

# The Perils of Cyber-Dating

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*The*  
Perils *of*  
Cyber-Dating

## PRAISE FOR THE PERILS OF CYBER-DATING

**“Hilariously Funny! Singles of all ages need to read this book.”**

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**“Thank goodness there are still hopeful romantics left in this world!”**

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**“Julie Spira’s a Very Glam Gal”**

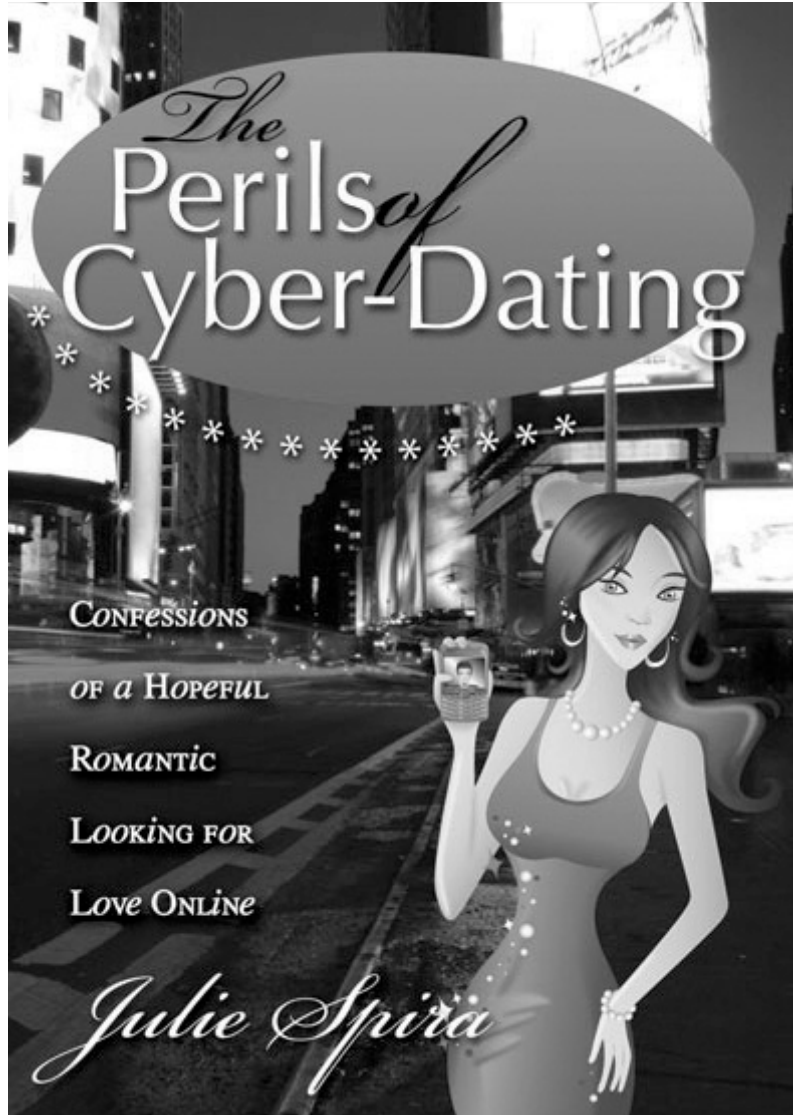
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**“Julie Spira tells a compelling story, shares intimate moments, and transforms her experience into means of larger good.”**

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~ Donna Sozio, Yahoo! Personals dating expert and author, *Never Trust a Man in Alligator Loafers* [www.donnasozio.com](http://www.donnasozio.com)



New York

## **The Perils of Cyber-Dating**

Confessions of a Hopeful Romantic Looking for Love Online

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M.

You were my inspiration.

Always,

J.

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## *Introduction*

With two failed marriages and four engagement rings behind me, I have been successful at falling in love with all the wrong men. Women everywhere complain they can't find a man to make a commitment. Apparently, I am the marrying kind.

Yes, I'm averaging a carat per decade. And yes, once again I'm single now at 50 and wishing I was 40. But I am still a "Hopeful Romantic" and am seeking to find true love again online. With my own personal rules of "netiquette," I'm still attempting to maneuver and connect with potential male suitors in search of a "Happily Ever After."

It was 1994, and it was a pivotal year for me. I broke up with the "Love of My Life" for the first of two times. After three years together, he wouldn't commit to marrying me. He said he wanted to marry me "someday."

Also in 1994, I was the first on the block to embrace the World Wide Web, even as my friends and colleagues kept asking, the World Wide What? My personal life and professional career suddenly were filled with dot-com excitement. I joined the first new media group, where a few of us Internet leaders met at our local watering hole

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near the beach in Venice, California. We were ahead of our time. We were the new technology experts trying to change the way the world operated with three little w's. I was hired as Vice President of an up-and-coming Internet company with stock options and was ready to go.

My introduction to cyber-dating happened shortly thereafter. I signed up for an AOL Account and was the first of my friends to try online dating. I was considered a pioneer in the days of online dating and soon became known as the cyber-dating expert. I created my online identities of *Pianobaby* in honor of my baby grand keyboard and *HarleyQT*, with the hopes of finding another high-end biker to ride into the sunset with. I eventually retired the *HarleyQT* account when I decided I didn't want to end up as an organ donor. As quickly as my profiles went up, there were downpours of responses and it started raining men. These were the days of the dial-up connection, and I would listen to the screeching sound of my phone line as it was connecting ever so slowly to potential dates. I would wait several minutes to view the latest photos of those I might get to meet. Every month, my cyber-bill got bigger and bigger as I was charged a per-minute usage fee and suffered with the low bandwidth. But it was worth the wait because there was a whole world of possible suitors writing to me.

It has been almost 15 years since I first started my online dating experience. My position as the Cyber-Dating Expert encompassed over 250 dates in my 30s, 40s, and 50s. My

friends would consult me in critiquing their online profiles and I would lend an ear with full reports at the end of their cyber-dates. My tenure of online dating resulted in an on-again, off-again love relationship with the process; both because I felt embarrassed at first that I had to look for love online and couldn't meet someone on my own; and because of my history of falling into long term relationships where I am a confirmed serial monogamist, and I would take a break from cyberspace. I am a relationship kind of a gal and after all, isn't the goal to fall in love and retire the cyber-dating account?

Over 10 years ago, I first started writing this book and telling the stories of my romantic journey. I wanted to share my experiences and suggestions for success with love online. Some of the stories are so funny, it's hard to believe they are true. As with most of us, life became busy, and my project went on the back burner until 2008.

I had just ended my six month relationship with the "Latin Lover." It was the shortest long term relationship I ever had. We did not meet online; we met through a mutual friend and business associate. He claimed he wanted to get married, have a meaningful relationship, and wake up in the arms of one woman every morning. With his dreamy eyes fixated on me, he told me that he wanted a commitment. He told me he loved me.

One day, shortly after returning from a romantic trip to Acapulco together, it was brought to my attention that my boyfriend, "The Latin Lover," had a very active online

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profile on Match.com. Without my knowledge, he had been searching for women in cyberspace the entire time we were dating. It turned out he had chosen a life as a serial dater over a lifetime of love with me.

They say the best revenge is a life well lived, so I chose to re-emerge in the online dating scene, to share my stories, and to once again look for “Mr. Right” almost 15 years after I started. I now have a whole new set of rules of “netiquette” that I’m happy to share.

This book is not intended to scare or discourage anyone from online dating. It is a real-life guide to embrace and navigate the World Wide Web with fun and entertaining stories, all with the goal of achieving “Happily Ever After.” It’s a romantic journey and these are my stories.

## CHAPTER 1

### *In the Beginning*

Not everyone gets to experience true love. A love so strong it causes your heart to ache. A love that makes you lose your appetite due to the butterflies in your stomach. It's that rare once-in-a-lifetime love when two people actually fall in love across a crowded room before ever speaking to each other. This was my experience with the man I refer to as the "Love of My Life." Before he even had the chance to say hello to me, we were both in heaven. The chemistry drew us together like a magnet, two strangers who had to meet. We had stared at each other smiling from across a crowded room for 20 minutes. By the time he walked over to introduce himself to me, I knew I was in trouble as my body started to tingle and neither of us could stop smiling. Everything was suddenly beautiful. We exchanged

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phone numbers, and as I flew to Las Vegas that evening, I felt like I was on cloud nine during the whole flight. Our courtship started shortly thereafter, and our chemistry and passion lasted for seven years. I was fortunate to have had this amazing love, but with it came the heartbreak that was as equally intense as the passion we shared.

I initially ended the relationship with the “Love of My Life” as I realized I was his transition person (T.P.), which meant I knew he would never marry me. The ink was barely dry on his divorce papers and I wanted a commitment. Marriage felt like death to him, but it was something I longed and ached for. I had put in my years of love and devotion and came up empty-handed. I vowed to never again be a T.P. As a matter of fact, these days I ask every divorcee if he has already had his T.P. before accepting a first date.

Our seven-year love affair was so strong that when “The Love of My Life” eventually remarried, he was forbidden to ever talk to me again by his new wife. She put him on a short leash as they both had a history of straying in their previous marriages. He sold out for the highest bidder with the largest dowry, instead of following his heart.

After our tearful first breakup, I briefly went online for the first time to try to and meet a commitment oriented man who wanted to get married. As an early adopter of the Internet, I had professional photos taken, uploaded them, and was ready to enter the world of online dating. I was in my 30s so I was still at an age where I thought I

would be desirable to a man. I chose two dating screen names: *Pianobaby*, as I have a baby grand piano and love to play; and *HarleyQT*, as a tribute to my love of Harley Davidsons.

When choosing to go online in search of love, the most critical challenge is creating your online profile. Having Mr. Right find you is like having a needle find you in a haystack. I compare it to a real estate listing. In real estate, the first week that your house is on the market is important because if it's priced correctly, professionally staged, and marketed well, it generates a lot of leads. Hopefully a qualified buyer will emerge.

The same holds true for a brand new online profile. You are highlighted as "NEW" in the first week or two, and within three days you are overwhelmed with hundreds of emails. If you haven't met your next suitor in the first 30 days, you no longer are a fresh face, and your listing goes stale. The amount of eager men suddenly declines, and you only receive a few emails a day

I was suddenly living an online double life with my two new flirty screen names and I was sure that in one month, the former "Love of My Life" would be replaced. After all, if I made it to the cheerleading squad in high school, I shouldn't have a problem finding a husband online, I thought.

The former love of my life had a Harley Davidson motorcycle, and I hoped to find another hunky biker, more specifically a RUBIE (the acronym for rich urban biker) as

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a permanent substitute. A RUBIE is quite often a CEO type or a Hollywood mogul, who hangs out with Jay Leno at the Love Ride, a charity run for muscular dystrophy. He's the guy who has a pretty girl on the back of his Harley, showing off his \$50,000 custom paint job. A RUBIE often flies to other cities and ships his fancy Harley in a huge truck to meet him at an event where he arrives all fresh and ready to go with his leather chaps and shiny steel metal machine. That is the stereotypical RUBIE and I was determined to meet him. I was going to be a charity upscale biker chick, and with a closet full of classy leather I dressed the part and had high hopes.

Before the invention of online dating, I tried the personal ads in *Los Angeles Magazine*. Yes, I vaguely remember the old-fashioned way of drafting a hand written letter to someone at a mysterious P.O. Box, sending my photos, and hoping to get a reply in the mail one day. My brief exposure to this ended with my second date, a guy whose name I can't remember. It's funny how you suddenly have a senior moment no matter what your age is and you forget their name after a bad date. But I do remember his fancy sports car. He drove a red Porsche with a personalized license plate identifying himself as the "HUSTLER." I was a bit naïve at this point in my life and I actually allowed this stranger to pick me up at my home rather than meeting him at a restaurant. He took me to a sushi bar where he promptly started to snort some white powder in a rolled up \$100 bill. Now you are probably wondering if I am

kidding. And, no, I didn't make this up. I do not do drugs and suddenly my life was put in the hands of a live wire and I wasn't having fun. I was shocked and scared as the speedometer on his sports car reached 90 mph on the overpass to the Marina Freeway from the 405 freeway as he took me home. It was a miracle I made it home in one piece. That night I decided the *Los Angeles Magazine* personal ads were not for me.

It was February, 1995 and Valentine's Day was approaching. I was in my 30s and for the first time in years, I did not have a boyfriend. Valentines Day was and still is one of my favorite holidays. I dreaded being home alone while the former "Love of My Life" was out celebrating our favorite holiday with his new sweetheart, a woman he claimed he didn't have to make a commitment to marry. Did he still love me, I wondered? Of course he did and I believe he always will. He called that night to wish me a happy Valentine's Day, after the romantic dinner with his current love interest was over. I let the call go to voicemail.

I have learned a lot throughout the course of my nearly 15 years of on-again, off-again cyber-dating experiences. While some of these memories have faded, before sending the others up to Internet Heaven—which is my version of the trash icon on my computer where I send my bad cyber-dates to with a one way ticket, I've decided to share them with you.

To sum it up, my own personal online adventures resulted in one marriage and divorce, another fiancé, a

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few new friends, a lot of laughs, and a few heartbreaks. I developed my own personal rules of “netiquette” all from the perils of cyber-dating. I hope you enjoy, laugh, and learn to see the red flag warnings from my stories.

While I used to be honest about my age, I sometimes found myself cutting off a few years to fit into a search. It seems that is the unspoken rule for most women online and men now expect it to be the norm. As I do believe in authenticity, on a first date I usually told the truth and admitted that I was a bit older than I advertised. I added that if he had a problem with that, I fully understood.

It’s funny how the perception of your age can eliminate you from finding “the one.” You need to fit into a search or you are in Internet Heaven alone and lonely. I can thank my mother with her good genes for allowing me to forget that I am 10 years older than I really look.

With each decade came a new uniform for the first cyber-date. In my 30s, I arrived in leather pants and a sweater during the daytime and a little black dress in the evenings. No designer labels were required.

In my 40s, the daytime uniform changed to blue jeans with a “Banana Republic” teddy and a matching cashmere wrap. In the evenings I wore my signature dress: the Roberto Cavalli Red Dress, a dress so beautiful that Paris Hilton modeled it in the December issue of *Brentwood Magazine*.

Now, after hitting the half century mark, I have gone on a shopping spree to find red dresses in a size zero to add to my wardrobe for my potential first cyber-dates. They say a

man always remembers “The Lady in Red” and I wanted to be the one that stood out from the crowd. Red is my color and I’m determined to expand my wardrobe accordingly.

Now at 50-something, wishing I was 40-something, my current uniform consists of a little black and white size zero Diane Von Furstenburg sundress during the day. In the evening, I wear a signature pink Missoni Dress. I have graduated to labels that no men would ever care about. Everyone knows that women dress for women, but that men are just visual. Men care about how you look and how you move, not about the label you are wearing or the price of the outfit. If we fully understood this concept, our species would save a fortune on designer clothing, shoes, and purses.

Being the daughter of a department store owner, I learned at a young age the art of putting price tags on clothing for sale in the women’s department. I also put alteration tags on those pieces of apparel that got sent upstairs to the in house Italian tailor. This ritual followed me to adulthood, where I am proud of the fact that I actually have a manila hanging tag on each hangar with the outfits I wear on my cyber-dates. Ever so diligently, I list the date each outfit was worn, along with the name of each potential male suitor, and where we went on our cyber-dates. This exercise insures that I won’t wear the same outfit twice with the same man. Have you ever heard of anyone who was that organized in their wardrobe closet?

## CHAPTER 2

### *It's Only Love*

#### ***The New York Transplant***

One of my first cyber-dates was with a former New Yorker living the good life in sunny southern California. I make it a rule never to ignore emails from East Coast transplants. I remember fondly my humble roots and love to share stories of living in New York, frolicking around and looking for a taxi at 3:00 a.m.

The “New York Transplant” and I met at an outdoor café in Venice, California. He wasn’t my type, but I was just getting started and thought we could compare New York deli sandwich and Broadway show stories. After some small talk, he told me his wife had died in her 20s. How sad and tragic, I thought. I felt so badly for this poor widower who raised his son on his own as a single grieving dad. I had to

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stay and listen to his story and be sympathetic as he was just starting to date again. I couldn't imagine experiencing such a loss and tragedy.

My "New York Transplant" proceeded to tell me how he impulsively met his wife while he was stopped at a red light, and asked for her phone number. She rolled down her window and called him at the number he provided, and they were married the next week. Was this a true romantic I was sitting across from or was he just an incredibly impulsive guy? How could I not like this man who followed his heart from the stop light to Vegas in less than a week? I let him continue his heartfelt story.

But all of a sudden, out of nowhere, like in a bad movie scene, the other side of this gentle man emerged, and he told me that I looked like his dead wife. I really didn't know how to respond and I pride myself as being an excellent communicator. I even have a degree in communications. I was speechless. He then opened up his wallet and showed me a photo of the recently deceased woman. Sure enough, she had long brown hair like I did and there was a similarity; however, she was a much thinner version of me. He told me his wife tragically died from anorexia, just like the singer-songwriter Karen Carpenter. Now I realize I may be on the thin side, and my family has thin genes, but I have never been anorexic and I enjoy a good meal. But suddenly, I lost my appetite that day sitting at the Rose Café in Venice.

My date abruptly stood up at the restaurant, and announced in a very loud voice, “You look like my dead wife” to all the patrons and showed the other diners the photo of the deceased woman. He repeated this line at least six times before I quietly told him I was sorry for his loss and gracefully exited the restaurant.

Although she looked like she could have been my sister from the photograph, I couldn’t seem to calm my date down. I never found out if he found another thin brunette to fall in love with, but I often wonder when I stop at a red light, if the “New York Transplant” will be in the car next to me.

### ***The Investment Banker***

One day when I was home from work with the flu, I went online to cheer myself up. That day I met the man I thought I would marry. He was an investment banker with a law degree, who lived in New York. He was strong, smart, well educated, and was in heavy pursuit of courting me.

My mother always told me she had a dream that someday I would marry a doctor, a lawyer, or a banker (but never an Indian chief). My New York friend had two out of the three in tow, so I was in luck. And although I never received any family pressure to marry anyone of any particular faith, background, or trade, every Jewish mother secretly hopes their daughter will marry a doctor or a lawyer one day.

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So when I received his email, I remembered my mother's dream and thought I would reply. The "Investment Banker" was adorable. He was brilliant. He had a cute puppy. He was successful, and he was crazy about me. I was vulnerable and very new to cyber-dating. I didn't have any role models, since I was the first on the block to try it, so I didn't have any solid rules yet.

The "Investment Banker" emailed me daily for weeks, several times a day, and we talked for hours into the night. He was my new online pen pal. He told me he was divorced and had no children. We were in cyberspace love, or so we thought. We talked about how we might get married some day. We planned our future before we even met and he even proposed over the telephone, which seemed sincere, but I was not ready to accept. Our night time conversations were a ritual and I was so excited when he told me he was coming out to California and we would finally meet.

The "Investment Banker" lived in Manhattan and also had an office in northern California. It turned out he would be in his California office the same time I would be close by on a business trip.

We made a date for dinner and were both so excited. The anxiety was rising each moment as it came closer to our dinner reservation. All of my friends knew I was meeting my potential spouse. I had counted the days until I would meet my soul mate and the day had finally arrived. He had

plans to come to Los Angeles the following day and he would stay in a hotel nearby.

Then the moment of truth came. I went to meet the “Investment Banker” for dinner, and I didn’t see anyone familiar in the restaurant. I was suddenly approached by a stranger I didn’t recognize. I thought perhaps he sent a friend of his to tell me he was running late. As he moved closer and said, “Hi, it’s me,” I thought he was looking for someone else. But there we were face to face and I had no idea who he was. As a matter of fact, his pictures were at least 15 or 20 years old, a common phenomenon in the cyber-dating world. He was also about 50 pounds heavier than his pictures and five inches shorter than he claimed to be, and we had nothing in common. There was nothing to say. The conversation just stopped. I froze and turned pale with the disappointment. How could he think I wouldn’t notice?

However, nothing shocked me more than when he cancelled the balance of his trip to Los Angeles and left me a message that he had to go back home for a family emergency. I understood that the chemistry wasn’t there for either of us and that we wouldn’t be filling out a marriage application in the near future. Perhaps he wanted to back out, but it was more than that.

The “Investment Banker” called me to tell me his parents were in a serious car accident and he couldn’t come to Los Angeles as they were in the hospital. He even

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told me the name of the hospital and claimed he was camping out in a bedside vigil.

Naturally after over 100 hours of phone calls, I felt badly about his elderly parents in the hospital. I decided to call the hospital to see about their condition and was stunned to find out there were no patients there with their names. I thought perhaps they were discharged, so I called information to get their phone number, and I phoned my future in laws as the concerned California girlfriend to see if they were feeling better.

Much to my surprise, the “Investment Banker’s” mother answered the phone and she had no idea who I was. She was in perfect health. How could this be? I was the girl of his dreams. I identified myself as her son’s girlfriend from California. The reply was, “Girlfriend? My son is married, and so who are you?” I hung up the telephone and for the first time I learned what a sociopath was. A sociopath is a person who will lie to you easily with a straight face and has no remorse. It’s a person who didn’t care about the consequences of his actions or behavior. A person who forgot he had a wife at home, when he was working late having conversations with women all across the United States promising them marriage and a happily ever after.

Looking back, of course the warning signs were there. His mailing address was a P.O. Box and my calls to him all went to a voicemail box and were returned promptly. We spoke so frequently, I didn’t notice. Never once did I call this man and have him answer the phone. How

could I have not known? I was so in love with love and on a quest to replace the former “Love of My life,” I got blind sighted.

The “Investment Banker” resurfaced the next week under a new online screen name saying he was a banker in Atlanta instead of New York. He surely got around. I wondered how many women in varying states he had done this to. I couldn’t be the only woman who wouldn’t recognize him from his childhood photos. It was my first experience with a married man, claiming to be single, playing with the heartstrings of an innocent woman 3,000 miles away. But I hear it is common. We had our children’s names planned out. It was over and I was duped.

I guessed that trip to Mesopotamia was out of the question. I decided it was best to meet someone closer to home for my next cyber-date.

### ***The Virtual Guy***

I’m just a nice girl from New Jersey searching for love from my computer in Los Angeles. So, as I previously mentioned, I have a habit of being polite and replying to almost all of the men from the East Coast who respond to my online ad.

So when I received an email from a man named the “Virtual Guy,” and read his profile to find out that he was originally from New York, I had to reply.

How exciting, I thought, to have this new virtual world, and now a virtual boyfriend with all of the same interests

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as me. I was still determined to replace the former “Love of My Life,” and perhaps the “Virtual Guy” was the one. I was still cautious I was only putting one toe in at a time in my new cyberspace world.

The “Virtual Guy’s” profile matched mine perfectly. We were perfect on virtual paper. Both of us lived near the beach, were passionate about travel and music, and just simply liked each other. He came over and played my piano and we sang together for hours as we sipped wine and talked about all the places we had been and where we wanted to travel to next.

Not every cyber-date has a bad ending and not everyone turns into a romantic relationship. We became both virtual and real life friends. We were in the same industry and would see each other at business functions on and off over the years. We didn’t have a bad breakup. There were no tears or deception. It just didn’t become romantic. I lost touch with my “Virtual Guy,” and then 10 years after our first cyber-date, while I was attending a business conference, I walked down the stairs and heard someone yell, “Hey *Pianobaby!*” And there he was, my former “Virtual Guy.”

He showed me photos of his new Virtual Bride and Virtual Baby all achieved through the magic of online dating and JDate. I was so happy for him. We hugged and compared notes from our lives over the past decade and eventually became friends on Facebook. See, there can be a happily ever after, even if it takes 10 years. It gave

me hope that someday my life will be filled with joy and bliss as well.

### ***The Desert Man Who Wanted Dessert***

I split my time between my home at the beach and the one I lived in at the desert. I had a fun filled life in my convertible, driving with the top down on Palm Canyon Drive on the weekends, and sipping cocktails in a bikini at my condo in Palm Springs. I decided it was time to find a man to hang out with in the desert, and started corresponding with a tall, dark, handsome man who had a Harley Davidson motorcycle.

My “Desert Man” helped me remodel my condo. He found a painter, and helped with the carpet selection. I had a built-in friend and interior decorator, and I was so happy to have a new friend for my bi-monthly visits. We strolled through art galleries together, went to museums, hiked in the Indian canyons and became close platonic friends. Every week, my “Desert Man” emailed me with the schedule of local events and inquired as to whether I was coming down for the weekend to relax at my Shangri-la.

Almost every other weekend, I put the top down on my Mercedes convertible and took the 10 freeway to Palm Springs to get away from the beach gloom. My “Desert Man” and I would talk and have lunch. He was a man of many trades. He was even a licensed massage therapist, so

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I started getting professional massages from him during my visits, which of course I paid for.

This went on for almost a year, our wonderful friendship, until one day, The “Desert Man” wanted a “happy ending” after my massage session was over. I didn’t want to collaborate with him in that way and I decided there would be no dessert for the “Desert Man.” I haven’t seen him since, but one day he resurfaced many years later after purchasing a Harley Davidson 2003 Anniversary Edition “Softail Deuce.” We rekindled an online friendship and the “Desert Man” still sends me regular invitations to ride off into Harley Heaven with him on his new shiny bike.

### ***The Drummer Boy***

After my experience with the married “Investment Banker” from New York, I decided to refocus my romantic endeavors on the “RUBIE” biker. I sorted through 100 emails from potential suitors from across the country who wanted me to ride on the backs of their custom Harleys.

And I replied to the “Drummer Boy.” The “Drummer Boy” lived in the Pacific Northwest and had both a real job and a beautiful custom orange colored “Dyna-Wide-Glide” Harley Davidson. He loved music and so did I. Together we fantasized about me playing the piano as *Pianobaby* while he banged on the drums as the “Drummer Boy,” making beautiful music together. We felt it was a match

made in cyber-heaven. We were meant to meet, it was fate, there would be no other.

We talked for hours about our dreams and goals for the future. We were both divorced with no children. We compared cyber-dating stories, and then after about a month, the “Drummer Boy” came to California for a business trip and we set up a date to meet.

It is strange and often disappointing how the magic “phone” chemistry doesn’t equate to “in person” chemistry sometimes. I just didn’t feel the romantic connection when we finally met, but we stayed friends for a few years. A year after our failed cyber-date, he came back to California for my annual birthday party. The “Drummer Boy” was happy to fly down for the festivities. We stayed in touch for years, and then I lost track of him when he got married and then later divorced again. I hope he found his girl. He was a sincere guy looking for love in cyberspace.

### ***The Men of Harley Davidson***

My search for a “RUBIE” biker was short-lived. I had a second date with a nice guy named “Custom Hog” and a third with the “Road King,” which was my favorite model at the time. The “Road King” was a rubber mounted bike which meant I could comfortably ride on the back for hours as it was so relaxing. I met another man named “Dyna Wide Glide Guy” and dated a man with an “FXR” all models in

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Harley Davidson's collection. I declined meeting the "Fat Boy" and "Stingray."

I had my own motorcycle license plate with the initials HDQT to go along with my screen name and I even signed up for the motorcycle safety class determined to get my own license and actually purchase a chick bike I had my eye on, the "883 Sportster." The instructor, who was a retired General, actually picked on me, called me a princess, and kicked me out of the class before allowing me to hop on a bike for the road test. He thought I was too fragile to be on a bike and he did me a favor. Although my feelings were hurt, soon after, I realized that my Harley days were just a chapter in my life. It was time to find someone to live a real life with and toss that fantasy away. My closets full of leathers began collecting dust and were shortly replaced with designer labels including Escada and St. John Suits for the business and board meetings I attended, Pucci and Valentino dresses for the sophisticated cocktail parties and charity events, Chanel and Prada purses to go with absolutely everything, and Ferragamo and Donald J. Pliner shoes designed for my unusually narrow feet. I got off easy as Manolo Blahnik shoes did not fit on my feet or in my budget. It was time to move on and become responsible and dress accordingly.

### ***The Malibu Man***

After the episode with the “New York Transplant” and his dead wife, the married man who practically proposed, and all the Harley guys, I revised my online profile with some fresh new photos to go with my new wardrobe.

Since I was now over 40, I followed the online unwritten rule of claiming I was younger and I somehow stayed in my 30s for a few more months to fit into an acceptable search.

In order to keep all of the responses organized, I created a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel with names of the numerous men I would never meet. A notebook would no longer be sufficient. It was good for my ego to have an overwhelming response to my online ad, but I didn’t have the time to focus on my cyber-dates. I was in heavy career mode as Executive Vice President of a dot-com in the process of going public. I needed an easy format to decide who I wanted to respond to.

I met my male suitors in the lobby of Shutters Hotel in Santa Monica after work. It was just a short block away from my office and had a beautiful ocean view. One by one they got interviewed and never made the cut. Either they didn’t look anything like their photos, hadn’t had a transition relationship yet, were still in love with someone else, or I just wasn’t attracted to them. Off to Internet heaven I sent them.

Then, I met the “Malibu Man.” The “Malibu Man” did not actually live in Malibu, but I liked his screen name

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and thought he lived up the coast. He was a nice looking guy, at least from the photos he sent me. He told me his wife had died in a tragic accident a year earlier and he was raising his young daughter on his own. It was a heartbreaking story, as he told me the details of how she had been sitting on a rocky cliff watching the water, and a large wave engulfed her and she was thrown out to sea. I don't know how these men find me, but I am always willing to lend a sympathetic ear. I told him about my previous experience with a widower, and wanted to make sure I did not look like his dead wife. When I found out that she was a blonde, and since I am a brunette, I felt it was safe to move forward. After a month of correspondence, phone calls, emails, and instant messages with the "Malibu Man" it was time to meet. My anticipation was at an all-time high.

The "Malibu Man" came to Santa Monica, and we met on Third Street Promenade, a walking street that replaced Venice Beach as the place to go and stroll in Southern California. He handed me a blue box with a white ribbon as a present. Now what girl wouldn't get excited opening a blue box from Tiffany? Inside was a beautiful sterling silver necklace with a heart to prove his feelings for the woman he was about to meet.

It turned out that the "Malibu Man" didn't look exactly like his photos. Very few do. Actually, he was a few inches shorter and about 25 pounds heavier than he claimed, a minor detail, or so he thought. With cyber-dating, it's

important to note that many women don't reveal their accurate ages and weight, while frequently men don't advertise their correct weight, hair, income, or height if they are on the short side. I enjoyed our conversations when we were seated, but as soon as he stood up, he was unable to hide his beer gut, and I found myself towering over him, even though I'm only five foot three.

I tried to get over the shallow stuff and we met for lunch again the following day; this time he brought his beautiful five year old daughter with him. When this sweet motherless child asked me ever so innocently, "Are you going to be my new mommy?" I hugged her with tears, and told her, "I didn't think so." I wasn't ready to be an instant mom to the child of a stranger I had only met the day before. I felt badly for their loss, but I returned the Tiffany necklace he gave me, and never spoke to him again.

I wondered why there weren't rule books for single parents, and how confusing it was to children when a new potential "mom" arrived at a restaurant. Just how many other women received a sterling silver heart while they were being interviewed to be a replacement wife and mother? I wasn't ready to sign up and I wished him the best.

# The Perils of Cyber-Dating

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