LAKEFRONT BILLIONAIRES

DA

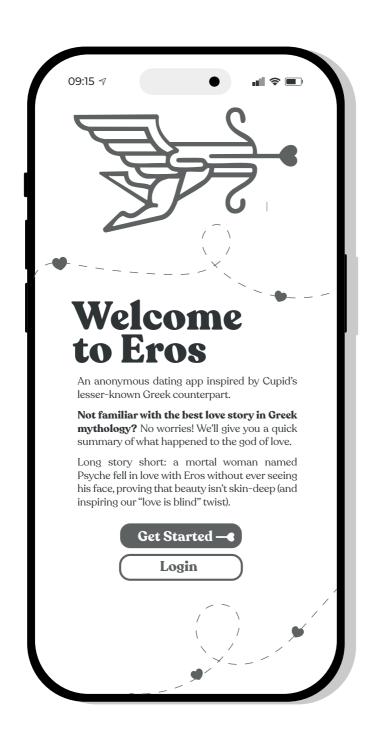


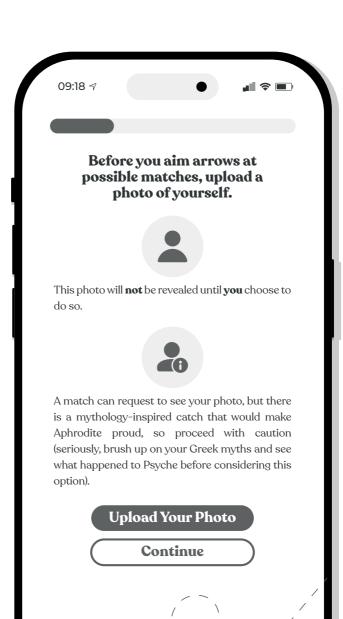
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
LAUREN ASHER

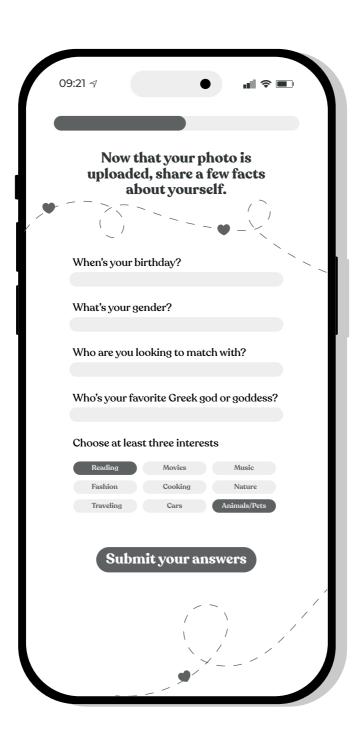
To those who dream of falling in love.

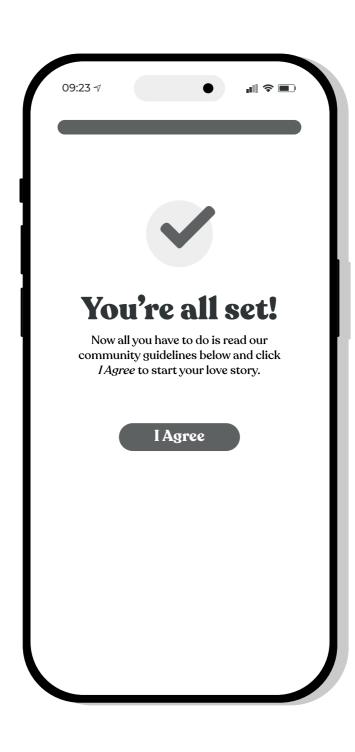
And to anyone who fears it.

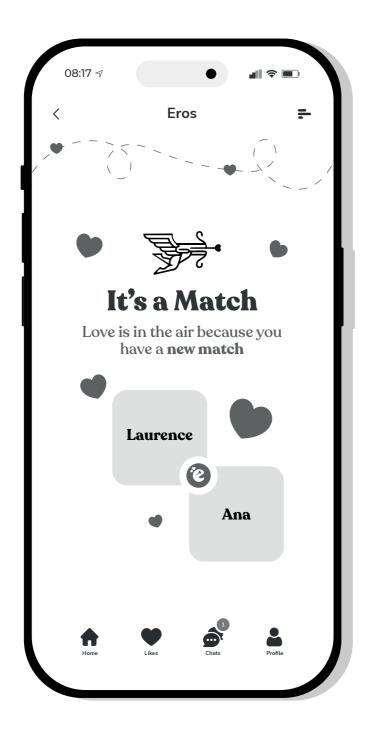
Love is one of life's greatest rewards,
so long as you're prepared to work for it.













Have you ever done something bad?

ANA

I can't tell if you're trying to flirt with me or scare me into never using Eros again.

LAURENCE

And if it's the first?

ANA

Well, if I have done something bad, then I'm not about to disclose it in a chat that some random IT guy could read when he's bored.

LAURENCE

And if it's the second option?

ANA

Then I have a feeling we're not talking about traffic violations or borrowing my sister's favorite sweater and shrinking it by accident.

LAURENCE

Most definitely not.

ANA

Good to know.

ANA

Then as your unofficial legal counsel, I need to advise you against continuing this conversation.

LAURENCE

Are you a lawyer?

ANA

After all the dramatized detective shows I've seen,
I could run a law firm.

LAURENCE

Straight into the ground?

I'm wounded that you think so little of me.

Have a little faith.

LAURENCE

I have some.

ANA

Just not the good kind?

LAURENCE

Exactly.

ANA

You are aware this is a dating app and not a crisis hotline, right?

LAURENCE

It's easy to forget given the state of your love life.

ANA

Mine? What about yours?

LAURENCE

It was DOA years ago.

ANA

Aw. Did someone break your heart?

LAURENCE

Who said I have one?

ANA

Well then now's my chance to drop a clichéd "everyone has a heart, even if yours is a bit broken" line.

LAURENCE

You've got a real talent for words.

ANA

Really?

LAURENCE

No.

Maybe it's time for me to delete this anonymous chat and find someone who appreciates my charm AND has no problem meeting up in person after spending the last few weeks messaging nonstop.

LAURENCE

Giving up already?

ANA

Your sunny disposition is starting to wear on me a bit.

LAURENCE

Your jokes are improving. I nearly laughed.

ANA

Is there hope for me yet?

LAURENCE

I hate to break it to you, but I have about as much hope as I do faith.

ANA

You know what I learned from fostering animals?

ANA

Hurt dogs don't holler. They bite.



ANA

Sometimes I think about packing my bags and going somewhere else.

LAURENCE

I don't believe you.

You're right. I love Lake Wisteria and plan on spending the rest of my life here. It's part of my whole thirty-year plan to buy a cottage, have a few kids, and start a bee sanctuary in my backyard.

LAURENCE

That's...oddly specific.

ANA

I've had a lot of time to think it over.

LAURENCE

I wouldn't have guessed.

ANA

Don't you have a thirty-year plan?

LAURENCE

No, and even if I did, I don't think it would include this town.

ANA

This place will warm up to you eventually.

Mark my words.

LAURENCE

Nearly impossible with the brutal winters.

ANA

I take it you're not from somewhere cold.

LAURENCE

Hell is known to have the same temp yearround.

ANA

You're funny.

LAURENCE

Your bar is far too low.

ANA

At least it's easier for you to hit.



You should expect more from people.

ANA

Why?

LAURENCE

Because if not, then you'll end up with someone like me.

ANA

Is that supposed to be a bad thing?

LAURENCE

You have no idea.

E September

ANA

Do you ever feel lonely?

LAURENCE

No.

ANA

Let me guess: You enjoy your own company way too much.

LAURENCE

You'd understand if you heard the voice in my head.

ANA

You struggle with that too? I tho ught I was the only one.

ANA

Does yours always tell you to treat yourself to a sweet treat or new outfit when you've been mildly inconvenienced?

No.

ANA

Oh.

ANA

That's disappointing.

ANA

Perhaps you should seek professional help then.

LAURENCE

Why do you feel lonely?

ANA

Forget about me. We're focusing on you for once.

LAURENCE

If I answer your question honestly, will you tell me?

ANA

Aw. You care about my feelings that much? I'm touched.

LAURENCE

More like I'm curious how someone like you could ever feel lonely a single day in her life.

ANA

I can't tell if you're insulting me or not.

LAURENCE

You'd know if I was.

ANA

Would it kill you to compliment someone from time to time?

ANA

And by someone, I mean me.

LAURENCE

And risk you expecting more of them?

The horror!!!

LAURENCE

Answer my question.

ANA

It might seem silly to someone who doesn't care for other people's company.

LAURENCE

I like yours.

ANA IS OFFLINE.

ANA IS ONLINE.

ANA

Sorry for the delay. I had to check if I accidentally fell asleep at work and started dreaming.

LAURENCE

And how did you do that?

ANA

It's best you don't ask.

LAURENCE

You're...

ANA

The most special woman you've ever met?

LAURENCE

No.

LAURENCE

You're the most special *person* I've ever met.

ANA

That better not be an insult.

LAURENCE

And if it wasn't?

Then you might end up proving this anonymous app isn't such a silly idea after all.



ANA

So, you're shipwrecked on an island and you can only bring three things. What are they?

LAURENCE

Things or people?

ANA

We both know you'd never willingly choose to be trapped with another human being.

LAURENCE

True.

LAURENCE

Or at least it was until I met you.

'2 October

ANA

There's a Halloween party tomorrow at Last Call. I think it would be fun.

LAURENCE

Nice. Enjoy.

ANA

You should go.

LAURENCE

I'm busy.

Your blood sacrifices can wait.

LAURENCE

Tell that to the full moon.

ANA

I hope you're joking.

ANA

Please tell me you're kidding.

ANA

It's been five minutes and I'm still

waiting for an answer.

LAURENCE

Let's leave it up to your imagination.

ANA

How about we don't since it tends to run a bit wild.

LAURENCE

This is your daily reminder that I'm not some vampire or werewolf.

ANA

Except that's exactly what someone would say to get me off their trail.

LAURENCE

Right.

ANA

Please come to the party.

ANA

Don't make me beg.

LAURENCE

I'd rather you didn't. I find submissiveness rather unattractive.

Funny because I feel the same way about someone running scared.

LAURENCE

I'm not scared.

ANA

Right. Sure you aren't.

LAURENCE

Why are you pushing for us to meet up?

ANA

I'm done giving you time to get to know me first.

ANA

Tomorrow is your only chance. I'll be dressed like a cowgirl. Pink hat. Lots of sparkles. Most likely to be found out on the dance floor with a passion fruit vodka seltzer in hand.

LAURENCE

I won't be attending.

ΔΝΔ

What a shame. If you don't show up, then I plan on going home with someone else.

LAURENCE

Are you threatening me?

ANA

If you took it as one, that means you care more about me than you want to admit.

LAURENCE

I don't.

ANA

Then prove it.

ANA IS OFFLINE



When you see this tonight, run.

LAURENCE ATTACHED A PHOTO

ANA

Run where? Straight into your arms?

LAURENCE

Why am I not surprised?

ANA

How did you get a mask like that on short notice?

LAURENCE

Don't worry about it.

ANA

Please. The only thing I'm worried about is the way I'll react in public once we finally meet.

ANA IS OFFLINE

