

Room for romance

The hunt for a great apartment just might result in love

By ANDREA MEYER

MY friends Kim and Christy both ended up with guys who started out as their roommates.

Kim rented the spare bedroom in her Brooklyn apartment to a friend of a friend, and within three weeks, they were in love — now, she and Loren are married.

Christy answered her now-fiancé Peter's ad because it said, "dogs welcome," and she had two.

"It takes three months before you start watching movies together," she says. "And when you start watching movies together, you know what that means."

Were these roommate romances the result of pure luck — or something more?

My friend Joe told me about a guy he knows who hooked up with so many women while showing his apartment, he continued inviting over potential flatmates even after finding one (female, of course.)

"When she was out during the day," Joe said, "he'd show the place, and then say, 'Wanna go out later?'"

My own sister met a slew of cute guys looking for a Williamsburg share. She says it beats Internet dating because you get to check out what books he reads, whether he has plants and how clean his kitchen is.

Thirtysomething and broken-hearted after the recent break-up of a drawn-out romance, I decided to see if my sister was right. I went on a roommate hunt.

It would involve a fair amount of deception, since I just moved into a newly renovated one-bedroom condo in the East Village.

The goal was to meet a good-looking, intelligent, successful, single guy in his 30s, with whom I have uncontrollable chemistry. The challenge was how to locate him.

I began with craigslist.org and was daunted by the number of apartments.

I limited my search to downtown Manhattan, Williamsburg and Carroll Gardens, since they're the neighborhoods I like best, but I

made exceptions for people like Heinz, an artist with a Midtown loft, after an intriguing call.

After a round of frustrating conversations with guys who were too young, too boring or too attached to their girlfriends, I finally spoke to an Italian photographer with a two-bedroom in SoHo.

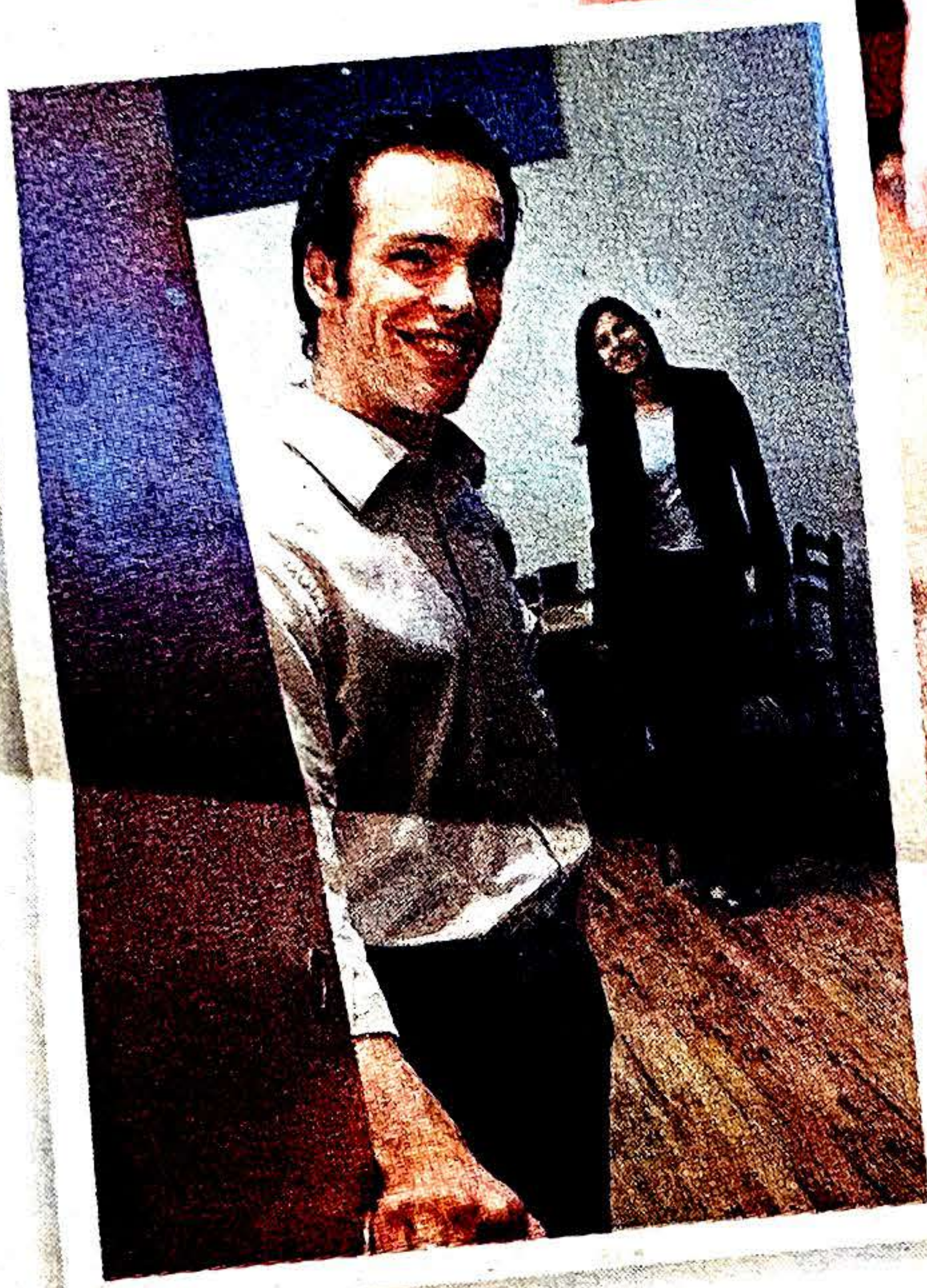
After climbing five flights of stairs, I was delighted to find him attractive and hospitable. He offered me a drink, and we sat down to make fun of some bad reality show.

It was all going well, until the doorbell rang — it was his equally attractive girlfriend.

After that, I began asking "Do you have a girlfriend who stays over all the time?" in my preliminary interviews.

It's a reasonable question if you're going to live with someone, and I was able to eliminate a few unavailables. But I learned that maybe seven out of 10 New York men will allude to a girl who occasionally spends the night.

I passed up the apartment of the



36-year-old geologist who might move in with his "sweetheart," but did go see the Williamsburg loft belonging to a British graphic designer, because his casual, "My girlfriend sometimes sleeps over," implied that the relationship wasn't necessarily serious.

But when I met the handsome, smart and personable fellow — someone I would like to date — he mentioned her more than once.

Then there was Michael, a 30-year-old Wall Streeter I spoke to

six times before checking out his TriBeCa loft, complete with a girlfriend putting on makeup in the bathroom. Darn.

I learned that men are wary of asking out a woman who might move in. While some seemed interested, nobody initially popped the question, even though I was lounging on their couch in a tank top, asking intimate questions.

So, I made a round of calls letting people know that while I enjoyed meeting them, I wasn't moving in.

Sure enough, the first guy I called, Jonathan from the East Village, said, "Next time you're in the neighborhood, we should have a drink."

With the Chilean filmmaker from Williamsburg, I had to ask him out for a beer. Fortunately, he responded, "I'd love to."

After two weeks, 35 e-mail exchanges, 22 phone calls and 10 apartment visits, I wound up with three dates, two invitations I turned down and one unfortunate crush on a guy with a girlfriend.

One man I had dinner with got extremely upset when I confessed I wasn't really looking for an apartment. I hope he'll forgive me.

I'd like to stay in touch with him and the others I went out with, although I'm not convinced I'm

The author (above) looked for love in the roommate-wanted ads — but often found men with girlfriends, like Michael Henderson (left), at home with gal pal Rania Tsoukalas.

destined to eternally love, honor and cherish any of them.

Would Christy have ended up with Peter if she'd only met him that first day? Would Kim have married Loren if she'd gone through a contrived roommate-to-be interview?

"The difference when you live together is you're not wearing make-up — you're walking around in your bathrobe," she says.

"You're watching TV, and the other person sits down. You have some extra food, you're like, 'I'm making dinner,' and the other person is there. You're not sitting there over a dinner table going, 'Uh, uh, where'd you grow up?'"

While I won't rule out finding love in the apartment classifieds, it takes a whole lot of hunting.

A friend suggested I put up my own ad and let the men come to me, but wouldn't that seem strange for a single woman with one bedroom?

Next time I buy a place, maybe I'll spring for two.

Photos: Michael Sforanski, N.Y. Post; Tamara Beckwith

Decoding the ads

To find a boyfriend, avoid apartment ads that say the following:

"Cute, lovely, charming, adorable": He's a girl or gay guy.

"Chill": Probably a recent college grad or stoner.

"No animals": Who wants to date a guy who doesn't love pets?

"Looking for gay-friendly roommate": Self-explanatory.

"Mature": Yikes!

"Very low rent": Very scary apartment.

"Never home": Probably has a girlfriend.