

Adam Giles

Mini Heartbreak Festival

I met Arnie Achtman on May 2, 2001. I was sipping Molson Canadian at the Imperial Pub with Tracey, Karen and other Erindale Writer's Group members who had made the drive downtown for Writers Write, an event at Toronto's Mayworks festival. After all the writers read their stories at the microphone, we stuck around to drink. Guy Allen, our writing professor from Erindale College in Mississauga, introduced me to Arnie.

"Adam hasn't read on the radio yet," Guy said.

Guy and Arnie co-founded *Life Rattle*, a storytelling program on CKLN FM.

"Adam's got a collection of stories about romance abortions."

Arnie turned to me with a look of concern. "Maybe you should start looking for different kinds of girls."

Everyone at the table laughed.

"You're probably right."

"Well, we'll have to get you lined up to read then. Give me your email address."

I emailed Arnie two of my rejection stories "Christine" and "Lesley." He sent me his edits. He wanted to record them both.

Arnie hit the stop button on his DAT recorder, smiled and shook his head. "You're a pretty sad individual in these stories. I love it."

I tuned in to CKLN 88.1FM when Arnie aired “Christine.” After the story, Arnie spoke: “We’ll be back next week with another story, another heartbreak story, by Adam Giles. We’ve got ourselves a mini-heartbreak festival here at *Life Rattle*.” His tone changed. “I wonder if Adam’s ever going to learn. I recorded Adam Giles reading his story. My name is Arnie Achtman. Stay tuned now for *Aggressive Rock*, coming up next on 88.1FM CKLN.”

Arnie asked me to read “Christine” at the Totally Unknown Writers Festival in October 2001. He said people would laugh at the part where Christine refused the roses I brought to her at home—she had company and said she couldn’t be seen walking in with flowers.

“Really? I don’t think it’s that funny.”

“Of course it’s funny. It’s absurd.”

Arnie was right. Everyone laughed.

The following year, I emailed Arnie my newest rejection story, “Jen.”

Arnie replied a few days later. “You should start looking for different kinds of girls, Adam.”

When I found out Arnie had cancer, Tracey and I visited him at his house in Toronto. I read him my latest story, “Michelle.”

“That was great. Thank you,” he said between coughs. “But Adam, I think you’re still looking for the wrong kinds of girls.”

I smiled. “I haven’t learned yet.”

In December 2004, my friend Amy and I started dating.

I listened again to the recording of “Christine.”

“I wonder if Adam’s ever going to learn,” Arnie says. “I recorded Adam Giles reading his story. My name is Arnie Achtman. Stay tuned now for Aggressive Rock, coming up next on 88.1FM CKLN.”

In the summer of 2005, I asked Amy to marry me.

She said yes.