time excuse. Also, all these first meetings should take place in a public place! You must meet in a restaurant, pub, sport club, garden, ski arena, etc. Nobody should come to pick you up from home. Make yourself a little mysterious... create some tension...”

BM

“Strong minds discuss ideas, average minds discuss events, weak minds discuss people.”

(Socrates)

My colleague and good friend, Julia, has been looking for relationships. Not that she does not have millions of contacts, acquaintances and good friends, but she wanted to use a platform for online dating to answer the question of how to classify and select close friends based on their written, and, eventually, spoken communication skills.

In no time did Julia realize that the platform alone was not appropriate for such an investigation because, after all, she only sampled the non-female half of the population, and also because the messages she received were mostly composed by desperate males trying to get a free ride, believing they disguised their purpose well enough.

Yet, funnily, these messages seem to plagiarize each other. Hence the idea of compiling all those messages as well as stories about face-to-face encounters and sharing their comic side with the readers. It is neither an act of ‘revenge’ nor a criticism of the other gender. After all Julia appreciates men as much as she appreciates women. The purpose of this collection is to depict people as they are, for good and for bad, and to continue to love them with their strengths and weaknesses. It is an artistic depiction of a mirror image of ourselves that describes people and events that will allow you to reflect on other people’s experience to better understand yourself, the ‘games’ you play and how these ‘games’ are perceived and interpreted by others.

The activities described here took place during the coronavirus crisis, a terrible worldwide pandemic that started in Wuhan, China, and from there spread rapidly worldwide, provoking never-before-seen complete

lockdowns of cities and countries, shutting national borders, and imprisoning people in their own homes.

This change in lifestyle, including working from home instead of from the office, has had major impacts on our social, economic and moral lives. How to survive in such a challenging environment? How to date online and how to date in general with social distancing measures in place? How to combat loneliness with self-isolation and home confinement? Are dating and love possible in coronavirus times? Is e-mailing the new mode of dating and what would happen to carnal love? How will Julia solve her issue of dating in coronavirus times? Is it possible that a few men will compete to capture Julia's heart? Or some of them will manage to seduce her concurrently? How do you think the story will evolve? Do you have a similar story to tell? Do you have even more fantastic or bizarre experience you are willing to share? Please feel free to anonymously share your story with the author of this book.

Enjoy reading the emails, messages and letters, as well as about the dates and, please, keep smiling. (BM)

Preface by Patricia

Your search for a partner has certainly been very wideranging, Julia. However, I wonder, do you still remember the names of the men you met? While hearing your stories, I feel quite dizzy. I suppose some of these men are failures, you simply put them aside and forgot about them. Like the mama's boy - *mammone*, as the Italians say - who still lives with his mother, or the other one who was too stingy to pay for a movie ticket. The others, well, you need to sort them carefully, maybe your prince charming is among them. If not, restart from the beginning. You simply recover like a tumbler and keep going. That's my advice to you.

The first case of coronavirus was detected in Wuhan province in China in December 2019.

WORDS ABOUT BOYFRIENDS

Gregory

Before all this began: a Sunday sometime in March 2019

“I will not leave my wife,” said Gregory.

We were on our bikes and this was the first sentence he said to me after leaving from my place in Luxembourg city. It was a cold but sunny day in March. It was not one of my best days. In the morning, I had been teaching a fitness class. Gregory looked at me during the class and said, “What about going for a bike ride this afternoon?”

“With pleasure”, I replied, “Where shall we go to?”

“We can do the bicycle path – the *piste cyclable* – I can come to your place and we’ll start from there. Two o’clock is good for you?”

“Yes, perfect.”

Gregory came by car to my place, with his bike in his car, parked in the courtyard behind my apartment building and we started cycling from there, riding through Merl, Belair, Mamer and heading to Clémency. We cycled behind one another in town but after he rode next to me and said his famous sentence: “I will not leave my wife.”

“Well”, I thought, “Why is he telling me this? I don’t really understand.”

We continued cycling, it was turning out to be a pleasant day, finally the first really sunny day for weeks. As usual, Luxembourg is grey, sometimes without any decent

sunshine for months in winter. So it was very nice enjoying the sunshine on the bike and the company of Gregory. I asked him so many questions. "Do you have children?" "Did you study?" "Where, what, when?" "What do you do in life? What do you do all day long?"

We arrived at the old Clémency train station, where people were enjoying food and drinks on a terrace in the sun. We sat down at one of the tables, ordered a non-alcoholic beer and Gregory said, "Now, tell me about you, what makes you so sad?"

I started talking about my lost love with Alan. "After so many years together, he has left me, of course, for a younger woman. I am very sad. Not only this but also in my family, we lived through a tragedy. This is the reason why I am so sad. It is not easy for me to hide my feelings, in front of the classes. You noticed that I was sad, others noticed as well. You see, I am an independent teacher and it is not simple, especially for a woman, being independent, and alone. Ironically, Alan left me exactly at the moment I asked him for help. But well, this is how it is, life goes on, it is difficult. But I will not get back together with him. We had a wonderful time, with unforgettable moments and travelling all over the world."

Gregory advised, "You see, nobody can take these wonderful moments from you. Keep them for yourself, in your heart, and treasure them. Also, nobody can take this special moment here from us. We will treasure it."

In the following months, we met from time to time, and later more frequently, to go cycling and do other sporting activities. I remember fondly the ice skating and curling at Kockelscheuer and the time we went rock climbing in Berdorf in July 2019.