

# THE GEESE THAT LAY THE GOLDEN EGGS

*Romance Scams that break hearts  
and plunder wallets*



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## Romance scams that break hearts and plunder wallets

*These are true stories. To respect the protagonists' privacy, in some cases their names have been changed.*

*The title 'The geese that lay the golden eggs' was chosen to emphasise the disdain with which scammers manipulate women's feelings to exploit them to their own advantage.*

*The contents of this book do not claim to be therapeutic but are intended to make women face up to a cruel reality of our times, and through the telling of stories and the dissemination of every possible means of defence, help them protect their hearts, hold on to their wallets and regain their self-esteem.*

## **Romance Scams**

### **Online contacts**

No offence, but it's happened to us all, poor lonely women caught out by an online message which we've fallen for, some perhaps more than others. With our heart beating madly for that oh so handsome, charming, passionate man who's noticed us, fascinated by our face in a photograph; won over by our story, or by the few personal details that the more reserved of us have only hinted at on our Facebook, twitter or other social network profile.

We can't help it! Us women are romantic, and "friendly" to the point of absurdity. Friendly and willing to believe that finally cupid has smiled down upon us, noticed our most intimate desires for love and let fly his arrow.

It seems like a wonderful sign of fate that such a remarkable man is interested in us, a man in naval or military uniform. With an honest gaze, open smile, profound dark eyes or even light ones, it doesn't matter. When we fall in love even the colour of the eyes is changeable, it matches the ideal image we carry around inside us. Remember Proust and the colour of the little Gilberte Swann's eyes, who he meets as a child? He describes them of such a brilliant black as to give back a bright blue light, so that if the little girl had not had such dark eyes - writes Proust - he would not have been in love most particularly with her blue eyes.

It's the meeting of desire and true likeness that fits our ideal image. The two pieces of a puzzle. What a coincidence! What luck, we think from that first contact with a few polite phrases from the fake American soldier. He's even the right age for us! Somewhere between fifty and sixty, like so many lonely separated women, or widows, or divorcees, who before this lucky meeting had tried all the *Meetics*, *dating sites*, *Badoos*, where nothing ever came of anything, perhaps because of our aversion to the person who said he was 25 years younger than his real age, or the irremediable faults which led to separations from exes: wives, lovers, girlfriends. When my sister-in-law once asked me why I hadn't rebuilt my life with a new companion, I told her it's difficult finding the right person, because as we get older we become more demanding; we do not easily surrender our independence, and the men who approach us have already been left by their woman, probably because they're flawed.

"Flawed?" replied my sister-in-law and she began laughing out loud repeating "Ah, flawed, flawed... what a description!"

But the same can be said of us too, what's that got to do with it? On dating sites, we too describe ourselves in our *Meetic* profile, posting a photo on the net that was taken a few years after our first communion. Then we go to meet the poor guy in the hope that he won't notice that the person before him looks like the grandmother of the beautiful girl in the photograph. So, what happens in these cases? The more courteous offer a coffee and say goodbye. The others ask you straight out to your face, "Why are you hiding your age? You can't be forty! You must be at least twenty years older!"

"Well what about you? You're supposedly only 55?" we might reply and get a brazenly optimistic response. "I'm sixty-four, but I look young for my age!"

Faced with such vanity, what should we do? I think it's best to just forget about it. Or, out of pure revenge, we could recommend that our friend should at least buy a mirror to furnish his home.

How many Friday night encounters end with an argument, or perhaps a bad-mannered comment from a guy who seems aristocratic enough online, but then turns out to be more accustomed to the sort of company found down at the docks, not setting sail, but loading and unloading.

But let's not be dramatic. Is the boor of the moment's language distasteful? Then each of you better go their separate ways. At worst we can just ban him and put the whole story to bed!

Bluffing never pays. Not even a pizza together to make friends is allowed, when you meet on misleading premises. These are the risks of social networking. Moderate risks overall, until recently anyway: a bad impression, a disappointment, a missed invitation to dinner. Nothing more serious.

## **Romance scams**

Nothing like the new trend of online virtual meetings between romantic ladies and lowlifes who set out to deceive mature women, with the single-minded ambition of getting their hands on the little, or large as it may be, nest egg which they imagine a person close to retirement will have set aside. They know all about the leaving bonus carefully hidden away in a safety deposit box, or perhaps even at home behind a tile? They know everything about us! And these *sonnavabitches* are clever. They use sophisticated techniques as if they really were the gentlemen they claim to be. They pull apart all our plans to defend ourselves against the "bad" guys, as though they were little Lego bricks, because they're different, different to that loser of our neighbour's ex-husband who woos us. Their (virtual) strong points are the appeal of a uniform, a distinguished profession, their status as a single man without ties, the adventure of it all, the courage involved, their financial resources. Because after all, we can all do the maths and perhaps even go online to see how much an American naval officer earns, or an Australian airman, or an English captain on ocean-going ships.

But we let our hearts rule our heads and as unsuspecting, romantic, dreamy women we don't realise that they're really very different to us. They're not westerners but they do everything to seem as if they are. They learn how to act to turn a woman's head. They watch lots of films, read romantic novels, and textbooks on how to conquer a woman. They pick up phrases, pleasantries, similes, which win the hearts of middle-aged women, even careful and intelligent ones. In fact, according to a statistical study, it seems the intelligence factor is always at a high level in these scammed women<sup>1</sup>. Ghanaians, Nigerians or Malaysians, no matter where they're from, the scammers use every tool the globalised world offers them to get to know the psychology, the dreams, the way of thinking of a western woman. Moreover, it's by no means rare that the handsome man writing to us from the other side of the world is really another woman. Probably younger than us, but most definitely cunning and skilful. A professional organiser of *Romance Scams*, the sophisticated and lucrative love-affair scams.

## Some stories of women scammed on the web

An example of some of the phrases copied and pasted when contacting women online:

*«I miss you so much, you're necessary for my heart and soul. You're my day, my night, my moon, my sun. You're the one and only queen of my heart. I really miss you, my days are getting sadder and sadder».*

## Melania

What does a still young and attractive woman from Rimini lack, to persuade her, in a delusion of love, to transfer payments for 24 thousand euros into a stranger's account?

Melania<sup>2</sup> is 40 years old, she lives in one of Italy's most 'open-minded' cities, the most famous holiday resort in Europe; culturally vibrant, visited by tourists, conference participants, businessmen, artists of all kinds and ages. Does Rimini perhaps lack opportunities? I wouldn't think so. Yet Melania finds her romantic love on the web; but it's a romance scam, a

cybernetic mess that impoverishes her resources and quickly becomes a thorn in her heart that will torment her for a long time.

When Melania reads the online message from John, a soldier in the U.S. Army, she doesn't wonder how come the man in uniform has contacted precisely her. No, she thinks "The power of Facebook! How could I ever meet a man like this if I weren't on the net?"

Melania is not naive and clueless, she's forty, she has a degree in biology, works for a public institution, has a former husband who she left out of boredom and incompatibility of character.

«I saw your photo - John writes to her - and for two days I've been waking up at night with your face before my eyes. I like what you say in your profile. I think you're a fascinating woman. May I ask you to be friends?»

«Why not - Melania thinks - a polite manner of introducing himself in a man with good qualities is always welcome.»

The friendship begins with the exchange of messages, first daily, then hourly: morning, afternoon, evening.

«I'm a soldier in the *United States Army* and I've been stationed in Afghanistan for many years now.» John tells her about his days, the dangers he lives through, his regrets for one day having had to divorce his wife who betrayed him (the cheat). His dreams of having a traditional family, a loving wife with whom to plan a future. A life together full of love, passion, values, respect. As well as travel and fun.

Strangely enough, John asks very little about her. He seems not to care who Melania really is, how she lives, what she believes in, what religion she practices. In this, the American is very open-minded. And, if at first Melania is a little surprised, she soon gets used to it. An outsider would have immediately understood that (the so-called) John couldn't give a damn about Melania, but she doesn't. She starts to be dazzled by his phrases and to justify his obvious indifference as open-mindedness. After all, you can't expect the narrow-mindedness of an Italian lover from an American man, a soldier who has travelled the world.

Melania, on the other hand, takes great interest in him, what he tells her, the words he writes to her:

*«Darling, it's getting harder and harder to get to sleep at night, in the darkness of my room, without you beside me, without holding you close to my heart. Without seeing your marvellous eyes half-close with the*

*pleasure of my caresses on your soft skin, kissing you to bring you happiness and ecstasy. The happiness that only two soul mates feel when fate brings them together».*

«What are you doing? Dear John, how do you spend your days? - asks Melania. - What do you want from a woman to make you happy?», and in the following message he replies: «I want a woman like you! Oh, Melania, marvellous creature, where have you been all this time? Why didn't you bring me happiness before now? Where were the scents of your skin? your body, your womb, the colours of Eden that I see in your eyes. Where was your mouth that I dream of kissing all the time? When will I be happy and satisfied? I can't wait any longer. May I call you darling? Don't tell me I'm moving too fast! I've never suffered and been so happy because of a woman like this before. I suffer because you're so far away, I'm happy because you're in my life now and anyway I feel you close to me. You're inside me. We are one!».

See how much passion John the soldier manages to convey?

Completely smitten, Melania increasingly lowers her defences and her objective judgement criteria. She cares very little now about her job, her friends, her hobbies. John's messages, John's promises, the prospects of a happy life together, lead her to imagine intense days filled with new things, happiness, travel to the USA to meet his family, and why not, to join him in Afghanistan.

She starts to fantasise like a teenager about to experience her first love. She plans their meeting and eliminates any obstacles to her happiness before they even appear. She could go and join him in Afghanistan, she could ask for some time off work.

The public authority where she works allows this sort of leave. She can already see herself dressed in camouflage fatigues, crossing inaccessible desert areas, in a white Land Rover. She starts to read up about it, she buys books, including "Viaggio a Kabul" [*Journey to Kabul*]<sup>3</sup>, where a whole new world starts to appear before her: *the snow-capped mountains of Hindukush, the cobalt blue of the sky, the ochre colour of the ancient abandoned cities along the Silk Route, and the noise, the myriad colours of Kabul.* And with all of this, her fantastic soldier, John.

What can her phoney lover ask her for, at this point? Probably anything....

The facts teach us that Melania agrees to all his requests. Her involvement is so all-encompassing that not even a hint of a possible scam would awaken her from his spell. She is in the (virtual) hands of John, who asks her to pay with (real) money for the dream he has given her.

«I gave you what you wanted!» he'll tell her later, when he's found out.

## **But let's see how the story continues**

While she plans her trip to Kabul, he begins to devise a tour of his own around Italy. Get to know Rimini, go to the sea together; see Rome and Venice while they're on their honeymoon full of happiness.

Melania changes her plans for exotic excursions shifting them towards cultural explorations in the Vatican museums and romantic getaways in the narrow streets of Venice. What does it matter! America and Asia can wait, the important thing is to have her beloved John at her side!

The fact is that the American is becoming very keen to travel to Italy and live there, to start a new life in the "*Bel Paese*" with his beloved Melania; to be together, love each other, be happy, and start a family. He is so involved in this perspective of life together as a couple that the next step becomes decisive: leave the American army. Resign, leave permanently.

«But are you sure? - she asks - The choice you're making is forever. Won't you regret it?»

Melanie is a little worried, but very flattered by the fact that a man like him would completely change all his life plans for her.

«Regret it?» says John. «Regret wanting a life with an adorable woman in a wonderful country like Italy? I'd regret it bitterly, a thousand times over, if I didn't take this step. Straight away, now. And I'm tired, fed up of the dry land where my military boots tread. I'm tired of war and blood!

I want to see blue skies, Italy's turquoise sea, your hazel eyes with specks of gold, Melania my love!».

## **The request for money**

At this point, all of you reading this, would have woken up from the daydream if John had asked you for money, right? Melanie doesn't wake up;

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