



Dear L. A. Plume,

I'm a recently single middle-aged man who is just entering the confusing world of dating for the first time in decades. It's not like it used to be! Women are ready and willing for anything. They call, they show up at my door unannounced. Yet with all this "aggressive" behavior, they never offer to pay, or perhaps drive themselves, when we go out. Even on a first date they seem to feel entitled to order the most expensive cocktails and items on the menu. There is the suggestion, sometimes couched in subtlety, sometimes overt, that they will render services in exchange. What happened to the old fashioned concept of dating, of getting to know someone gradually? This is not fun; help!

Bewildered Bob

Dear Bewildered Bob,

It seems you need to set some boundaries! If you are meeting someone for a "first date" – have her meet you at the restaurant. Pick a place that suits you as well as your budget. Or try a coffee, or lunch, date before you go out for dinner. That way, if you are not charmed, you can

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Written by L.A. Plume

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say that you have a meeting, or have to go back to work, the golf course, or whatever. And remember, in the final analysis, that you usually get just what you ask for!

L.A. Plume

Dear Ms. Plume,

Who let the crazies out? Is there anyone out there who tells the truth, about anything, on internet dating sites? What am I to do when I meet someone online, chat for a bit, seem to find some common interests, then get together in person and realize this isn't remotely the person they portrayed themselves to be? Their photos seem to have been taken years ago, or of someone altogether different. I'm a relatively uncomplicated, outdoorsy kind of guy who lives a bit out of the way. Internet dating seems like a reasonable way to meet someone who I wouldn't meet in my small burg. But shouldn't there be rules? Does listing "likes fishing" as an activity really mean that they like to order sushi? Is there a way to decode this stuff? What's wrong with honesty?

Frank

Dear Frank,

The internet does seem to be a mega-store for crazies on the dating scene. People seem to try to be "bigger" than they are in real life, or who they would like to be. Get an email address that you use specifically for this purpose. That way you can exchange information and photographs and check for inconsistencies. If they don't know how to use spell-check, write them off immediately. If you want to know if they really are telling the truth about their likes, ask a specific

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question; i.e. if it's fishing – ask her what kind of rod she prefers. Try to read between the lines; ask for a photo with a date stamp on it. I agree that it should be a good way to meet people out of your immediate geographic range, but people are just people and these stories are always good fodder for cocktail conversation.

L.A. Plume