

LERN SCHMÖKER



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# The Dating Game



Frauenroman



Langenscheidt

# 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

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**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

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

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**to pout** [paʊt] einen Schmolldmund machen **tad** [tæd] eine Spur  
**straight** [streɪt] heterosexuell **to feign sth.** [feɪn] etw. vortäuschen  
**coyness** [ˈkɔɪnəs] Schüchternheit **to tempt sb.** [tempt] 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

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

colour. Sometimes I think Internet dating was invented just for her. I can understand that she wants a bit of excitement in her life but I ...” I hesitated.

As usual Chloe could read my thoughts.

“You still think you can find your soul mate, don’t you?”

I **fidged** with the computer mouse. “Suppose so. Don’t you believe there’s such a thing, Chloe?”

Chloe’s eyes darkened for a moment. “I did once, but ...”

I **wined**. When I had first moved in with Chloe 12 months ago, her beloved girlfriend Sybil had just **dumped** her. That was at about the same time Rick had left me too. Misery loves company and we had both tried our best to **console** each other. Since then, I have been very reluctant to date. But Chloe being Chloe didn’t **mope around** for long. Within a week of being dumped, she was surfing the Internet, visiting every gay dating website she could find. Perhaps Internet dating really was the way to go, but something inside me rebelled against using the same methods to choose a package holiday as to select a future lover. I shivered, even though the temperature in the room was pleasant; after all it was the end of a hot day in late summer. London doesn’t really deserve its reputation as the fog capital of Europe.

“Chloe, online dating feels unreal to me. It’s unnatural. It feels ... It feels so *artificial*. See!” I pointed to the screen. We **feasted** our **eyes upon** a nostalgic image of a Mississippi

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**to fidget with sth.** [ˈfɪdʒɪt wɪð] mit etw. herumspielen **to wince** [wɪns] zusammenzucken **to dump sb.** [dʌmp] mit jdm. Schluss machen **to console sb.** [kənˈsəʊl] jdn. trösten **to mope around** [ˌməʊp əˈraʊnd] mit einer Jammermiene herumlaufen **to feast one’s eyes upon sth.** [ˌfiːst wʌnz ˈaɪz əˌpɒn] sich an etw. weiden