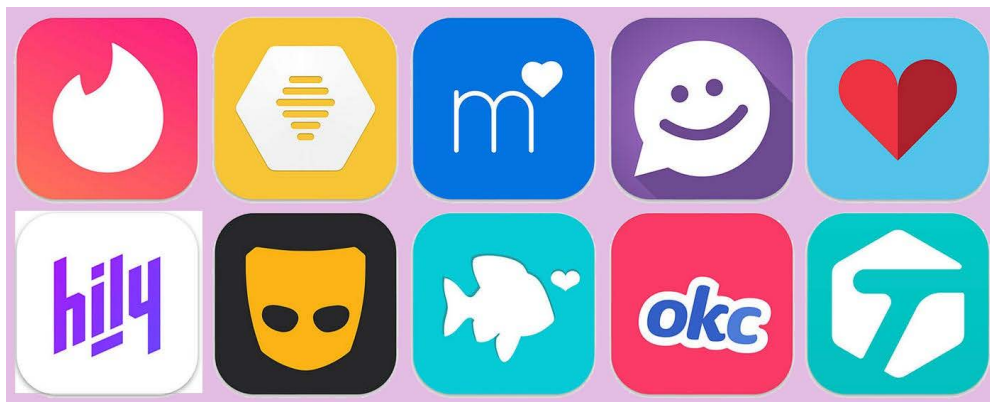


PERSONAL ANSWERS



Z. Sharon Glantz
phone: 206.523-7442
zsharon@thesanitypatrol.com

PERSONAL ANSWERS

CHARACTERS

WRITER mid 30's, overweight
CHILD
MAN
WOMAN

SCENE: Desk with computer, large shrubs and building blocks. During the play, CHILD's predominant task is playing with building blocks; MAN's predominant task is planting shrubs; and WOMAN assists everyone else with their tasks.

[WRITER SITS AT HER COMPUTER
READING WHILE CHILD, MAN AND WOMAN
READ OVER HER SHOULDER. CHILD AND
MAN SNICKER. WOMAN HANDS WRITER A
PAD OF PAPER AND A PEN]

WRITER

Professional artist seeks same for performances, exhibitions, sonnets and the occasional dance-until-dawn. Past-mid-life crisis, have destination and route, but need company. Reply with creative vignette if you are bright, fit, quirky, imaginative, & passionate about something...anything. Age, religion, race, hair color are not important, but freckles are a plus.

WOMAN

We've got freckles and nothing to lose. [HANDS WRITER PEN AND PAPER]

WRITER

What do I need these for?

WOMAN

We're better writing this kind of thing by hand.

MAN

What the hell are you doing?

WRITER

What the hell are you doing?

MAN

Planting shrubs in the front yard. [WRITER WRITES] Someone's got to take care of the house and since we live alone, that someone is me. At least I'm not wasting my time with personal ads that could be from a serial killer.

WOMAN

Your opening sounds like you're applying for a job.

CHILD

Not another stupid job. Why can't we just play?

WRITER

Someone give me place to start. Please?

MAN

Don't look at me.

CHILD

Look at me. I made a castle. And after we get married, this is where we'll live. And there'll be a moat with swans and geese and I'll have beautiful dresses to wear and I'll learn how to fight with a sword and my prince charming will do whatever he does and together we'll rule the world and--

MAN

Shut the fuck up.

CHILD

But a giant monster will come along [MONSTER NOISES AND KNOCKS DOWN CASTLE]. See what you made me do? Now I have to start over. Help me?

MAN

No.

WOMAN

I'd love to help you.

WRITER

Help me too.

WOMAN

I can do both. Okay. The ad starts with Arts Professional--

WRITER

I've got it. Enclosed is a copy of --

MAN

You're hopeless.

WRITER

Joking! But yes, this is probably a waste of time anyway.

MAN

Good girl.

CHILD

No, I'm the good girl and you said we were going to get us someone new to play with. I want a new friend.

WRITER

You heard the kid. There's nothing like divulging my deepest darkest secrets to a stranger who might want to kill me.

WOMAN

Just write something fun and creative and be done with it. What could it hurt?

WRITER

Me. I hate rejection.

MAN

You've been rejected by some of the very best publishers.

WRITER

I didn't say I couldn't take rejection, I said I hated it. And this wouldn't be a rejection of my work, this would be a rejection of me by some stranger.

CHILD

I think he'll like us.

WRITER

Why?

CHILD

Because I like us.

MAN

Be logical. You've never even met the guy. Attraction is chemical.

WRITER

What if I already know him? Worse, what if I've already dated him? This has the potential to be incredibly awkward.

MAN

Good girl. And yes, you're also a good girl.

WOMAN

He's the one who put a personal ad in the paper. How is answering it humiliating yourself?

MAN

What if he's a wanna-be arts professional – all ideas but no product?

WOMAN

He says he has his destination and route.

MAN

You promised us no more talentless or starving artists.

WOMAN

He's got a point. I'm sick of being a caretaker.

CHILD

I don't care if he's starving as long as he'll play with me. Maybe he'll be our perfect match and we'll fall madly and deeply in love and live happily ever after.

WOMAN

Let me help you build another castle.

WRITER

If and when the alarms go off, I promise I'll pay attention to what you have to say. Who knows? Maybe he's not starving or needy. Maybe he's a healthy man.

MAN

Don't be naive. He's advertising his neediness on the internet.

WRITER

Our posting at loveme.com got us a date, or have you forgotten.

MAN

How can I forget that glorious afternoon that born-again Christian tried to help you accept Jesus.

WOMAN

Until he found out we were one of the Chosen. And then he was so jealous it creeped me out.

WRITER

And we're not even religious.

CHILD

He was nice. He bought us a magic wand at the street fair.

MAN

And don't forget that great letter you got from your roommate's lover.

WRITER

He said he sent it out before they started sleeping together. Too bad too. I liked him a lot more than she did.

MAN

She's – shaped differently.

CHILD

Maybe this time it'll be different. Maybe it'll be magic. Butterflies will fly in our tummy.

WOMAN

Even if they don't take to flight at first, they might in time.

CHILD

I want the butterflies to fly now, not later. I miss the butterflies. The only time they fly now is when we're writing and it's not the same. I want butterflies, I want butterflies.

MAN

Butterflies can be dangerous. We know that from past experience.

WOMAN

"'Tis better to have loved and lost--"

MAN

Shut the fuck up.

CHILD

We have freckles

MAN AND WRITER

Coincidence.

CHILD

No such thing.

WRITER

Maybe it's a sign.

MAN

[MIMIC] Maybe it's a sign.

WRITER

I love my close friends and I'm lucky to have a terrific family living in another state, but you have to admit, it's been a long time since we've gotten laid.

WOMAN

We don't need a man to validate us.

That's not what she said. MAN

Dam, I miss--. WRITER

Playtime? CHILD

Sex can be dangerous these days. MAN

I want to play. You're just being a big baby. CHILD

No, I'm a careful adult. MAN

You're a big baby, you're a big baby. CHILD

And you're an immature child. MAN

So what? At least I'm not a big baby. CHILD

You're asking for a spanking. MAN

Knock it off, both of you. WOMAN

Is there any way I can convince all of you that answering this ad is okay? WRITER

No, there isn't. MAN

Can we agree to disagree? WRITER

No. CHILD

MAN

I'm not particularly self-destructive but I will spank you if you don't stop.

WRITER

Enough I can live with ambivalence but not with self-abuse. [TO MAN] You, leave the child alone. [TO CHILD] And you, quit your teasing. [TO WOMAN] What do you think?

WOMAN

If we took the risk without a little uncertainty and fear, I'd be worried. As long as we monitor our fantasies so that they don't turn into expectations, we should be fine.

CHILD

What's wrong with fantasies? This guy has fantasies.

WOMAN

Yes, and you can be sure many of them have been shot to hell in the course of meeting the women who've already answered his ad.

MAN

If you want to remain in denial about that one word in the ad that made us all flinch, fine with me.

WRITER

What? That he's past his mid-life crises and could be older than us? No big deal. We're close to our own mid-life crises, you know.

WOMAN

[HELPS MAN DIG AND PLANT SHRUBS] Looks aren't everything.

MAN

I'm only trying to protect us, you know.

WOMAN

I know. We all do, don't we everyone?

MAN

Are you mocking me?

WOMAN

And make fun of myself? I could never do such a thing.

MAN

Denial about that one word could make this a very bad experience.

WRITER

I admit I'm not exactly fit.

WOMAN

We are fit, just not skinny. A few pounds over emaciated and we think we're fat. I refuse to be self-conscious over a few pounds.

MAN

Men tend to be more concerned with the physical than women.

WOMAN

We may not be skinny, but we're attractive.

WRITER

Yes, but I have to admit, the word did make me flinch.

WOMAN

If he wants a lean high-maintenance princess who spends more time working on her outsides than on her insides, he wouldn't like us anyway.

MAN

For once I agree. We don't have to get defensive just because of one stupid word that reflects a pathetic sociology. What if he doesn't like dogs?

CHILD

Everyone likes puppies.

MAN

Jackson is no puppy and he's the size of a small horse.

CHILD

You're such a turkey butt. What if he likes Jackson more than me?

WOMAN

"What ifs" will get us nowhere. How about this. We'll send him this silly little answer and let it go. Pretend we're submitting a book synopsis for consideration. If we never hear from him, we'll treat like we do writing submissions and blow it off. If he responds, we treat him like we would a publisher interested in our book -- celebrate the moment of initial acceptance and then check him out to see whether or not he's worthy of our attention.

MAN

As long as I get to say, I told you so, when it doesn't work out.

CHILD

And if it works, I get to say, I told you so a billion trillion times.

WRITER

You know what's going to happen, don't you.

MAN

He's already met someone and he'll put us in the holding pen for forever?

WRITER

The minute we put this thing in the mail, someone else will show up.

CHILD

For what?

MAN

For us.

CHILD

Oh boy. We're going to have a new playmate soon. Yippee.

MAN

There. I may not be a landscape architect, but I think that with a little TLC, these'll grow big and strong.

CHILD

And lookie what I built. [SHOWS A HEART SHAPED BY BLOCKS]

WOMAN

I helped you both.

WRITER

And just hit send.

[END OF PLAY]