

**SCREENING  
PROCESS** Lincoln  
Park single Hillary  
browses men on  
eHarmony.

# The single diaries

A woman using two matchmaking services. An eHarmony subscriber. A gay bargoer. A polyamorous bisexual in one relationship and looking for more. Four brave souls share every detail of their dating lives for one awkward, exciting, adventurous month. Photographs by **Christopher Kitahara**



## MORE DIARIES

Read the extended versions of these diaries and the logs of two more singles—a gay man who meets guys with the Scruff app and a straight mom—at [timeoutchicago.com/features](http://timeoutchicago.com/features).

**Hillary, 27, Lincoln Park, straight**

*After nine months of playing the dating-site field, Hillary realized she "was only attracting mustachioed guys who oozed Kerouac" on OkCupid and the breadth of Match's subscribers was too overwhelming. She's now focused on finding love (or at least a decent dinner) on eHarmony.*



**>December 11<** There were several interesting guys in today's "crop" (eHarmony provides you with only a handful of matches each day). One listed "talking to my family on the phone" as an interest. Another wanted people to know he had all kinds of dog-clad boxers, including a pair featuring dachshunds in sweaters. I can be guilty of a filterless persona, but in the world of online dating, it can be difficult to let your personality shine through without scaring people off. I've exchanged e-mails with a couple of guys who seem nice, but no dates set yet.

**>December 13<** I find that I go in waves of interest and disinterest in responding to e-mails. I've also found that eHarmony's process makes it really easy for me to sift through prospects. The site's Guided Communication, which allows you to ask innocuous questions before facing the pressure of a full-blown e-mail, acts as a funnel: If I'm not interested enough to answer a question, I know I'm not interested in the guy. Also: Guys who suggest a phone conversation or date after one e-mail are generally too aggressive for me.

**>December 17<** I have a lunch date tomorrow with a guy I'm on the fence about. He's seemed reluctant to pick a normal time for drinks, coffee, etc. I'm a lot more likely to give you a good-night kiss *at night*. A lunch date feels more like an errand.

**>December 18<** The lunch date was pleasant. He drove the half-mile between his place and the restaurant, which I found odd. He's a bit more of a

gym rat than I typically go for. We shared an interest in vulgar rap and Big 10 football, but the chemistry wasn't there. In the words of Jay-Z, "on to the next one."

**>December 19<** Guys with a serious interest in martial arts have been e-mailing me in disproportionate numbers.

**>December 20<** One guy has suggested we meet at a nearby Lebanese spot for dinner and conversation. He gains points for knowing a Lebanese spot. I love cooking and food, and any guy who loves those things can't be too awful... right? Unfortunately, this date has to be put on hold for the holidays.

**>December 25<** Santa brought me six new matches! As I didn't bring my laptop home for the holidays, and flirting on the eHarmony smartphone app is rather tedious, I shall have to wait to unwrap God's gifts to women.

**>December 27<** From my phone in a gas station parking lot, I edited down the 30-plus new matches that had accumulated in my absence. Easy edits are generally location (I have no car, so the suburbs might as well be Alaska), and attraction. I'm only human. A carless human.

**>December 28<** Sometimes online dating feels like a part-time job. While you might spend hours standing around in bars looking for Mr. or Ms. Right, at least in a bar you can drink and dance and spend time with friends. Online dating from your couch on a Sunday night can be downright depressing. I've also received a few "invitations" to "call or text if that's easier [than continuing to e-mail]." This aggravates me. If you want to talk to me on the phone, ask for my number and ask to call me. Don't put the onus on me under the guise of my "comfort."

**>December 29<** Today's batch of men included the roommate of a guy I exchanged a few e-mails with back in September, and a guy whose pictures included a girlfriend of mine. I didn't know how to process this other than to close my computer and have a glass of wine.

**>January 4<** For dinner tonight, I met a guy who I'd been exchanging e-mails with for a few weeks. We're both runners who have close relationships with our siblings. He asked about my experience online dating. I've always found that a strange (and frequent) conversation to have on a first date. I once had a guy high-five me for looking like my picture. You may have met me online, but please show me the same respect you showed the girl you met at a dinner party and refrain from asking how many dates I've

been on that week. But my date tonight was a perfect gentleman, and his inquiry seemed to be a way of nervously moving conversation forward. There will be no second date because we weren't compatible, not because he broke the fourth wall.

**>January 5<** After a few weeks of less than promising options, I've decided not to continue my eHarmony subscription when it expires in a few weeks. The past nine months have taught me that I'm just as likely to land a date at a bar or via Twitter as I am on the site. At least I haven't resorted to Craigslist.

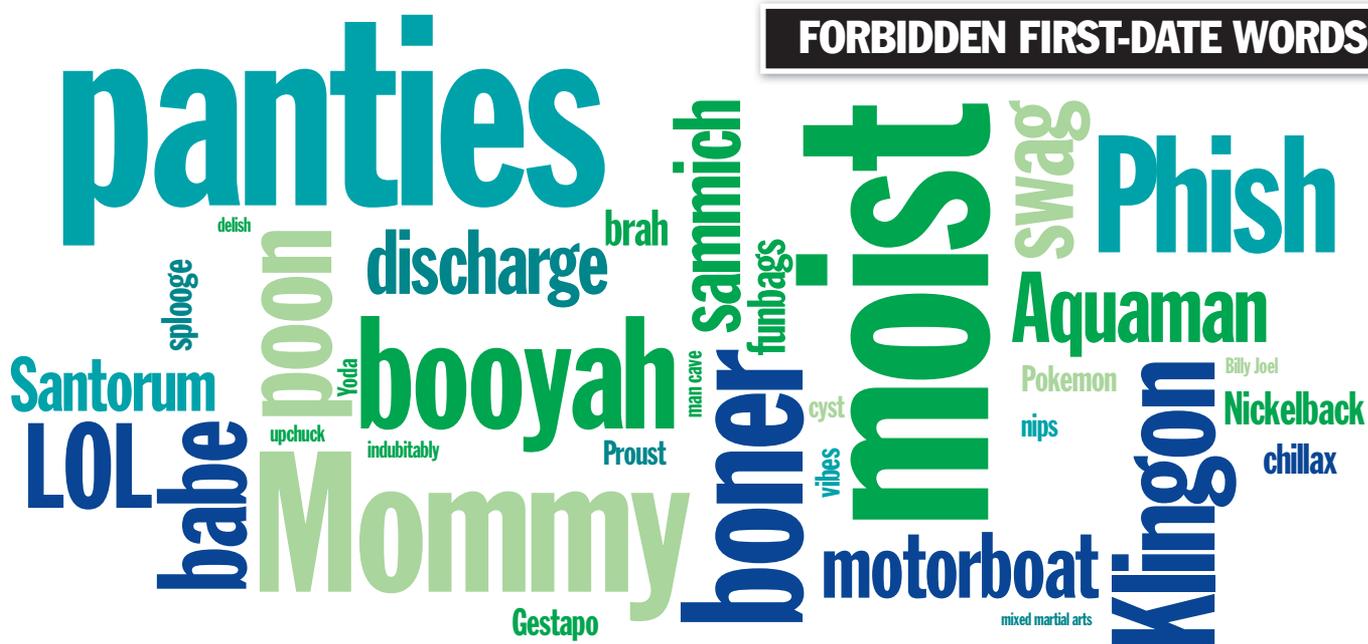
**>January 8<** I was just matched with my ex-boyfriend's roommate. Out of wine, I resorted to banging my head against the wall.

**>January 11<** I know three couples who met their spouses online. While it may not have worked for me this time, it does work. The biggest lesson I've learned is to throw out the rules and be open to love, regardless of its origin... as long as it's not Craigslist.

**Want to date Hillary?** E-mail [hillaryd@tccpersonals.com](mailto:hillaryd@tccpersonals.com).

**"I once had a guy high-five me for looking like my picture."**

**FORBIDDEN FIRST-DATE WORDS**





## Polyamorous lifestyle

**THREE'S COMPANY**  
Kayo has been openly polyamorous since last year.

### Kayo, 26, Lakeview, bisexual

*In 2008, Kayo realized she was in love with two people. After the “residual panic” from her Catholic upbringing settled, she came out as polyamorous—having multiple intimate relationships at once—to friends last year and to her parents in September.*

**>December 11<** Pietro, my only boyfriend right now, spent the night. He’s been married for nine years, but they recently opened up the marriage, and we met on OkCupid in June. I caught him doing my chores again. Next time my mom suggests my partners are just taking advantage of me, I should send her a picture of Pietro washing my dishes in his pj’s.

**>December 14<** I’m hoping to get some time with Norrin and Diana before the holidays. I’ll be honest: I don’t know what to call the dynamics there. I met Norrin on OkCupid in August, and I met Diana at a poly event in September. For me, poly meetups (I go to Poly Under 40 and Chicago Polyamory events) have always been more for building community than finding partners. But I have a crush on Diana. We’ve been flirty in the past, but something doesn’t seem to be clicking anymore.

**>December 23<** Told Pietro I feel guilty about restoring my OkCupid profile to find a couple more...viscerally focused relationships. His response: “Why? It sounds like it would be good for you.” This is part of why I love him. He’s

legitimately concerned with my needs being met, even when I sometimes need other people to do so.

**>December 26<** I told Norrin I love him. Via text, no less. This is what happens when I visit my

family, get stressed and dig through old photos until I’m a raw bundle of feelings.

**>December 27<** Norrin thanked me for sharing my feelings and said he’d like to talk soon. This, in my opinion, is an ideal response.

**>December 31<** Pietro started seeing Selina, a woman I have a crush on. While I’m theoretically cool with socially incestuous dating, I’m not sure I’m ready for it, if she’s even interested. Then there’s Remy, who I met at a recent poly event. He lives in the ‘burbs with his wife and kids, and has a couple girlfriends already. His wife knows about his lifestyle, but that just seems complicated. Still, I sent a Facebook message asking him out. Apparently, I’ve decided to start the New Year with no lingering emotional secrets. How novel...and terrifying.

**>January 3<** I sent Diana the “what’s up with us?” e-mail. She suggested we just be friends. I’m disappointed, but happy to still have the friendship. Norrin is broken from a recent outpatient surgery. I’m just not gonna hope to see him this month.

**>January 4<** Pietro’s feeling terrible that he has work to do while he’s over tonight. But a low-key night watching TV and snuggling while he works sounds awesome.

**>January 3<** Met up with Remy at a bar after work. We had some drinks and food and talked for a couple of hours, and then he gave me a ride home. Somehow, tonight was the first time I ever made out in a car. Still not sure what will happen with us. Getting into a new relationship is always a little scary, whether it’s monogamous or polyamorous. I’ve had some very bad luck with some very unhealthy relationships in the past, so I have a whole extra cluster of anxieties. But I value having Remy, Pietro and Norrin in my life, and I look forward to exploring what I might develop with each of them.

**Want to date Kayo?** E-mail [kayoa@tccpersonals.com](mailto:kayoa@tccpersonals.com).

## THE TRUTH ABOUT GAY AND STRAIGHT RELATIONSHIPS

### STRAIGHT COUPLES

Share feelings about porn in couples counseling

Regular e.p.t. tests

Fight over check at Filini

Legally allowed to marry

Met via computer screen

Scoping out hotties: grounds for breakup

Idea of a romantic vacation: Sandals resort in the Bahamas

Nervous about meeting parents

Would have three-way with Beyoncé

### GAY COUPLES

Share porn collection

Regular STD tests

Fight over best Fellini film

Legally allowed to call each other “Mary”

Met via phone screen

Scoping out hotties: fun afternoon activity

Idea of a romantic vacation: Dollywood

Nervous about meeting dog

## Allen, 32, Albany Park, gay

*"I sprang out of the closet and landed on a bar stool," Allen says of coming out more than ten years ago. Today, he still enjoys meeting men at bars—not to mention at thrift stores and on the CTA. A shared cab ride home? "Winning."*

**>December 16<** The week went by drowsily, and I think this night was more about my interest in drink than hopes of male adventure. A really good straight girlfriend had never seen male dancers outside of bachelorette parties and earnest documentaries on Southeast Asia. She had the money to spend; I had places and faces. To @mosphere in Andersonville we went. We met a group of friendly middle-aged men clucking like hens. I was being appreciated, but my girlfriend got all the compliments. Boo!

**>December 17<** Too drunk too early at Berlin, I met an older gentleman—we'll call him Dancefloor Daddy—who smiled at me from the end of the bar. I had to read his lips over the loud dance music. He was handsome and I could see his excitement at finding a directionless and enthusiastic youth (I look much younger than I am, so naturally I played my part with relish). On the dance floor he led, which is always strange because it feminizes me; also, the music was inappropriate for midcentury chivalry. I avoided kisses and found it patronizing when he asked, "Do you need somebody to pay for the drinks and watch you flirt but keep the tab open?" Presumptuous, oppressive and a little insulting. Nothing much after that. I tried to speak to a sweet face and got hissed at. A perfect night.

**>December 23<** Attending holiday parties of worthy causes is a great way to add a little socializing to the tree lighting. Tonight, at a dance company's fund-raising party, I ran into an actor whom I had met once before. He was genuine with a big smile—good energy and a real career on the stage. A brand new man for a brand new year?

**>December 27<** Scavenging for vintage at the thrift store, magic happens one hanger at a time. Scavenging for men happens one electric gaze at a time. At the Village Discount Outlet in Albany Park, I spotted a man making a greedy pile of sweaters in his cart and walking to the sole mirror in the central aisle. Putting on and taking off sweaters lifts undershirts and exposes skin. For an exhibitionist, it's an easy peekaboo and also completely practical. And so he lifted his

## Bar hopper

arms and pulled hard to get around his shoulders, negotiating rising boxers with finesse. I was inspired to shop sweaters, too. At the mirror we danced. His sweater, then mine: an erotic show of waists, compliments and stilted jokes. He invited me out that night. I wore a

smart blazer and a sturdy jersey hoodie, and we headed to an art opening for a childhood acquaintance of his. By the time we arrived, the cheap wine and PBRs were flowing and the after-party was brewing. In someone's highly designed apartment, we made out like preteens.

**>December 30<** Friends are in town and friends of friends are in town. Tonight, somebody's new jazz band was playing at the Green Mill. We sat close to the bar. I started a whisper campaign with a rascal who is a graduate student in gender studies. Sexual ambiguity goes down well with murky cocktails. I missed chord changes and rhythmic counterpoint, but I do remember that his mom was a dancer and his siblings are rivals for family glory. We left one another with a charged close-mouthed kiss.

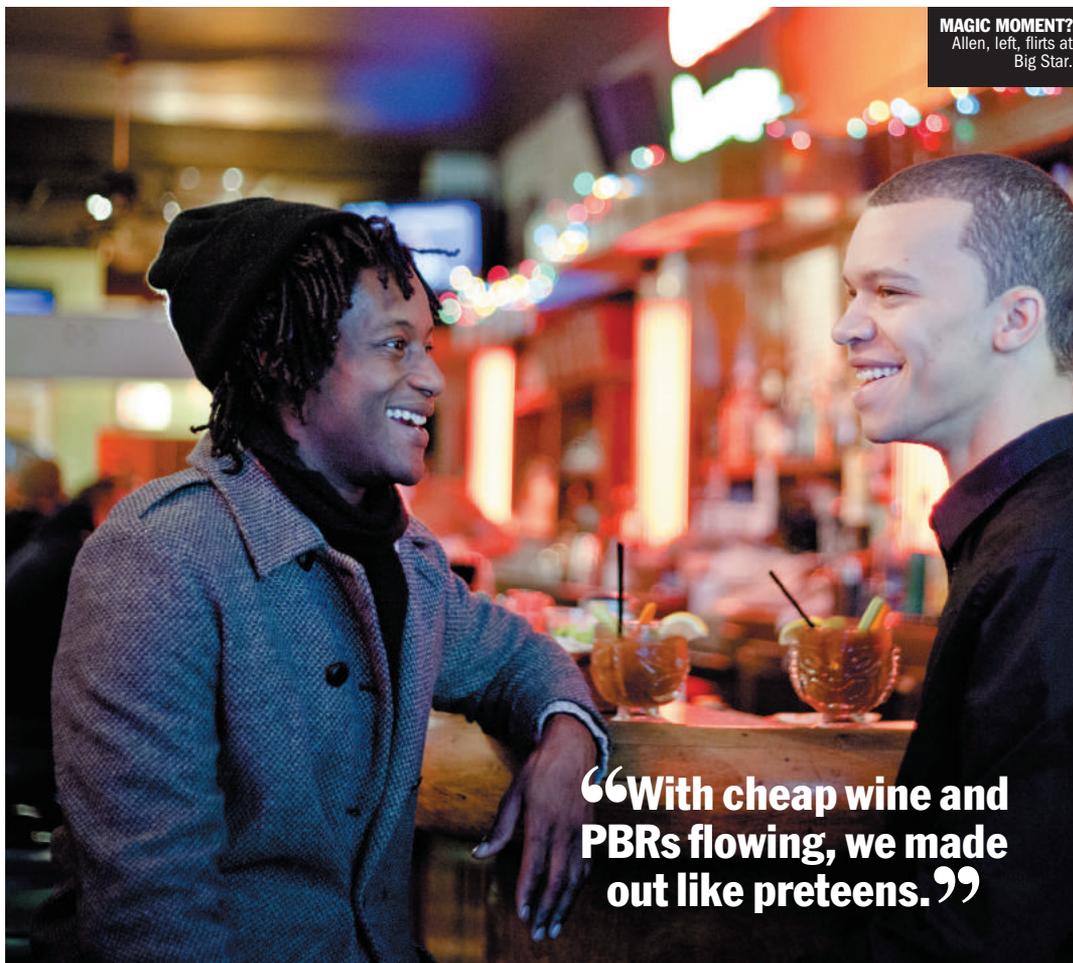
**>December 31<** For New Year's Eve, I dressed myself like a melancholy count: a cape draped from my left shoulder, a Col. Sanders string tie with a silk mantilla veil, shiny patent-leather church shoes, black tuxedo shirt, black blazer, mascara and eyeliner. I texted something cute to an old friend and hoped he got it. He was

charmed... lol. This friend has been a sentimental stand-in for a lack of serious lover on New Year's Eves, birthdays, Valentine's Days. On those kinds of nights, if we each are in a relationship with someone else, we send a message to each other about how nice it is that we both have moved on. If we are both alone, we profess love in the most unattractive way possible: drunkenly, desperately and unconvincingly. But we make it funny.

I forgot I couldn't party-hop by cab because everyone in Chicago was going two places on each side of the midnight countdown. So after midnight, I went to the bus headed east down Chicago Avenue. Pressed up against an unknown fellow reveler, we shared whiffs of designer gum and designer cologne. He complimented my getup; I complimented his boots. I looked at his feet because if I looked straight in his face we would have been taken into the gravity of a kiss. It was my stop so the flirtation stopped. Missed connections on the first day of the year.

The thrift-store man and I still call each other on whims; nothing has come out of it but fun. That's good enough for now. After all, I am a person who very much enjoys myself by myself, and to me going out is anthropological: It's about talking and seeing people, and searching for ourselves. We are like bowerbirds collecting pieces here and there so finally we can make a home, no matter how strange the material we build with.

**Want to date Allen?** E-mail [allenm@toctpersonals.com](mailto:allenm@toctpersonals.com).



**MAGIC MOMENT?**  
Allen, left, flirts at Big Star.

**“With cheap wine and PBRs flowing, we made out like preteens.”**

**Singles**

**Lizzy, 27, Lincoln Square, straight**

A fan of Fiddler on the Roof, Lizzy has always been curious about modern-day matchmakers. So, TOC hooked her up with two: Stefanie Safran of Chicago-based Stef and the City (stefandthecity.com) and Janis Spindel (janisspindelmatchmaker.com), a New Yorker entering the Chicago market.

**>December 18<** I met Stef at the 24-hour Starbucks in Old Town. In 90 minutes, I disclosed more details about my dating history than a stranger should ever know. Stef calls herself “Chicago’s Introductionista,” meaning she also gives clients tips on how to meet dates. She has 16 rules (example: For the first three weeks of dating, phone calls only!); break one and she keeps at least part of the \$25 deposit you pay on top of her \$42–\$125 fee per introduction. She suggested I join her at the gym so I could watch her hit on guys. I was afraid to mention that I wear old T-shirts to the gym and have my headphones in at all times.

**>December 20<** I received an e-mail from Janis, who later told me she’s the only person in the country with the gift of matching people for lasting marriage. Janis charges women \$25 to submit a profile and two pictures. If you fit what her pool of men is looking for, you’re eligible to attend a group meeting with her (\$200), or arrange a one-on-one consultation (\$1,000). I resisted the urge to send a Halloween photo of myself dressed in head-to-toe *Cats* gear. I assume the men who pay her \$100,000–\$500,000 to find them wives want more refinement than spandex and face paint. Although in my book, anyone who commits to a costume is golden.

**>December 22<** Stef sent me for a makeover with Joey Kiening at Solo Salon, who charges \$35–\$95 for a style and \$55 for a makeup application. He did a beautiful, natural job. Meanwhile, Janis left me a message about a *beyond adorable* young man. When I called back, she told me (1) my hair is not sexy enough, and (2) I’m a tough case, since I’m 5’10”. For the record, I have great hair. Then, it was off to meet Stef for her “Wing Chix” (read: she plays wingwoman) service at a networking party at Excalibur. A guy and I made the “red carpet” photographer take photos of us in a fake fistfight.



**Using a matchmaker**

**CATCH ME A CATCH**  
Matchmaker Stefanie Safran, center, introduces Lizzy to a man at Excalibur.

**>December 24<** Stef e-mailed me with her take on the event. She thinks I might be too picky (friends have told me this before). She critiqued my Match profile, and suggested I remove a photo of me with the pumpkin I carved of FrankenRahm (our mayor as Frankenstein, duh!). “Your face looks shiny,” she wrote. I think guys would see that photo and think: Your pumpkin looks awesome.

**>December 28<** I sent a two-line e-mail to the guy from Excalibur. Even if he doesn’t reply, he should get a laugh out of the fistfight photos.

**>January 11<** Stef is going to set me up with an Abercrombie model. My family’s reaction: “She

knows an Abercrombie model who’s not gay?”  
**>January 18<** Sadly, Janis never made it to Chicago to go “galavanting in that triangle area” (shudder), so I doubt I will ever meet any of her wealthy, lonely clients. Stef’s Abercrombie model has yet to materialize, and the Excalibur dude never replied. Maybe Janis was right, and as soon as I figure out how to pull off “sexy hair,” I’ll settle down with a *beyond adorable* man. I think I’ll bet on finding someone, sans matchmaker, who appreciates my height, style and pumpkin-carving skills.

**Want to date Lizzy?** E-mail lizzzym@tocpersonals.com.

**DATE OUR READERS!**

**Robyn Chang, 25, Logan Square, straight**  
**What’s the worst date you ever had?**

This guy I knew was going to La Crosse, Wisconsin, and asked me if I wanted to go. When we got there it ended up being a family event, with a crazy ex-girlfriend present. He also ditched me at his brother’s house to go to a strip club. On the ride home he told me he “didn’t want to talk” and the only CD he had was Counting Crows. So we sat in silence and listened to the frickin’ Counting Crows on repeat for hours. I hate “Mr. Jones.” I hate “Mr. Jones” forever.



At [timeoutchicago.com/singles](http://timeoutchicago.com/singles), 26 Chicagoans looking for love divulge details about their dating lives, including their favorite first-date spots (results below) and the worst dates they’ve been on. Go online to ask for a date with Robyn (below) or another sexy single.

**What’s your idea of a perfect first date?**

- Weekend in Tokyo 4%
- Coffee 8%
- Cooking class 8%
- Sporting event 11%
- Concert or comedy show 11%

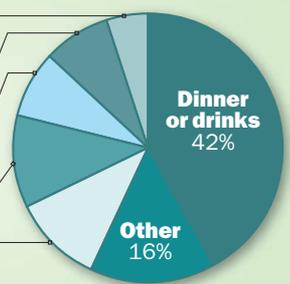


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