

Do you feel too old to find true love again? Has the world hurt you deeply and you wonder about a future filled with repeated endless nights alone? Has your heart been bruised with heart break? Is it too late for love?

So many older singles choose not to try at love one more time. Was it devastating divorce or two? Did the death of a spouse convince you it hurt too much?

But life has funny twists and turns, much like a new dance you're trying to learn—it feels clumsy at first, then once you learn it, it feels comfortable and you execute the moves with no thought at all.

And so, it was with George and Lauren. They met when she was sixty, most of her life gone, spent in so many full rewarding ways. She had married twice. One left her for a younger woman, and the other died way too young in a car crash. That loss left her a widow and childless—so much left undone and so much left unsaid. She often grieved over the vast emptiness it left behind.

For thirty-two years, Lauren enjoyed a rewarding job as a middle school English teacher. At fifty-eight she retired with full retirement pay and continued a lifelong dream—writing. Before retirement, she published two books and had such success, one of the big five publishing company picked up her next book. This literary success contributed to her retirement lifestyle and set her free to enjoy her life and still pursue her writing career because she could do it anywhere.

And she danced—her true passion in life! She enjoyed a mixture of dance styles: square dance, round dance, country western, and west coast swing.

However, Lauren knew deep loneliness—the ache and pain that came with no one sitting across from her at the dinner table, the emptiness of her bed, her unfulfilled desire for a constant dance partner or her unfulfilled marriage dreams. Her solitary nights stacked up on each other night after night, but she became used to them. She thought that was the way it was going to be and accepted it. She knew about the disproportionate male/female ratio in the United States, and being older, it wasn't in her favor. Resolutely, she had made peace with it, then she met George, and her whole world changed.

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Lauren spent her the summers traveling in a class A Winnebago RV across the USA—writing, reading, camping, dancing and meeting people.

If you met Lauren, she appeared fifty; she had matured with grace and beauty. In fact, friends continued to tell her she looked lovelier and younger with age! She kept a watchful eye on her petite size, exercising regularly and eating wisely.

During her travels, Lauren had several suitors but felt no sexual attraction to anyone and decided early on she would forego casual sex. She was not a prude but knew any sexual involvements without a deep commitment would complicate matters. Being a mature woman, she just kept saying no to all the many advances. In reality, she just wanted a dance partner.

She met George in Reno, Nevada square dancing at a square and round dance festival in early May, the Silver State festival. She was sixty; he was sixty-five. Lauren had attended this event before and expected an enjoyable time this year. She had a favorable reputation with the single male dancers as being a fun-loving, talented dancer, so she didn't worry about attending the event without a partner even though the single women outnumbered the men.

She enjoyed the Friday night dance, dancing with a mixture of men, and the dance partners continued during the Saturday afternoon workshops. For dinner, she joined a lively group of singles and couples—friends from all over the United States. As she eyed the group around the table, each held a special memory in her heart, attached to another time and another dance. She loved her dance family. So far, the weekend had gone well—nothing out of the ordinary but fun.

Then Saturday evening changed her world. Their eyes met across the overcrowded floor—that's sounds too cliché, but she had no other words to describe the moment they connected. Heads bobbed between them, but eye contact occurred between these two strangers, for that one magnetic moment.

George weaved his way across the crowded floor and asked Lauren to dance. Feeling like a bashful teenager, she blushed and shook her head, "No" because she had promised the next one to someone else. George understood his dilemma and asked for the one after that and then was by her side for the rest of the evening.

In between tips they agreed not to round dance, even though she loved it. Friends wondered about her absence on the round dance floor because she never sat out if she had a dance partner. But something told Lauren to stop and listen. They sat and talked, exchanging those awkward first facts, widowed or divorced, working or retired, those unique details required when an older couple first meets.

As the music started for the next tip, George took Lauren's hand and led her to the dance

floor. For the rest of the evening, they jumped into squares with her friends and his. The single male dancers watched silently as they saw George commandeer one of their favorite dance partners away.

At the end of the square dance part of the evening, George asked, “Do you want to go to the after-party?”

Lauren squealed with delight, “Yes, I do!” So many of the older men wore out before the after-party, so she had become accustomed to not going. She knew she had found a kindred spirit if he had the energy to keep dancing.

At the after-party, they danced every dance, whatever the step or the music. The band played many traditional country western favorites. They both sang those familiar lyrics. Lauren’s favorite, “Silver Wings” had George singing a duo with her as they two-stepped around the floor.

When the band started the first few notes of “In the Mood,” she held her breath. So many men couldn’t jitterbug, so she would usually have to find another woman to dance with. But George bopped onto the floor and did an outlandish Lindy Hop that kept her moving.

George was as skilled a dancer as she. For the rest of the after-party, when George guided Lauren to the dance floor, she felt like a queen, and the smile that crossed George's lips as his arms encircled her showed sheer pleasure. This charming couple glided across the floor, swinging and swaying to the beat as one. When George held her close, Lauren breathed in his masculine cologne mingled with his powerful body scent, not body odor, but a distinct smell she would soon name as his and his only.

The two figures blended into one body, gliding to the beat of the melody, her competent to follow his apt leads. They orchestrated their dance steps with accuracy.

Lost to the surrounding world, George and Lauren smiled and laughed often. Friends noticed and nodded their heads as they watched this love affair blossom right before their eyes. On the slow dances their cheeks touched and his short gray locks touched her salt and pepper shoulder-length hair. She wanted this night to last forever.

When the dance ended, George escorted Lauren to her car. Exchanging phone numbers, they agreed to meet at Shoney's restaurant in five minutes.

George walked to his car with a light and youthful step. Lauren swung her legs into her car and pushed her petticoat layers under the steering wheel so she could see out. Lauren caught her eyes in the rear-view mirror and saw the eyes of a teen glowing back.

They met at the restaurant—two cautious, tentative teenyboppers, not two seasoned adults. The waiter directed them to a half-size booth. George settled in, facing her. They ordered blueberry pie, and the conversation lagged at first then gained momentum. After two hours of endless conversation, Lauren yawned and sighed, "It's time to go."

They conferred about their future dance schedules and made a date for the coming Saturday in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Lauren's home, to go to a contra dance, a dance form she loved. Albuquerque had been her lifetime home; she loved the dry heat and the New Mexican culture and food. George had driven through Albuquerque often on his way to other dances or events, admired the high desert terrain and the majestic Sandia mountains but never stopped.

As George and Lauren walked to her car, they swung their joined hands and chuckled. He kissed her good night on the cheek. This was the start of something special, they realized.

Lauren tossed and turned that night in bed, anxious over her upcoming date—a week away. It had been years since she had ventured on the dating scene. She felt so alive!!

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The following travel week went by uneventful with no incidences on the road for either one which is always good. He decided to take a different route than she because he needed some space to think about her and what he felt was coming for them. Lauren took her time going south, stopping at familiar campgrounds and enjoying the scenery. When she arrived in Albuquerque on Friday afternoon, she settled into her usual spot at the RV park she had moved to several years ago when she downsized from her house. Her next-door neighbors dropped in to welcome her home, asking about her time in Nevada. She decided to keep George a secret for now.

All day Saturday Lauren occupied herself right up to George's arrival, then his knock startled her. When she opened the door, George took her into his arms with an embrace, exclaiming, "Lauren, you look lovely tonight."

The contra dance was more fun than she had experienced in years. She felt childlike and laughed deeply! Lauren so enjoyed looking into George's eyes and saw sheer joy reflected. She loved the long swings in contra dancing that kept George and her spinning and spinning much longer than a square dance swing!

The night ended too soon. They lingered at the door to her RV, holding each other in an

embrace that shook the world. Lauren tried to say good night, hesitated, finally said good night with a kiss and shut the door.

She exhaled and leaned her head against the closed door, still aware of his presence. Lauren glided across the kitchen to her bedroom still intoxicated with the joy of contra dancing with a man she possibly was falling in love with. She giggled as she slipped into bed.

Her dreams that night overflowed with swings and twirls and strong arms holding her tight. She snuggled deep into her bed, not wanting the dream to end.

The next morning, George called to wish her a happy morning and set up a date for the coming Saturday night.

That's the way their relationship took off, steady and constant, built on mutual interests. George sold his RV and moved in with Lauren, hers being bigger, a thirty-seven foot Winnebago Class A with ample room. Activity defined this couple. They danced, camped, hiked, fished, watched movies, and traveled to faraway places.

A passionate sex life surprised both of them. George and Lauren thought they were too old to rekindle that spark, but it happened to their mutual enjoyment and amusement. Often George chuckled after a night of lovemaking, saying, "I thought this part of my life was over. But you revitalized it!" Lauren always blushed yet agreed wholeheartedly.

Supportive of Lauren's writing, George often encouraged her to read him a piece of her current writing project. When she did, his eager attention made her words so important and vital. He became her biggest fan and editor and often promoted her books more than she did. Her book business continued to boom.

George and Lauren's love and relationship touched many who watched them. Friends wondered about finding love at their age. Their wedding was a simple ceremony before a square dance, and it declared to many elderly friends the possibilities in life. Many friends of all ages attended and celebrated this marriage. The evening rang with laughter and love.

The following years unfolded uneventfully, not marked by commotion and chaos but consistency and care. Their love answered the test of time.

As they grew older, they realized they had to be tolerant of each other, especially when Lauren lost her hearing and had to buy hearing aids. Vanity held her captive. She ignored her problem as long as she could, but when she began causing squares to break down because she missed a call, she knew it was time. When she finally decided to go for it, Lauren easily made

the adjustment and their lives ran much smoother. George never once criticized her dragging her heels but celebrated her decision.

As George aged, he faced a problem with his lousy teeth—crooked teeth in the front and teeth falling out without biting anything too hard. So, he decided it was time for dentures. He spent a couple grueling months without teeth and felt unattractive and old which reminded Lauren to be as patient and loving as he had been with her. Often, she grabbed him with a bear hug saying, “Kiss me, you fool!” and his laughter filled the room. When he could finally put in the dentures, he did it easily and his beaming smile with beautiful teeth wowed Lauren once again. None of life’s adversities diminished their love and care for each other.

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The years continued to unfold, and they enjoyed themselves but decreased their travel and dancing. They still danced but not every tip and not every night of the week like before.

As time slipped by, Lauren noticed a drastic change in George’s health and attitude—shortness of breath and a cranky answer to simple questions. Something was changing. George hated to go to the doctor, but after her persistent nagging, he finally agreed to go, and she insisted on going with him. Something was not right.

At eighty-five, George received a diagnosis of stage four lung cancer, becoming bedridden and weak quickly. He admitted to being a heavy chain smoker years ago but thought he was safe because he hadn’t smoked in forty years. The change came without a warning—now he experienced persistent trouble breathing and needed oxygen 24/7. The doctor warned them that George’s prognosis wasn’t good.

Even though he was dying, George labored over his future. He hated hospitals with their sterile smell and atmosphere, so he chose hospice care and wanted to die at home.

Finally, one autumn night in the cool shadows of their bedroom, George expressed his heart's message to Lauren as she cuddled him close: "We met when I was sixty-five. I figured being elderly limited my future prospects, but you've made these last twenty years heaven. I grew up in a rural community and spent more time alone or with farm animals than humans, thus my quiet personality. I married and divorced twice and fathered three children. After the second divorce, I resolved never to marry again, and I drifted through the years afterwards alone yet yearning for a companion. When I learned to square dance and then took other different dance classes, I fell in love with dancing. I had square danced as a child but forgotten how much fun it

was. After retirement, I followed the square dance circuit across the USA, fishing and hiking along the way."

At this point, George coughed and pain flashed across his face. Sweat beaded across his forehead, and Lauren wiped it away, as she did so often lately. She lit the light beside their bed, brightening the dark room. Everything took effort for George now.

Breathless, he continued his last speech: "We met in Reno, and I haven't been the same. You have been by my side since the day we wed. I knew the moment we met, you'd change my life, and you have. You offered me love when I thought my chances for love were over for good. Yes, Lauren, I found love at sixty-five, and it has continued for twenty years more, so much more than I ever thought I'd have."

Tears filled both of their eyes, and Lauren echoed the same sentiments. At first, her words failed her, a writer who usually had words for everything, but then she dug deep and expressed her deep love and admiration for this man who had filled her life with such ecstasy.

"Your love healed a wound I never dreamed could go away," Lauren looked him in the eyes to be sure he was hearing her. "I found someone who knew me yet didn't run away. You stood by me through the good, the bad and the ordinary. You are my best friend and my lover!"

That night, Lauren cradled George in her arms as he breathed his last. The hospice nurse and George's three children sat in the shadows marveling at the love this couple shared. In preparing each other for the end, they shed many tears together. She recounted their many adventures together, wanting him to remember as she did. Facing his imminent death, she caressed his cheek and his silver hair. Lauren's tears overflowed and covered George's beloved face.

Lauren whispered, "You showed me that love was possible at sixty and have continued blessing me for the last twenty years. Thank you." Then he breathed his last. She gasped and sobbed.

As she stared at his lifeless body, Lauren knew beyond a doubt, here lay her soul mate, the one man she had searched a lifetime for and found. Hers just came late in life but not too late—it's never too late for love!