

# MR. WRONG



By Valerie Byron

# CHAPTER ONE

The phone rang at 8 am, waking me from a sound sleep.

"Hi, sexy baby" came the deep, thrilling tones from the voice on the other end of the line.

I stretched out, smiling, loving the sound of intimacy and suggestion in his voice.

"I love you, baby," he went on.

"I think about you day and night, and can't wait to see you."

Jerry and I had been communicating by telephone and emails for over a month. We'd met on-line and although he lived in Denver, miles away from Los Angeles, we felt that it was a manageable relationship and could possibly lead to permanence.

Jerry called me several times a day, and I loved hearing his voice. He made me feel as if I were the most important woman in the world. We seemed to get along perfectly, except for our political views. He was a die-hard Democrat, whereas I am more conservative. We had had a few hearty debates over the phone about his politics, some even leading to tears on my part.

"Oh well", I thought, you can't have everything. "Maybe I can learn something from him."

"So when are you coming?" he asked.

"I can be there this weekend – my son gave me a free pass, so I'll arrive on Friday afternoon."

"I can't wait, baby" he said softly. "I'm dying to see you in person."

I wondered to myself if what I was doing was crazy. I had been married for over thirty years and my husband had left me several years before. I

had tried to cope on my own, but loneliness and a desire for intimacy had led me to the Internet. I'd met a few men and had several dates, but none of them were willing to commit to a relationship, until I "met" Jerry. He seemed to feel I was "the one" and showered me with attention on a daily basis. His seductive words roped me in, and I failed to heed the warnings of my friends.

## CHAPTER TWO

Friday finally arrived and I managed to find a seat on the plane at LAX. Traveling stand-by is always stressful, but since my son works for the airline, I was able to obtain a pass.

It was a two-hour flight to Denver and as the plane swooped down to land, my stomach dipped in anxiety.

"Please, God, make him attractive," I begged. His picture had been fuzzy on the dating site, and although he had sent me newer photos, they showed a man who was somewhat overweight. Jerry had assured me he had been dieting and exercising faithfully for the past six months, and had dropped several sizes. He phoned regularly, boasting of the runs he had taken up and down Red Rock, and reporting that his belt size was shrinking rapidly. I was expecting to meet a burly but fit man and although his photos showed him to look like a pleasant teddy bear, I felt I could live with that. I just wanted a happy, pleasant and loving man, nothing more.

The plane finally started its descent, and I reapplied my lipstick. Spritzing on my favorite scent, I grabbed my overnight bag and minutes later left the plane.

As I walked through the unfamiliar terminal, I looked around, hoping to see someone who resembled the photos I had been gazing at for the past few months. There was a line of people standing waiting at the Arrivals gate, and there he was, standing at the end of the line. My heart sank. He was obese and quite unattractive. My first instinct was to run back to the plane and go home, but he had seen me.

I walked up to him and he gave me an awkward hug. His breath smelled and I shrank away in distaste. I looked up to see a large, florid face, with two chins leading into a rather large neck.

“Oh no, how am I going to get through this weekend?” I shivered.

We picked up my luggage from Baggage Claim and walked to his car. He had told me he owned a large luxury car, but this was a small, unwashed

clunker, filled with dried leaves from his garden. I looked at the car, and then at him, and mentally shrugged my shoulders in despair, staring out of the window at the passing scenery.

He totally bypassed Denver, which I had never visited, and took the freeway directly to his small town. We hardly spoke, and I could sense he felt my withdrawal. Feeling guilty, I placed my hand on his shorts-clad knee, and gave it a friendly squeeze.

"You look disappointed" he remarked, and I quickly replied "Oh no, not at all," hating myself for the lie.

We eventually arrived at his house, which was large, but uncared for. The sprawling, unkempt garden was overgrown with weeds, and some dining room furniture occupied the back patio. Several jack rabbits hopped around the tall blades of grass, and a rusty lawnmower looked as though it had been unused for years.



I placed my bag in the spare room and looked around. I noticed the dead spiders on the window ledges and the cobwebs hanging from the ceiling. It definitely needed a woman's touch and a good clean. After I had freshened up, Jerry asked if I wanted to go out for a bite to eat. Happy for an excuse to get out of the house, I agreed, and we went to a local dive for Mexican food.

As the evening progressed, I began to relax and he started to look a little better to me. Amazing what a couple of margaritas can do!! I enjoyed his possessive arm around my waist and the way people looked at the two of us. They were probably wondering what on earth I saw in him, but I was determined to get past my former shallowness and look inward to the good, kind man I knew must be inside.

After dinner, we returned home and he plonked himself in front of a very small television set, with rabbit ears. He was so large, I wondered if he would ever be able to get up again from the sofa. A football match was on, he explained, and as he was a sports fanatic, he absolutely had to see the game. I hate football, but tried to be a good companion, and sat by

his side. The game went on for an eternity, and my boredom grew as the minutes turned into hours. Finally, it was over and we retired to his bedroom.

I opened my suitcase and gave him some special candies that I thought he might like, as well as some cologne and a music DVD. He had recently celebrated his birthday, so I thought these gifts would be well received, as they were.

At this point he nervously approached me, and took me in his arms for an embrace. You may be wondering how on earth I could stand being touched by such an unattractive man. Looking back, I don't really understand it myself, but it was almost a fascination of the horrible.

He wasn't a flabby man. He was extremely large, but muscled and strong at the same time. His hugeness made me feel small and feminine, and infinitely desirable. It is impossible to explain what thoughts went through my mind, but I was somehow attracted to him, feeling almost like Beauty

with the Beast. Perhaps it was the words of desire that he used, or the sheer physicality of his largeness, but I felt a definite sexual pull.

We fell to the bed and proceeded to hold each other. Amazingly, he was an adept and skillful lover, and we made the most satisfying love I had experienced for a long time. When it was over, we turned out the light and prepared for sleep.

His bedroom was dark and the windows were covered with long, heavy drapes that he refused to open. I felt stifled in the heat, almost as if I were in a coffin, and asked if he would open the door and leave a night light on. He refused, telling me that it would mess up his air-conditioning system if the door was left open. I felt a panic come over me, and told him that I could not sleep in the room, and needed to go into the living room where there was air. He seemed okay with that, and immediately went to sleep, leaving me to make a bed for myself elsewhere. I grabbed a pillow and tried to make myself as comfortable as possible on the sofa.

## CHAPTER THREE

I awoke early the next morning and made breakfast for the two of us, after which Jerry took a shower. I looked around his living room, noting the accumulation of dust and dirt on the window sills, dead insects littering the floor, and the general disarray. I quickly came to a decision.

Ignoring his instructions "Do not touch or clean anything", I deliberately took a vacuum cleaner from the corner of the room and proceeded to pull out all the furniture. I then vacuumed behind the sofa, stopping to dust, mop and sweep up all the debris that had accumulated. When everything looked tidy and bug-free, I stood with my hands on my hips, surveying my work, feeling confident that he would be thrilled with his clean living room.

Moments after I had put everything back in its place, Jerry walked into the room and looked at me, and then at his living room. To my intense distress he started shouting at me. He asked me why I had cleaned his house. Did I think he was a pig? How would I like it if he came to my house and cleaned it? Wouldn't I feel insulted?

Choking back the desire to blurt out that my house would never be in such a condition, I started to cry. My feelings were badly hurt and I was taken aback by his angry response. I thought he would be pleased. I was trying to help. After all, we don't expect bachelors to know how to clean.

We shouted back and forth, getting absolutely nowhere, and it was then that I realized I had made a mistake in coming, and went to the spare room to use my cell phone. I called the airlines and made a reservation to go home on the next flight. He walked into the room as I was making the call and shook his head. He was upset that I had decided to leave, but I was adamant, and asked him to drive me to the airport as soon as possible.

I jumped out of his car as soon as we arrived at the airport, said a hurried goodbye, and thankfully sped to my plane, glad to see the back of him.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Upon my arrival home, I was bombarded with phone calls and emails, begging for forgiveness. At first I refused, telling him that I could not be with a man with such a bad temper. Surely it was better to live alone than with a crazy man?

Jerry was determined to make it up to me and although I was absolutely sure he was not the man for me, I started to weaken. Having someone fight for me was something new, and not entirely unpleasant. I had missed his morning phone calls and the phone sex was great. Oh, how low could I sink? In retrospect, I feel such shame for thinking his words on the telephone would be enough for a fulfilling relationship.

I allowed him to continue his phone calls and the days turned into weeks. We seemed to get back into our old routine and I forgot what it was really like to be with him. Finally, he asked if he could fly to Los Angeles for a few days and I agreed. I figured I would be safer on my own turf, and that if it didn't work out, I could ask him politely to leave. We arranged for

him to arrive on a Tuesday and I cleaned the house and stocked my fridge for his arrival.

On Tuesday morning I drove to the airport to pick him up. His plane was early, so when I got there, he was already waiting outside. He saw me pulling up but did not wait for me to get to the sidewalk. I saw him walking towards my car, which was in the wrong lane for loading luggage, and I signaled him to get back onto the sidewalk. The vehicle behind me started honking a warning, and Jerry started screaming abuse at the driver. This was the start of our four days together.

I had given him a free pass to fly to Los Angeles, although when I had visited him before, I had paid for my own ticket, brought him gifts, and even given him cash to pay for any meals I might have. In fact, that money was wasted because I bought groceries in Denver, and cooked all our meals, except for our dinner the first night there.

We came back to my place and I proudly showed him my lovely little house. I had the fridge stocked with good food, and made him a lovely

steak dinner with potatoes, corn and salad. Afterwards we went for a walk in my neighborhood, to work off the calories we had consumed. He had previously told me in our phone conversations that he exercised daily and was making great strides in losing weight. We had barely gone a mile, when he started breathing heavily and wanted to turn back. I was flabbergasted that he could not even walk a mile, and sadly returned home, not knowing what to do next.

He parked himself in front of the television with a happy sigh, and proceeded to watch football until it was bed time.

"Jerry?" I asked. "Wouldn't you like to do something else, other than watch television?"

"What else is there to do?" he retorted.

"Well, we could sit and talk, or listen to music, or even play cards," I countered. "Surely those are more fun than watching television."



He looked at me in amazement, and flipped the channel to another football game. I gave up and retired to my bed.

The next day I made plans to take him to my local beach, trying to entertain him as best I could. I noticed that as well as being massively overweight, he was inordinately interested in all the local fast food restaurants in my neighborhood. It seemed as if he was always asking to go to Jack in the Box for their tacos, or Fatburger for a hamburger, or some such place. His interest in junk food seemed overwhelming and obsessive, causing me to wonder what on earth I was doing with this man. He told me he only liked meat – and would not eat fish, vegetables or eggs. No wonder he was so huge, I thought, with a diet like that. We never did get to the beach as he wanted to stop for lunch before we got there, and then just sit in the restaurant, eating as much as he could.

Adding to the negativity of my experience with him was the fact that he did not like the way I drove my car. According to him, I drove too fast, braked too hard, and did not take into account his feelings as a passenger. As we drove through the streets, he criticized other drivers, and constantly

made negative comments about those people who had Republican bumper stickers on their car.

When we arrived home for a break before leaving for dinner, he remarked on how many photos I had in my house and how many lotions I had in my bathroom. Everything was a subtle negative critique and I was beginning to feel less attractive and worthy than I used to.

That evening we went to my favorite Mexican restaurant for dinner, and he inhaled the burrito, chips and salsa to an embarrassing degree, washing them down with numerous diet cokes. I wondered how on earth he intended to lose weight when he ate like he had never seen food before. Then I started to feel guilty about judging him. After all, no-one is perfect, least of all me. I tried to ignore the negative and focus on the positive, although it was becoming more and more difficult to find anything to be positive about.

## CHAPTER FIVE

I had been lonely for so long that I was determined not to give up on this man. After all, he was great at making love, when it suited him, so he must have some good in him! Right? After arriving home, we attempted to go for a bike ride. He managed to pedal for one block, then fell off the bicycle, panting and heaving. Hmm, what to do? Walking and bike riding were apparently out – and the only exercise he really seemed to enjoy was eating, so that just left sex. He had proved himself capable in that regard, so it seemed to me I should try and get him to work off his calories by some bedroom activity.

You may be wondering why on earth I would even consider having sex with such an unappealing, argumentative and bombastic man. I am wondering that myself. However, at the time my brain was being seduced, rather than my body. He had worked me up to such a peak over the months, that I had studiously ignored his physical appearance. You know what they say - "All cats are grey in the dark" - well I am afraid that is how I was thinking.

To my chagrin, my increasing sexual desires were never really addressed because, as he explained, "I am not twenty-five years old anymore, and cannot perform twenty-four/seven". When I gently caressed him, he told me to stop fondling him. "I just want to cuddle" he explained, which was definitely not going to do the job for me. It was then I started to wonder what on earth he was good for. He could eat, watch television and criticize quite well – but were those attributes I needed in my life? Obviously not.

The next morning we decided to take a trip to Venice Beach. On the way, we stopped at a gas station, and he said he would fill the tank while I (naturally) paid. He could not understand how the nozzle worked and when I tried to show him how to hold the handle – because the gas had stopped flowing – he started screaming at me like a banshee. He said I was treating him like a child and that he was a man and could figure it out. I looked around to see people staring at us with curiosity, and I felt humiliated and embarrassed.

We went to Venice Beach and then on to Santa Monica. I parked on the street and he said I would get a ticket if I parked there because there was no meter. I said there were no signs indicating I could not park there, but he insisted I park elsewhere – so I did. We had our second, and last meal that he paid for the entire time he was with me, at the Kings Head Pub. When the waitress brought the check, he left it lying on the table. When she came to pick it up about fifteen minutes later, he still had not paid. He remarked to me how he hated it when they kept coming back for the bill or taking away his plate too soon. After what seemed hours, he finally paid the bill. I thought we could go, but no, he asked the waitress for another refill of his diet coke. And I waited and waited. I noticed how much coke he had consumed and casually mentioned that there was a bathroom right behind us if he wanted to go before we left. Again he blew up, telling me to stop treating him like a child.

"I want a girlfriend, not a mother," he said, in a loud voice. "Stop babying me." I refused to respond and we left the restaurant.

We rounded the corner and went to my favorite British store, The Tudor House, to pick up a few English goodies. He wanted one of their chocolate éclairs and a trifle, so I bought them for him. Of course, he never offered to pay. When we arrived home, he ate the trifle, the éclair and then went through a packet of popcorn, watching television the entire time.

I was becoming more and more frantic, wondering what to do that would entertain the both of us. We finally decided to go see a movie – but when we arrived, it wasn't playing until 10 pm. So we went to another theater, and it was the same. He shouted at my driving, making me stressed out and jumpy. When I tried to park – he screamed that I was going to hit the car next to me. Again, he said I drove too fast, changed lanes abruptly, put my foot on the brake too fast and made him a nervous wreck. We gave up on the early movie and decided to go home for a few hours.

We decided to watch television until it was time to leave for the late movie. We saw "Wife Swap" and, when it was over, we discussed the people we had seen on the show. One of the men was very authoritarian and harsh,

and I whispered, in a joking fashion, "Yes, I have a boyfriend who shouts at me too". I should have known better than to make that remark.

He stiffened, pulled away from me, and then let loose with full force. "You always do that" he screamed. "How many times have I told you not to do that? You never listen to me? Your driving is terrible. . . .you make me feel so uncomfortable in the car" and on, and on, and on he ranted.

I left the room and proceeded up the stairs. He kept calling me to come down and work the problem out. I stepped halfway down the stairs, and told him that shouting at me in public or private was unacceptable.

I retreated to my room, climbed into bed and left him sitting downstairs. The hell with going to a movie. I never wanted to go anywhere with him, ever again.

Eventually, he lumbered up the stairs and stood at the side of my bed, gazing at me with puppy dog eyes.

"I'm sorry" he said in a small voice. "Can't we talk out these problems?"

"No, I don't think so," I responded. "I find your behavior intolerable. How dare you say those things to me. I have treated you with kindness, consideration and generosity, and all you have done is criticize me. I'm not going to put up with it any more."

He continued to entreat me to forgive him and promised to control his shouting in the future. I decided not to break up with him at that moment, because I didn't want to go through a night and morning of silence and anger. So I pretended that all was well and allowed him to hold me close as we slept.



## CHAPTER SIX

The next morning he was to leave for home, so I prepared him another splendid breakfast. I knew this would be the last meal I would ever make for him, and my heart sang at the thought of him leaving.

As he ate his oatmeal, telling me that this was a wonderful healthy meal, promising that he would lose 20 lbs by January, he poured on brown sugar and honey. After polishing off his "healthy" muffins, smothered with my English marmalade, he reached out for the muffin I had not eaten. He followed those with bacon, eggs and sausage and looked around for more.

It was finally time for him to leave. He gladly accepted the packed lunch I made him for the long two hour plane ride home. God forbid that he should go hungry on the flight! As I dropped him off at the airport, he lamented that he had forgotten to take a couple of sodas from my fridge. When I told him that the airline gives out free drinks he said "Yes, but they won't give you the whole can."

I gave him a perfunctory kiss goodbye and drove away with relief, and a little sadness that it had not worked out as I had hoped. What a waste of time, energy and emotion.

Several hours later he called, letting me know he had arrived safely and acting as if nothing untoward had occurred between us. He apparently had no clue that it was over, even though I was cool and somewhat distant. I knew that I would never see him again and sank down on my sofa with a sigh of relief, releasing all the stress of the past week.

It was only moments later that my phone rang again. Thinking it was Jerry, I hesitantly said "hello?" To my surprise, it was an old beau, wanting to come over that evening to take me to a movie. My spirits rose and thoughts of Jerry began to disappear fast.

Rory arrived several hours later and as we were about to leave the house, the phone rang again. This time it was Steve, whom I had gone out with a few months previously, asking to see me later in the week. Life was starting to look up again, and I realized that I had made the correct

decision in saying goodbye to Jerry. When I came home from the movie that evening, I emailed him, ending the relationship for good. There were bitter recriminations on his part, more pleading phone calls and emails, but eventually they petered out, and he finally left me alone.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

I am happy to report I have learned an important lesson from Internet dating. Fortunately, there appear to more fish in the sea than ever came out of it. I would advise my lovelorn sisters to beware of seductive love making over the phone. The words often do not match the man. Do not become embroiled in an "on-line" affair – meet and get to know him first, and ***then*** decide if he is the one for you. Oh, and one more thing: I discovered that I do enjoy my own company and being alone isn't so bad after all. Happily for me, I eventually met "Mr. Right" on the Internet, and he turned out to be THE LOVER of my dreams.