

One

Ruby's diary

Career women over 30 have a higher chance of **being struck dead by lightning** than of finding a **soul mate**. My flatmate Chloe mentioned this surprising fact to me. I'm single and my thirtieth birthday is just three short months away. Wild horses wouldn't have dragged me to an online dating site twelve months ago. But last night Chloe put things in perspective. She told me I had no choice – a lot **was at stake**. I had been single too long and I was so busy with work that I had no time to go out in the evenings and meet people in their normal **social habitats**. Is virtual reality the only place for me to find my future soul mate, whoever he is and wherever he may be?

“So why don't you give *Loveboat* a try? It's the coolest online dating agency in Europe.”

Chloe, a **petite** woman in her early thirties with brunette shoulder-length hair now elegantly **twisted up** into a French knot gave me a **nudge**. It was Wednesday evening. We were sitting in the freshly painted living room of our **bijou flat** in leafy Maida Vale surrounded by an **eclectic** variety of furniture that Chloe had bought up cheaply over

to be struck dead by lightning [bi: strʌk ,ded baɪ 'laɪtnɪŋ] vom Blitz erschlagen werden **soul mate** ['səʊl meɪt] Seelenverwandter **to be at stake** [bi: ət 'steɪk] auf dem Spiel stehen **social habitat** [ˌsəʊʃl 'hæbɪtæt] sozialer Lebensraum **petite** [pə'ti:t] zierlich **twisted up** [ˌtwɪstɪd 'ʌp] hochgesteckt **nudge** [nʌdʒ] Stups **bijou flat** ['bi:ʒu: ,flæt] kleine elegante Wohnung **leafy** ['li:fi] grün **eclectic** [ɪ'klektɪk] bunt zusammengewürfelt

the years at flea markets in and around London. She loved nothing more than acquiring **dirt-cheap** items that had been unceremoniously abandoned by their unimaginative owners. **Dilapidated** wooden tables, desks and chairs were among her favourites. With **boundless** energy, she then went on to **strip** them **down**, repaint and ‘**distress**’ them. This gave them the fashionable look experts call ‘shabby chic’. The two of us were **perched** atop two of her recent **D.I.Y. products** – a pair of matching Victorian-style chairs that she had first covered with layers of progressively greener paints and then sanded down, so that the soft sour cream **base coat** shimmered through.

“So what do you think, Ruby? Why don’t I take a photo of you and we can sign you up for *Loveboat*? We can have your picture uploaded to your profile **in a jiffy**.”

No sooner said than done! She whipped her mobile phone out of her second-hand, banana-coloured Gucci handbag (in matters of fashion as well as furniture, Chloe didn’t believe in spending a lot of money unnecessarily) and pointed the **device** threateningly towards me.

I tried to protest, but it was too late. Minutes later, thanks to wireless transmission, an image of my face **graced** the computer screen. I must admit I didn’t look too bad. I have a fairly oval face and long curly reddish-brown hair and nut

dirt-cheap [ˈdɜːttʃiːp] spottbillig **dilapidated** [dɪˈlæpɪdeɪtɪd] rampo-
niert **boundless** [ˈbaʊndləs] grenzenlos **to strip sth. down** [ˌstri:p /
ˈdaʊn] etw. abbeizen **to distress sth.** [dɪˈstres] etw. malträtieren
to perch [pɜːtʃ] hocken **D.I.Y. (= Do It Yourself) products**
[ˌdiːaɪˈwaɪ] selbst gebaute Sachen **base coat** [ˈbeɪs kəʊt] Grundan-
strich **in a jiffy** [ɪn ə ˈdʒɪfɪ] im Handumdrehen **device** [dɪˈvaɪs]
Gerät **to grace sth.** [gɹeɪs] etw. zieren

brown eyes. Okay, my lips were **pouted** a **tad** too sceptically, but overall the effect was quite pleasing.

“You look gorgeous. I love those lobster-red leggings of yours. Can I borrow them some time?”

“Sure, feel free!”

Chloe put down her mobile back in her bag, looked at me and sighed. “I, for one, would fall in love with you at the drop of a hat. Shame you’re **straight!**”

I grinned and put my hand under my chin **feigning coyness**. “Ooh, Chloe, you’re **tempting** me. But okay, so I’m not gay! Well, nobody’s perfect!”

We both started to **giggle** and when I had recovered, I looked at my photo on the screen again. “I like the photo, Chloe, but I’m not sure I want to post it online. What if one of my clients saw it? It would be embarrassing.”

I am a **solicitor** and I deal with sober-minded business clients in many different branches. The last thing I wanted was for one of these ultra-conservative ‘suits’ to go **wading through** intimate details of my private life.

Chloe nodded seriously. “Point taken. In my line of business that kind of thing is not ... uhm ... exactly **paramount**, but with you things are a bit different.”

Chloe was a **television host** and producer. In the media nobody cared about privacy, or so it seemed to me.

to pout [paʊt] einen Schmollmund machen **tad** [tæd] eine Spur
straight [streɪt] heterosexuell **to feign sth.** [feɪn] etw. vortäuschen
coyness [ˈkɔɪnəs] Schüchternheit **to tempt sb.** [tɛmpt] in Versuchung
führen **to giggle** [ˈɡɪɡl] kichern **solicitor** [səˈlɪsɪtə] Anwältin **to wade
through sth.** [ˌweɪd ˈθruː] sich durch etw. durchwühlen **paramount**
[ˈpærəmaʊnt] an erster Stelle **television host** [ˈtelɪvɪʒn ˌhəʊst] Fern-
sehmoderatorin

“All right, but even without putting my picture online, I’ve still got a funny feeling about computer dating.”

Chloe, who was already calling up the registration form, **sniggered**. “Ruby, you must be the only single woman below thirty in London who has never met anyone online in her life, and of course I blame your mother.”

I laughed dryly. “You’re right. No wonder I’m **wary**. Charlie is really an extreme example of Internet dating gone crazy!”

Exercise 1: Underline the appropriate words or phrases.

1. Ruby is a successful (*career woman/Internet dater*).
2. Her flatmate (*wants to try/wants her to try*) Internet dating.
3. She lives in a (*large/small*) flat in London.
4. Chloe enjoys distressing (*Ruby/furniture*).
5. Ruby is wary of (*Internet dating/gay women*).
6. For Ruby (*being photographed/privacy*) is paramount.

The registration form appeared and Chloe handed me the computer mouse. “There you go, it’s all yours! And speaking as a veteran online dater myself, I must admit that I feel like a complete **novice** when your mother tells her tales.”

My 60-year-old mother Charlie, a **doyen** of cyber-dating, has gone through four marriages and four divorces but she remains an eternal optimist. Chloe, no beginner herself, was connected up with an amazing network of friends and potential lovers via a gay dating site.

“My mother doesn’t seem to need a permanent relationship. She changes boyfriends like other women change their hair

to snigger [ˈsnɪɡə] kichern **wary** [ˈweəri] argwöhnisch **novice** [ˈnɒvɪs] Neuling **doyen** [ˈdɔɪən] Meisterin