

To Swipe or Not To Swipe

By Erin Renzi

Slow dancing on the Esplanade along the Charles River, stargazing, and sharing a bottle of wine — this may sound like a scene from a rom-com, but Annie Bennett, a third-year journalism student at Emerson College, experienced this on a first date with a Tinder match. “We spent all night together, it was like something from a movie,” Bennett said. When her Tinder match flew back home to Kansas, the girls decided to stay in touch.

Bennett’s match kept telling her to come to visit at Kansas University. Originally opposed, Bennett eventually bought a plane ticket. “I found some cheap flights, and I was like ‘Fuck it, whatever,’” she said. Bennett’s visit ended with her locked out of her date’s dorm room and crashing in a random freshman’s spare bunk bed. Bennett immediately left the next morning — it’s no surprise that the two didn’t talk much after that.

Tinder launched ten years ago in September of 2012. With the app having millions of users for over a decade, along with the release of other dating apps like Bumble and Hinge, online dating has become more commonplace and an accepted aspect of dating life, especially for college-aged individuals. As someone who met their current boyfriend of over two years on Tinder, I am a supporter of dating apps. But this isn’t to say that college students aren’t still wary when it comes to meeting a potential partner through swiping.

When using dating apps, you never know who you might meet, or what type of situation you will find yourself in when going on a date. Calvin Kertzman, a second-year Visual Media Arts student at Emerson College, messaged someone on Hinge who claimed they wanted to sell him a baby. “It

was really weird, I didn't know what to do," Kertzman said. "I deleted Hinge for a while after that — I was kind of spooked."

Of course, not everyone experiences something strange while swiping. Elizabeth Albahary, a student at Boston University, met with several matches from her school, but nothing ever came from it. She has since deleted all dating apps. "I definitely would rather meet someone organically because, for me, it feels more natural," explains Albahary.

Along with dating apps come presumptions and certain stigmas. "There's just an expectation of a relationship," Albahary said. "I want to make a friend first. I think when being friends with someone first, you can create more of a trustworthy and faithful foundation in a relationship."

I haven't been on dating apps in over two years, but during my freshman year of college, I found Tinder to typically be used for hookups and Bumble for those in search of more serious relationships. Kertzman feels Hinge provides a certain intimacy that Tinder can't, because Hinge profiles include prompts and less space for photos. "You really have to think about answers that will catch someone's eye or answers that really reflect you, but also the kind of person you want to attract," he said.

Location can also influence the success of using dating apps. When Kertzman went home to New York City for spring break, he used Tinder and within a week found himself talking to around 30 people. He describes Tinder as an app for people looking for fun. "I feel like people in Boston are looking for a lot more slower experiences," he said, making Hinge his favorite platform to use while at school.

Bennett, Albahary and Kertzman's experiences beg the question: Can dating apps provide more than an interesting story to tell? It all depends on what the user is hoping to gain from swiping. I think if you download a dating app with little to no expectations, you might find yourself pleasantly surprised.

Ashley Guse, a freshman at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, downloaded Tinder during her first semester of college for fun. She matched with a lot of people and started conversations, through which she discovered some people acted nice and genuine, while others seemed more seductive and riskier. While she never hooked up with or dated anyone from the platform, she used it to meet new people.

"I have met up with Tinder matches before, but usually we both were with some friends," Guse said. "I also use it [Tinder] to see if I would match with people I know or people I didn't think would swipe right on me. Overall, I have had a good experience with the app."

Even after Annie Bennett experienced the disastrous second date with her Tinder match from Kansas, she kept swiping. In late January, she received a notification signifying she had a new match. "Are you kidding me right now? This girl is hot!" Bennett thought when looking at her profile.

Bennet and her Tinder match are now officially dating and approaching their two-month anniversary. Meeting a romantic partner on a dating app may not be for everyone, but when someone is the right fit for you, you just know.