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Fifty First Dates after Fifty: A Memoir

Carolyn Lee Arnold
She Writes Press (Nov 2, 2021)
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Fifty First Dates after Fifty *is a genuine memoir that recounts a period of trying out new relationships and investigating spirituality.*

Carolyn Lee Arnold's unconventional memoir *Fifty First Dates after Fifty* covers her midlife quest for love, sex, and emotional connection.

When her seven-year relationship with Buddhist, noncommittal Peter ended with a letting go ceremony, Arnold—with thirty years of social science research and ten years of organizing relationship workshops under her belt—decided to turn her search for a committed partner into a project. A member of a New Age community in California, she was well-versed in personal growth workshops and spiritual ceremonies, and meeting new people was part of her regular routine.

Arnold went on fifty first dates, but her book covers only the most notable ones, as with one with a just-divorced neighbor who wanted her to hang out in his sauna, and one with a sexy free spirit whom she met at a tantra workshop and had a steamy tryst with on the side of the highway. The dating project lasted for three years and was punctuated by spiritual workshops. All kinds of men were included; she ended up meeting someone who became her partner of over a decade.

A variety of emotions and experiences are represented in Arnold's hunt for love. The book covers discoveries, excitement, and happiness, but also disappointment and loneliness. Its divisions keep those feelings in mind, but are also progressive. Internally, despite this rise from hope to revelation: they meander, covering ups and downs, and also sometimes spending too much time on what's negative or boring. The book's bright spots—good dates with smart partners; informative workshops—are more engaging.

Arnold is an accessible and conversational guide; her work sometimes has the flavor of diary entries or friendly letters, while at other times it is funny. Explicit sex scenes also play in. Beyond the personal accounts that guide it, the book also delivers helpful relationship advice meant to help others follow Arnold's example, focusing on how to date the right way: with open communication and abundant honesty at the fore. Arnold encourages learning what kind of partner one wants and needs, and shares intriguing lifestyle information in her portrayal of New Age eccentrics, sex parties, and nudist events.

A memoir about seeking romance in midlife, Carolyn Lee Arnold's *Fifty First Dates after Fifty* is genuine as it recounts a period of trying out new relationships and investigating spirituality.

ASHLEY HOLSTROM (September 1, 2021)

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