

# FOOL ME TWICE

CONFESSIONS OF A PERPETUAL  
INTERNET DATING NEOPHYTE



A MEMOIR  
BY JULES HANNAFORD

**SAMPLE EXCERPT**

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# Fool Me Twice

Confessions of a Perpetual Internet Dating Neophyte

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A Memoir  
By Jules Hannaford

*Empathy is the antidote to shame.*

**–Brené Brown**

*Loving ourselves through the process of owning our story  
is the bravest thing we'll ever do.*

**–Brené Brown**

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## **Endorsements**

*Jules bares her soul in her beautifully written memoir "Fool Me Twice" in an attempt to help others learn from her experiences. This is definitely a must-read for all the women out there.*

– Joanne Ong, International Bestselling Author of 'The Sun Within: Rediscover You'

*I first met Jules on one of the many podcasting enthusiasts' pages littered across social media. From the outset, I could tell that she was driven. We helped promote her small but growing podcast "Hong Kong Confidential" on our network. The show about a woman from the country in South Australia talking to interesting people in Hong Kong steadily built an audience and hit new milestones. This is due in no small part to her work ethic and likeable personality. Jules's storytelling too has great depth; it can be funny but also dark in places. Her podcast is a unique offering. Get yourself a copy of the new book "Fool Me Twice" by Jules Hannaford; you'll be glad you did.*

– Liam Carter, Auscast Network

*Jules's raw and honest personal account of her struggles is a beautiful example of how owning our own stories gives each of us the power to write a brave new ending.*

– Rebecca Hopkins, Live Brave Workshops

*"Fool Me Twice" was written by Jules Hannaford about her life experiences with online dating. This story has many universal themes that will resonate with you, the reader. The purpose of the book is to educate others in the hope that no one will ever experience what she has: being scammed. Her advice is priceless and listening to her may save you from being scammed. A must-read for anyone considering internet dating.*

– Judy O'Beirn, International Bestselling Author of the 'Unwavering Strength' Series

*A deep bow of respect to you, Jules, for seeking out and showing up to do the inner work we did together for you to reconnect with the creative, confident, vibrant parts of yourself that had been tucked away and forgotten about. You showed the curiosity, courage, love, and tenacity to do what you needed to give us your true, wondrous, radiant self!*

– Natalie Goni, Life Coach

*Jules, reading your awesome book was a treat even in the difficult, emotional parts. Having known you and your daughter for two decades on our little island paradise in Hong Kong, I was pleasantly surprised how much I enjoyed the book and learned so much from what you wrote. You're an inspiring mother, teacher, writer, artist, podcaster, person, firefighter, problem solver and most of all, friend to all of us. Keep up the great work, and thanks for everything.*

– Glen Watson, Editor/Writer, Hong Kong

*Internet dating scams are sadly an all-too-painful reality for many women in today's world, and most of us have no idea this is going on! It's hard to explain how intelligent, successful women with everything going for them can fall into this kind of trap, and yet they do. Every day.*

*If you ever wonder how is that possible, Jules's brave bare-it-all story of how she overcame the pain and shame of being involved in such a traumatic experience is an invaluable resource for women who may feel the need to go to great lengths to find real love.*

*After coaching many women in this situation to regain their self-esteem and trust that not all men are scammers and to overcome their pain and limiting beliefs related to love and relationships, I am delighted to see a true story of a woman who got her power back and is now ready to share her experience with the world.*

*Don't imagine this can never happen to you! Jules's practical tips on how to protect yourself and unmask these aggressors is a wonderful guide for every woman out there, so don't delay!*

*– Valentina Tudose, Dating and Relationship Coach, Happy Ever After*

**Dedication**

*To my beautiful, talented, and amazing daughter.  
Thank you for your support and love.*

## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to say a huge thank you to everyone who supported me on my journey while writing this memoir. I am particularly grateful to the Online Author's Office, led by Pashmina P., for your endless encouragement and professionalism whilst bringing this book to fruition. To the editors, designers, researchers, and consultants from the OAO, I could not have done this without you. To Judy O'Beirn from Hasmark Publishing, thank you for selecting me as a client; I appreciate your faith in me. To all of my friends and family who have not only supported me through the process of writing my book but have also agreed to be in the book and allowed me to use their real names, I am very appreciative. Thank you also to those people who provided such heart-warming quotes about me to use in my book. Your generosity of spirit is truly amazing. Thank you so much to everyone who endorsed my book; your advocacy gives me strength. Your belief in me and your recognition that this is a story that needs to be told, and understanding that it can help others is very humbling. I appreciate the support and guidance of the Principal at my school. Thanks to my daughter for your brilliant editing skills and wise advice. Thanks to Glen Watson for your editing support. Finally, special thanks to Mari, who has been with me on this journey every step of the way. Thanks for being my rock, my advisor, my mentor, and my dear friend.

## ***PART 4 - My One 'Tru' Man***

### **Scammed Big-Time**

I was in Hong Kong Skyping with a friend in Australia who told me she had met this awesome guy on a new dating site. He was in the UK, and she felt like she was really developing a relationship with him. I decided to check out the dating site, as my old ones were clearly not working for me.

I saw this profile:

*Name: Truman*

*Age: 35*

*Lives: Manchester, United Kingdom*

*Occupation: Construction / Trades*

I indicated my interest, and he replied with a message about himself. It was most likely a generic reply that he sent to everyone, but I did not even consider this at the time. I thought he was writing this directly to me from his heart.

*Thank you for all your interests, favourites, and messages. I wish you all luck finding love, but please remember the words of Ms Marilyn Monroe... 'I'm selfish, impatient, and a little insecure. I make mistakes, I am out of control and at times hard to handle. But if you can't handle me at my worst, then you sure as hell don't deserve me at my best!' Okay, a bit about me... I am a tall, prosperous, kindly professional. I am a director of a property/project management/construction company. I'm self-motivating, intuitive, with varied interests and people-orientated. My likes are building, conversation, golf, theatre, books, travel, wining and dining. Dislikes are pomposity, personal violence, and women who believe that true virtue is located below the navel. I am funny, with a high IQ and income. I have a sparking, confident smile, shiny brown skin, a trimmed moustache, rich brown eyes, and shaved bald head. I am looking for a sexy lady to share travel and excitement, maybe more. So this is unlikely to suit pushy materialists. Should this meet the eye of a loving, nice lady who enjoys concerts, movies, quiet times, and finer things in life, why not contact me and tell me about yourself? No photo, no chat, sorry. If it hasn't happened to you yet, it could with this optimistic, talented, and charming man. Thank you for reading my profile.*

It's obvious now that he was writing to many women, not just one. I did not see that at the time. Crikey, how naïve and gullible I was, again! It makes me feel sad for the person I was back then.

He seemed like a great guy from his message, and I wrote to him. This was my first message:

*You seem very interesting and genuine. I like your pictures as well, you have a great smile! I am an Aussie girl living in Hong Kong. I am six feet tall, long dark hair, and very active. I play different sports and love to swim. I am a teacher at an international school and I teach drama and personal, social, and health education. I am also a Head of Year so I look after the students' academic needs and emotional, social problems as well. I love my job, so I am really lucky.*

*I live on a little island off Hong Kong which is a Chinese fishing village with great beaches. There are no cars and I walk everywhere. I travel loads; actually, I have just returned from Kenya with 60 students on a school trip, which was amazing.*

*I have a daughter who is a beautiful, successful girl. She is 21 and she lives in London. Do you travel much, and have you been anywhere in Asia? Do you have any children?*

*Anyway, have a great day and let me know if you would like to learn more about me. I hope to hear back from you.*

*Cheers,  
Jules*

This is the first reply I received from Truman in November 2010:

*It was really nice to hear from you. I have been wondering when a Joan of Arc with substance and looks to match would come along... I hope your love trip online is going well. Not so for me, it's all been fake profiles, demands for money or phone credit, scams, etc. I am left wondering where all the good ladies in the world are. I am so thrilled about the concept of living on an island with no cars... how unbelievably cool. You sound quite happy and good on you. Life is short and you seem to have got it right... simple is better! I am planning my trip back in time soon. The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya are all on my planned travel route. I am at work, but decided to reply to you quickly... Until our energy attracts again.*

*Take care,  
Truman*

It is very interesting that Truman, the would-be scammer, commented on being scammed himself on the dating site. This was great psychology to use to put my mind at ease. It made me think that he was a genuine guy.

My reply was:

*Hi Truman,*

*Wow, thanks for the awesome email. Nice to hear from you, too! It's interesting that you ask about my experience on this site. I have only been on a few weeks and have received hundreds of messages and interests... a ridiculous amount, 99% of which I have deleted. I have chatted to one guy in Sweden who was very nice but too young; apart from that, you're the second one. I have been burnt before with internet dating and have some interesting stories to tell but not much luck, I must say.*

*There certainly are people out there whose intentions are neither honourable nor straight up. We live and learn and I never give up hope for a decent, honest, loving partner to share my life with. There are some fantastic people out in the world; they just seem to be few and far between on the internet.*

*As a six-foot woman in Hong Kong, as you can imagine, I struggle to meet men. Thus, the internet seems to be my only hope. I can't leave this wonderful lifestyle and job that I have in search of love because there are no guarantees anywhere. Anyway, rest assured, I am genuine and only looking for love and a partner to share all the great things in life there are to be enjoyed. I really want to travel with someone, through Africa and South America. I would love to do a couple of months in each place, which is possible given I am a teacher and we get long summer holidays.*

*I love Africa and have a strong affinity for it. I have been to Kenya five times with over 260 kids in total. They have been life-changing trips for many of my students and they appreciate what they have so much more and care more about others. It's quite rewarding, and we make a huge difference to kids along the way in Kenya. We took 300 pairs of trainers to a school in Baringo; it was brilliant, as every kid got a pair of shoes in the school and the joy over a simple pair of shoes was not lost on my students who have everything and more. Priceless!*

*I have also been to Madagascar, where I pulled out some of my high school French and surprised myself with what I remembered. I have been to South Africa twice, Egypt, and I think that's it so far. Oh, Mauritius too.*

*I come from Adelaide in Australia and I grew up on a farm and went to boarding school, which I loved. I came to Hong Kong 10 years ago when my daughter was 11. I put her through university on my own and now she is working in London. I play netball and am in the top division 1 team in Hong Kong, although my ankles are telling me I should retire but the rest of me won't let me. I also love to swim and scuba dive. I play beach volleyball, although lately we have been paying pétanque (boules) and commenting on how we are not as active as we used to be. I have loads of friends here on my little island from all over the world. We are an eclectic bunch... bit of a dysfunctional family one might say, but we have an amazing life here, as there is never a dull moment.*

*I have just finished working 19 days straight (with the Kenya trip in the middle) and am thrilled that it is the weekend. I look forward to hearing more about you and your life. Please ask me anything you would like to know about me.*

*Thanks for inspiring me to share so much with you. I enjoyed your message!*

*Take care and I hope to hear from you soon. Please feel free to ask me anything you would like to know about me.*

*Later... I hope,*

*Jules*

After that, we decided to share Skype addresses and began messaging each other.

## **Falling for His Lies**

So, our relationship began. We wrote on Skype and also chatted on the phone a few times. I thought his accent was a bit odd and questioned him about it. He told me that he was born in the UK and was adopted by a British couple. He said that his parents sent him to Canada for boarding school and that explained his unusual accent. In hindsight, I realise that he was just talking rubbish and his accent was not British with a little Canadian twang, but his story threw me off and convinced me to trust him.

Early on, Truman's Skype name changed to Truman Buharay and it did not match his name, which he told me was Truman Buhari. I did not notice this at the time, but I questioned him sometime later, and he brushed me off. When I asked what his job was, he replied that he was a project and business development manager for a successful property company—'full throttle, baby', as he put it.

On the phone, he said he would like to visit me in Hong Kong, to which I said he could. However, soon after, he made an excuse about work and said he couldn't come to see me and asked if perhaps I could visit him or suggested we meet in Africa for a holiday. I cannot believe I was considering going to meet him in Ghana for a holiday, having never even met him in person. That was absolute madness, and thank goodness it never happened.

Given that sending pictures was his condition for initiating our relationship, I sent him some photos of the island I live on and of me. He began getting sappy, and I rose to the occasion and joined him with sentimental rhetoric.

*Truman: Keep them coming...*

*Truman: Your mails cheer me up...*

*Jules: Will do.*

*Truman: Your photo is on my computer background.*

*Truman: It's a battle between your picture and the island.*

*Truman: I do not know which I love more. Lol.*

*Truman: I stare at you all day...*

*Jules: I want you to love us both equally, me and my island. Lol.*

*Truman: Difficult one...*

*Truman: The island photo going on tomorrow. Lol.*

*Jules: Nice.*

*Jules: You can interchange them.*

*Truman: I do...*

Positively sickening! I want people to see how men like this, preying on loneliness and goodwill, can suck some people into thinking they're really interested, when they're actually professional scammers. We had been speaking on the phone a lot as well, so he was working me from two different angles. I asked for some of his pictures, which he initially ignored. After quite a while, he finally sent some photos.

In these chat logs, you will notice that some lines of conversation seem to overlap. This is because we are typing too fast to keep up with each other.

*Jules: Did you like the photos I sent?*

*Truman: I do...*

*Jules: Can you please send me some photos of you? I don't have any.*

*Truman: You are a sexy lady...*

*Jules: Thanks, glad you think so.*

*Jules: I was wondering how someone as hot as you can be single in a place like the UK?*

*Truman: They're just not my kind of women...*

*Truman: I just came out of a long relationship.*

*Truman: I just want a simple, nice woman.*

*Truman: Not spoilt, unrealistic, and selfish.*

*Jules: Ha, I don't know if any women are simple... I think we can be a bit complicated.*

*Truman: I try to always look for good in people.*

*Jules: Oh yeah, I am not any of those.*

*Truman: One of my many faults...*

*Jules: My faults are being too trusting, too naïve, and too generous.*

Little did I know this last line would have been music to his ears, exactly what he was *really* looking for in a woman. Without realising it, I had made it clear to him that I was an easy target. I was a scammer's dream come true.

Truman (an ironic name, as he was not a true man at all!) went on to tell me about his career, which of course I later found out was all lies as well. He claimed to have a degree in project management, and was responsible for three projects each worth £2 million. He continued to boast about himself, then used my interests to reel me in a little more, and I fell hook, line, and sinker.

*Truman: They say I am the best...*

*Truman: If Tru can't do it, it can't be done.*

*Jules: I am sure you're brilliant.*

*Jules: In an ideal world what would you like to be doing for a job?*

*Truman: Working with children.*

*Truman: I love kids.*

*Truman: Helping the less fortunate in Africa.*

*Jules: Yeah, that's our plan, you and me in Africa saving lives and making a difference.*

*Jules: We can work towards that.*

*Truman: I already am...*

*Jules: Anything is possible, you know?*

*Truman: I am going to buy land and build a home for orphans.*

*Jules: We could be an amazing team.*

*Truman: Motherless babies and babies with HIV.*

*Jules: Fantastic! Count me in.*

*Truman: I am going to take care of them myself... all the way through to university.*

*Truman: Can you imagine that?*

*Jules: Wow! I have the same aspirations!*

*Jules: Yes, totally!*

*Truman: Having tons of kids owe their life and future to us...*

*Jules: I so hope we click on all levels, fall in love, and can make this happen.*

*Truman: That's why I am working so hard.*

*Jules: A new and exciting chapter in our lives.*

*Truman: Because I know there is a life in Africa I am going to save.*

*Jules: Good for you. I am ready when you are.*

*Truman: We need to go do our homework.*

*Jules: We just have to decide where?*

*Truman: Maybe go to Africa for 7 days?*

*Truman: 29th Jan?*

*Jules: We will chat face to face on Skype this weekend and make a plan.*

*Truman: I would love to go with you...*

*Jules: Me too. I will go anywhere that we can be safe to do our work.*

*Truman: We can brainstorm this weekend.*

*Jules: We will. It will be amazing. Do you have any sense of where you come from?*

*Truman: I will always protect you.*

*Truman: I have a black belt in judo.*

*Jules: I know you will. This is so amazing that we have met. Your dream has been my dream also but I wanted to do it with my partner.*

*Jules: Very exciting. I feel intuitively very calm and sure that we were made for each other.*

*Truman: I don't know why, I feel it too...*

*Jules: I have been looking and waiting for you for a long time.*

*Truman: Have you ever been in love before?*

*Jules: I have been in love twice in my 20s but not since, really. The thing is, I don't think that I have ever truly had someone who loves me.*

*Jules: You?*

*Truman: I just hope we don't let each other down when we meet!*

*Jules: I don't think we will. All the chips are falling nicely into place so far.*

*Truman: I wasted 14 years on a woman that didn't know the meaning of love...*

*Jules: We will increase the connection when we talk face to face. We will be ok.*

*Jules: Nothing is a waste because it all shapes who you are today.*

*Jules: I have been single for most of the last 14 years, so I have been without love for ages.*

*Jules: It's ok because good things come to those who wait and I have been waiting for you.*

*Jules: We have so much to look forward to.*

*Jules: I wish you could come to Hong Kong over Christmas break. I would have come to you if my daughter and her boyfriend weren't coming here.*

*Jules: Even though it's freezing in your neck of the woods.*

*Truman: I am so sleepy...*

*Jules: Go to bed, babe.*

He had me going a mile a minute, and I was quick to let him leave at the slightest hint that he was done. It is so interesting to read this now because it is right out of the scammer's handbook, but I was completely oblivious to any of it at the time. I was just

enamoured with his desire to be with me and have a relationship. Everything I had always wanted suddenly felt possible.

He was increasing my connection with him by appearing to share the same dreams as me. He knew that I had taken students to Kenya and was drawing from my history and love of helping kids with the fantasy of going to Africa together. By opening up with all his talk about how good he was at his job, how big the projects were, and how much money was involved in them, he seemed accomplished, successful, and important, allowing me to believe that 'our' dreams could come true.

He was very good at avoiding topics that he did not want to discuss. He avoided the question about where his ancestors might have been from originally, and when I suggested he come and see me in Hong Kong, he shut that down by saying he was sleepy and had to go to sleep.

As I think back on how it all began, I realise that we can have great wisdom with hindsight, but to be honest, I really overlooked so much that I should not have. I was trusting and took him at face value.

## **Lies, Damn Lies**

Truman worked hard to convince me he had two careers running alongside each other. I did not consider at the time that he was supposedly a senior project manager in a multimillion-dollar construction company. If this was the case, how could he have had the time to run and work in a mobile phone shop on the side—and why would he? I cannot understand why I did not question this at all. It did not cross my mind. I just thought he was such an incredibly hard worker. Oh, my stars!

We always messaged each other in our Skype conversations as he said his webcam was broken. He never Skyped with me face to face. When I asked him to, he said I needed to teach him how to set it up. What kind of person owns a phone shop and can ‘sell, fix, unlock phones, and find parts and accessories,’ as he described to me, and cannot manage to video chat?

Instead, we continued to make plans to meet in person. At first we were going to meet in Ghana, but then he said he couldn’t leave his phone business so he couldn’t make it to Africa. He said he would love to come and see me in Hong Kong, but both his jobs prevented him from doing it at that time, so he asked if I could come to him. I had two weeks of holidays coming up, so I decided I would go to see him in Manchester for a week after my daughter and her boyfriend returned from their visit to Hong Kong.

I accepted his friend request on Facebook, and noticed that he didn’t have many friends. One of them was a pretty blonde girl from Sweden. He later mentioned her and said that she had refused to visit him and that annoyed him, so he ended it with her—a little early intimidation to remind me to be loyal and generous.

Here is what I wrote when I had booked my ticket to see him. He didn’t answer as he probably couldn’t believe his luck and was possibly in shock.

*Jules: Hey there, I have a flight booked on the 26th December arriving on 27th (will let you know time as can't remember) then I fly out on the evening of the 1st Jan (I might leave a bit earlier in the day and meet my daughter in London for a bit... I will see). I will just send the ticket to you later. Does that all sound ok with you? I am very excited. Please get a new webcam so we can Skype this weekend and see each other. I am off to bed now. Hope I can sleep in my excited state. Catch you soon.*

Most scammers do not meet their intended victims. They groom them over time to make them think they are in love from afar and then they start to try and get money from them. I often wonder if Truman was angling for money from me for a ticket to Ghana, but his plan was foiled by me flying to see him in the UK. That may have thrown a spanner in the works and hence the radio silence when I told him I bought a ticket.

The next time we spoke, he told me I had a ‘beautiful smile and lovely honest eyes’ and we had some random chit-chat about my netball and my visit to see him. I also had to ask him again—for the third time—to get a web cam.

*Jules: So are you ok if I visit from 27th December to 1st January, or is that too long?*

*Truman: I would love you to come and spend those days and New Year's with me.*

*Jules: Great, that's fabulous. I will send you flight details.*

*Truman: I am going to book us a nice treat.*

*Jules: Oh lovely, I am really excited you know. It's going to be fabulous.*

*Truman: I really do care about you...*

*Truman: And feel very excited too...*

*Truman: I hope we make it.*

*Jules: Please can you get web cam so we can build on that connection before I come?*

*Jules: Love is very elusive.*

*Truman: I know...*

*Truman: I have had it before and it's the most beautiful thing in the world.*

*Truman: I respect you so much...*

*Jules: We're on the same page which is amazing. We both want a deep and meaningful relationship with true love.*

*Jules: You're lucky! I hope we can have it, too.*

*Truman: What you did with your daughter, moving to Hong Kong and making it there...*

*Truman: You are a strong woman.*

*Truman: I just want to know I have someone who cares about me out there...*

*Truman: Who loves me for me.*

*Jules: She wants me to be happy.*

*Jules: She is sick of seeing me make bad choices and getting hurt.*

*Jules: She wants me to meet a decent man who thinks I am amazing.*

*Truman: Good. I am that man.*

*Truman: I was in a 14-year relationship. I was so good to her. I stood by her. For her to forsake me...*

*Jules: Yes, the 14 years shows you can be loyal and committed.*

*Truman: I am getting all emotional...*

*Truman: I need a time out.*

*Jules: Don't be sad.*

*Truman: Take care, my love...*

*Jules: Things happen for a reason.*

*Truman: No... I am happy that I may have found my soul mate and God has answered my prayers.*

Blimey, he's good, sucking me in with his emotional 'I've been hurt before' rhetoric. Reading this back was quite cathartic, I can see how he fooled me and how I fell for his fake platitudes. I feel a little less angry, and instead I feel sorry for myself for being conned by this smooth-taking charlatan. At least I can now see that he was very good at scamming me with his words.

In one of our previous phone conversations, he told me we were going to spend a weekend at a posh spa hotel, hence the 'nice treat' he was going to book. I researched the venue and it looked gorgeous and very expensive. He was going to pay for the whole weekend as a thank you for me paying to come and see him. Oh, how sweet, I thought. I was excited to be taken care of, for a change.

It's also interesting to note that this was the second time he told me about being in a previous relationship and I fell right into his trap by confirming what he wanted me to believe from that claim: that he was loyal and committed.

You can see my excitement at going to meet him in this exchange below. Sadly, my naïveté is also evident in this passage and is an indicator that I was thinking with my heart and not my brain.

*Jules: I have paid for my ticket so operation Tru and Jules connection is under way!*

*Jules: I also bought some warm clothes for the trip.*

*Truman: How much was it, babes?*

*Jules: The clothes cost more than the flight!*

*Jules: Just kidding.*

*Truman: Lol.*

*Jules: I am excited!*

*Truman: I have a doctor's appointment...*

*Jules: Can you buy web cam? We could Skype when you get home?*

*Jules: Are you ok?*

*Truman: I have the flu, or a chest infection.*

*Jules: I am sorry to hear you're not well.*

*Truman: It's okay, I will bounce back.*

*Jules: Glad you're taking time to go to the doctor. Forget the web cam until you get better. I love your fighting spirit.*

Can you believe it? I ask him again to get a web cam, he tells me he's sick and I let him off the hook. Also, why did he ask me how much I spent on the clothes? Was he trying to ascertain whether I had money or not by how much I would spend on myself? He claimed to have fortune and a thriving business and to have been in a long-standing relationship in the past. He had also offered to treat me to a spa, further indication that he was a man of some means. All of this seemed so wonderful for a lonely single mother like me. He made me feel somehow worthy of love and a relationship, which is something that, for me, was so elusive. It was not his money that drew me—it was the investment he seemed willing to make in me as a partner.

## **Falling in Deeper**

We had another long Skype chat for an hour and a half—without a camera. This was all happening in November and December, 2010. It was all very fast—I knew him for less than two months, but he either Skyped with me (without a camera) or spoke to me every day on the phone. Every time, I gushed to him in talk or text, feeling so confident in our connection.

*Jules: Every time we talk I feel more and more connected to you. I like you so much. I am so excited and happy! It's a wonderful journey already and it's just the beginning!*

*Jules: I am so thrilled we found each other! It's our time!*

I cannot believe I wrote this—I can't even remember doing it. He wasn't even answering me and I was rambling on like a fool to someone I had never met. How excruciating is it to read and share this? I still feel shame eight years later.

Some of that shame was already present. I didn't reach out to discuss the situation with any of my friends or family because deep down, I knew that they would tell me to get a grip and stop what I was doing. I did not want to hear this, so I kept it all to myself. At one point, I did briefly bring up the situation with my good friend Pam, and she made it clear that she did not think it was a good idea. Instead of taking her advice, I just kept it all to myself. In my mind, I felt she didn't understand, but in hindsight she was spot-on with her concerns and was just showing that she cared and was worried about me. My daughter would have had the same reaction as Pam if I had told her. I know deep in her heart she wants nothing more than for me to find a good man to share my life with, but if I had explained the situation to her in honest detail, she would have begged me not to go and meet him. My daughter is very tuned in to her intuition and this is something I admire in her. She seems to have the best instincts of anyone I know.

Meanwhile, lost in the fog of romance, I would sit up for hours, waiting and thinking of nothing but the positive.

*Jules: I stayed up late last night hoping you would come online. Wish I didn't do that now. I feel very tired. Silly me!*

*Truman: Baby, please don't do that, go to sleep...*

*Truman: We have our whole life together.*

I had sent him a getting-to-know-you questionnaire in the hope that he would send it back to me and I could learn more about him. Of course, he never sent it back, but I had filled it out for him and therefore had given him a load of information about myself that he could use to lure me into the fantasy world he had created: his construction job, his phone shop, being adopted and going to school in Canada, and even having a fourteen-year relationship with a woman. I assume now, given what I know, that all of this was untrue. My fantasy world was a love story with someone who supported me, loved me, and had

shared interests. I thought our worlds were a perfect match, but couldn't completely see this for myself yet, and the quiz was just a fun, revealing way to affirm this.

What I had given him was a tool kit for manipulating me further by connecting with me on things I cared about or was interested in. It's ironic that I meant to use this as a way to genuinely learn more about him and see if I could build a connection, but instead, by filling in the questionnaire for him, I was giving him ammunition to deceive me on a deeper level than he already was. The fact that Truman did not bother to return the quiz is just another red flag indicating that he was not genuinely interested in me, but I made excuses in my mind that he was just too busy with his two careers.

The quiz included deep-thinkers like 'What is your biggest fear?' and fun one-liners such as 'Who is your celebrity crush?' As I read my heartfelt and genuine answers that I sent to this stranger in the hope of making a connection eight years later, I feel a pang in my heart. It's not embarrassment I feel—it's sympathy. I just want to give that girl I was a hug and tell her that I am sorry she was so lonely and yearning for love. I'd tell her that I don't blame her for trying to find someone to love; it's a natural urge and desire.

## Meeting Truman in Person

Not long before I was about to fly to the UK to meet Truman, we had this exchange on Skype. It includes another embarrassing confession: I love *The Bachelor* (I am really baring my soul in this book!). I know some consider it 'trashy' reality TV and likely to be staged, but I find the whole premise of the show fascinating. I get hooked on the drama and romance, even though it is completely unrealistic. It's like being a fly on the wall; we get to see into other people's lives, and on some level, this is both riveting and entertaining, but it can also be a reminder of how good my life is. At other times, it can be a reminder of how alone I am.

*Truman: Just been thinking all night.*

*Jules: What have you been thinking?*

*Truman: So much...*

*Truman: I was answering those questions you sent.*

*Jules: Oh cool, yeah.*

*Jules: Did you enjoy my answers?*

*Truman: It got me thinking how unhappy I am in my job...*

*Jules: I had fun doing it.*

*Truman: And not having love...*

*Jules: Well, there's hopefully a new beginning and new love just around the corner.*

*Jules: Fingers crossed.*

*Jules: It's quite exciting, hey?*

*Jules: I spent the whole day watching girls get their hearts broken on 'The Bachelor'. It's a very strange concept! It made me think so much about how I want true love and someone to share my life with.*

*Truman: It's more.*

*Jules: Everyone wants to have love in their lives, enjoy their jobs, and have fun with their partners. Also doing things for others gives you personal satisfaction.*

*Truman: I am making some changes in my life... for happiness.*

*Jules: It's all possible you know!*

*Jules: Glad to hear it! I hope I can be a part of it!*

*Truman: I know, babes.*

*Jules: Every time we communicate, I feel closer to you.*

*Truman: You are the foundation...*

*Truman: The primary reason...*

*Jules: Oh, that means so much to me.*

*Truman: You showed me something that I thought was only in movies.*

*Jules: You are amazing. I feel so privileged to have found you.*

*Jules: I am looking forward to seeing your quiz answers. Thanks for doing that. I am excited to learn more about you.*

*Truman: It was interesting.*

*Truman: Anything for you, baby.*

*Truman: I luv you...*

Some of this is cringe-worthy, but it shows how dizzy with excitement I was and how much I wanted it to work. I really was living in a fantasy world, but I think that comes from years and years of being alone and really wanting a partner in my life. As humans we're not solitary creatures; we're designed to have partners. I had been in two physically and emotionally abusive relationships and been scammed before; I just wanted this to be real. When you want something badly enough, you will believe anything. It's amazing how I was able to convince myself that this was real when the truth was that I being scammed on an epic scale.

I didn't know at the time that the change he was talking about was quitting his imaginary job as a project manager because he now knew that I was coming to see him and he had lied through his teeth. When we were on the phone, he clarified to me that he had quit his project manager job. In our next conversation on Skype, he said, 'I am so happy I met you... and you made me give that job up.' I never once asked him to quit his job or even suggested it.

This was also the first time (but not the last) that he said that he loved me, and I felt uncomfortable with him saying it. I never expressed this concern to him, but it is reassuring that even in my desire for this relationship to work, there was still some semblance of logic operating in my brain, just not enough of it.

*Truman: You know, you are a great person.*

*Truman: I am so happy I found you.*

*Jules: Oh, so are you.*

*Truman: I love you so much.*

*Jules: I think we are really lucky and have so much to look forward to.*

I did not return this sentiment of love to him in any of my messages or when talking to him on the phone, although I spoke a lot about wanting to find love. I could not see how anyone could say they love someone without meeting them. It just doesn't make any sense to me. I was hopeful and having fun, but I did not have any feelings that I was in love with this guy. However, this is how scammers work; they want the person that they are communicating with to fall in love with them without meeting them. Thus, slowly but surely, I was giving away my heart, and with it my good sense.

One positive outcome is that I quit smoking. Truman hated smoking and I remembered how it played a role in my missing out on a relationship with Trevor from Shanghai, so I decided to quit before I met him.

One day, Truman noticed that I was not myself and asked if I was okay while we were talking on the phone. Coincidentally, I *wasn't* okay, I was feeling low, and his 'perceptiveness' blew me away. This kind of deeper-level understanding of my moods reeled me in even further. I wrote this response to him:

*Jules: I was just thinking, you are very tuned in to me already. I do feel a bit flat and tired today. I'm very impressed you picked it up. It's just another great sign of our connection!*

*Truman: I know...*

*Jules: I am really impressed! Not that I wasn't already impressed by you!*

I can't believe I was so mushy and elated with someone that I had never met in person. What was I thinking? The fact was that, at forty five, I was starting perimenopause, and this may have played a role in my mental state. I was grabbing for a hot man instead of the hot water bottle I really needed. A woman's hormones often go haywire in perimenopause, and this may have made me more susceptible to this man connecting with me on an emotional level by appearing to show empathy towards me. My body and mind were buzzing and reorganising themselves in preparation for menopause, and I associated the intensity of feeling on the connection I had made with Truman.

We communicated throughout the two months that led up to my visit. We emailed (his were always very brief), talked on the phone, and chatted on Skype—still without a camera. There was more talk about him coming to live in Hong Kong, and then a Skype chat to remind me of his work in the phone shop. I want to scream when I think about the praise and admiration I offered him.

In this chat below, he mentions his last day at his imaginary construction site job. He also sets the scene for another layer to the scam—this portion related to Liverpool—that I was completely oblivious to at the time.

*Jules: Hey Tru... what are you doing? Working in your shop or doing handover at your other job?*

*Truman: Just got back from Liverpool site...*

*Truman: Last day.*

*Truman: Really busy so will chat with you this evening.*

*Jules: Congrats on last day. How does it feel?*

*Truman: All my love for now...*

Truman had offered to book a hotel for us for my Manchester visit, but when he got back to me, he suddenly needed me to do it. For some reason, in that moment, I lost all rational thought and I found myself booking the hotel.

*Truman: Babes, can you sort the hotel out?*

*Jules: Sure, do we want it for all nights I am there?*

*Truman: It's affordable and next to shop.*

*Jules: Ok, I will do.*

*Truman: All nights... Yes, baby girl.*

*Truman: Thanks.*

*Jules: No worries.*

*Truman: I miss you.*

*Jules: Miss you too.*

*Jules: Wow... Friday 31st is really expensive... but oops, too late, already booked.*

*Truman: Should we get a cheaper hotel for that Friday night?*

*Truman: I am looking right now.*

*Jules: I think they will all be expensive.*

*Truman: Do you think it's too much?*

*Jules: We can cancel Friday night earlier in the week.*

*Jules: Should we stay at your place?*

*Truman: I will see if I can find an alternative.*

*Jules: Ok, it's up to you.*

*Truman: In case we cancel... is that okay?*

*Jules: I don't mind either way... no problem.*

*Truman: Just thinking of funds... I have put a lot into my shop...*

*Truman: Okay, you seem sleepy...*

*Jules: Whatever you decide will be great... I am easy.*

*Truman: We can talk in the morning.*

*Truman: Love you.*

*Jules: Sure...*

*Jules: Bye.*

I like the way he cleverly made it seem like he would be paying for the hotel or at least splitting the cost. I felt a bit concerned, yet again, that he was saying he loved and missed me, but I brushed it aside and I responded that I missed him.

## **One-Sided Email Exchange**

I talked to my daughter about Truman and the fact I was going to meet him. I am sure deep down she had reservations, but she wanted me to be happy and still trusted my instincts. I never told her about the incident with Dean, so she didn't really understand my level of naïveté and poor judgement. She joked about meeting him to vet him as she was always amazing at intuitively knowing if someone was a good person or not. Even if my daughter had met him and warned me against him, I am not sure if I would have listened to her. I certainly did not listen to Pam's warnings, which caused her annoyance and worry I'm sure.

I sent Truman a few emails during the two months before my UK visit, and he rarely replied. When he did, his responses were very limited and brief: a song link, or just a couple of words. I thought it was because he was so busy with his two jobs, but his lack of response could support my theory that the person that I was Skyping with was not him. On Skype, he wrote a lot, and often. He still wouldn't Skype with me face to face, but he sent me pictures of himself. I suppose he knew I would have been more likely I to realise that he was not genuine if we spoke face to face. It also could indicate that I may not have even been Skyping with him—it could have been anyone. This is even scarier to think about, and I will never know the truth.

*Hey Tru,*

*Sorry I missed you online today.*

*I told my daughter about you last night. She was happy for me. She told me to tell you to come to her graduation next Tuesday so she can meet you first and vet you... Hahaha, she was only joking. She doesn't trust me.*

*Let me know as soon as you know if you get holidays... then we can plan our trip. How exciting.*

*Catch you later,*

*Jules*

This is an email reply from Truman, the first one I had ever had from him:

*I would love to go to the graduation...*

*Just a short reply...*

*I was really beat, went to bed early.*

*All my love,*

*Tru Buharay, the living legend*

Can you believe he called himself a living legend? His ego was out of control and this was another red flag that I ignored like an ostrich with its head in the sand. I wrote:

*Hooray!!!! I got an email from you... how exciting. Thanks! Even though it was short, it means a lot, you know!*

*That was funny regarding graduation, she was only kidding. Nice, response though! I will certainly visit you at some stage so you will meet her then, unless you want to pop to HK for Christmas?*

*I have printed up the picture of you in your shop, facing straight to camera, with your beautiful lips (and all). I love that photo, it's my favourite!*

*Thanks again for email, it was the highlight of my day. Can you tell I am easily pleased? Anyway... have a great day and don't sweat the small stuff. (It's clearly a night for clichés.)*

*Warm hugs,  
Jules*

I didn't wait for a response before emailing again.

*Hey Tru,*

*I wanted to just write you an email to tell you how much you mean to me and how lucky I feel to have found you. I am really excited to meet you in 11 days' time. I am so happy, I feel really calm and excited at the same time. Also, I was wondering what will happen, but it is great just knowing that this is the beginning of something really wonderful. I don't want this fabulous feeling to ever go away. I hope you still make my heart flutter when we're old and sitting on the porch in our rocking chairs playing with our grandchildren.*

*Truman, you make me smile so much!*

*Your girl,  
Jules*

Truman emailed me a couple of sappy love songs, and I noticed that the name he used in his email signature was different than the name that he used on Skype. He did not mention the name of the company in his email signature, which I felt was also very suspicious. The detective in me was rising to the fore only to be shut down by the hormonal beast on a quest for love, denying all the clues that were hitting me over the head like a sledge hammer.

I took the emails as a sign of our growing connection, and I wasn't shy about how happy this made me. Encouraged by my response to the song he sent, he sent another corker. I wasn't actually into these sappy songs, but I told him I liked them because I liked the romantic gesture—even if it was more like being trapped in a Mills & Boon novel and I thought the songs were terrible.

In one of the songs he sent me were lyrics about a wedding, and he followed up by sharing his idea of an ideal wedding. This was a strategy to get me to think that he is open to getting married, which is what many single women my age want. This was not, and is still not, on my agenda. I am sure that this was another way for him to try to subconsciously influence me to think that we were made for each other. It actually had the opposite effect, and made me feel uncomfortable. It was too much too soon, but despite the over-the-top platitudes and gooey sentiments, it did not stop me forging ahead with my plans to meet him.

My daughter visited me with her boyfriend just a few days before I left to meet Truman in Manchester for the first time. I have always valued her opinion and she seemed supportive of my choice to go and meet him. Deep down, she has since told me, she was sceptical, but she did not communicate this to me at the time.

I believed I was on the cusp of a great new happiness, but on that trip, I reflected on my greatest joy in life: being a mother. I have worked very hard to give my daughter and myself a great life with many opportunities. My daughter has grown to become an incredible woman.

I wrote this to Truman a few days before I flew out to see him:

*Hi Truman,*

*My daughter and her boyfriend are great. I was so excited to see them. We all had dinner in the village then came up here to my house. He is really great, just as I suspected.*

*Anyway, I am going to go to bed, we are all going for dim sum in the morning for breakfast. On Sunday we are all going to hike to the other side of the island and then have a Chinese lunch. Then we might get a speed boat back if we can't be bothered hiking back.*

*Anyway, I hope to see your beautiful face on here soon... hint hint!*

*Cheers,*

*Jules*

You would think that I'd wonder why he didn't write much back to me, but I really didn't even give it a second thought. I just put it down to how hard he was working. We spoke on the phone or messaged every day, so the fact he did not respond to my emails did not really bother me. I was too busy planning our future in my mind to recognise what was really going on right under my nose.

I didn't give up. I kept sending him emails despite his limited responses and lack of effort getting back to me. I also kept persisting with requests that he talk to me on Skype face to face with a camera, but to no avail. I told him that I would feel less nervous coming to meet him if I could meet him face to face online before I came. He ignored this plea, and this should have raised great concern for me, but my plane tickets were bought and I was all set. I couldn't pull out at the last minute as I was invested and I really wanted to know if this could lead to something more. Here was a handsome guy who seemed to be very caring and

empathic, was into me, and said he was willing to move to another country for love. In my fantasy world, this was what I was looking for, so I pushed all of my concerns and negative thoughts out of my mind and continued on my path to destruction.

I sent one final email before I flew to the UK. Take a look at the name I use when I send this email to him, 'True Man'! Oh, the irony! It was like I'd had a personality transplant and was acting completely out of character.

*Hey True Man,*

*I am on my way. Going to dinner with my daughter and her boyfriend then off to the airport. The flight is leaving on time. All systems go. I am a bit nervous, but really excited to see you. I assume you will be meeting me at the airport? If not, let me know and I will get a cab to the hotel; either way is fine. I will forward you my ticket again just in case. I will text you from Heathrow to let you know if the connecting flight is on time or if I have to hitchhike to you (kidding).*

*I will see if you're on Skype later when I get to the airport. See you tomorrow. (How freaky, that we will meet tomorrow!)*

*Cheers,*

*Jules*

Well, there you have it. I was on my way to meet a man I met online. He had used two different names with me already, had an unidentifiable accent, and had never bought a camera so we could Skype face to face. He also told me that he loved me many times and seethed over his former love. He had two jobs that should have been full-time and it would have been very difficult to manage both, but he still found time for long chats—although he had rarely emailed me. I had only known him for two months and he had the worst taste in music ever. I was in for a shock when I arrived.

*The truth is: Belonging starts with self-acceptance. Your level of belonging, in fact, can never be greater than your level of self-acceptance, because believing that you're enough is what gives you the courage to be authentic, vulnerable, and imperfect.'*

**–Brené Brown**

## **Jules Hannaford Biography**

Jules grew up in rural South Australia before moving to Adelaide, the state capital, and beginning her career as a teacher. She now lives in Hong Kong, the setting of her first book, *Fool Me Twice*, which details the pitfalls and abuse she experienced in her online search for love.

Jules began writing her book in 2010, when she was involved in an internet dating scam. She decided this was an important story to share with other women to prevent them from becoming caught in the same trap and help them make safer, smarter decisions when dating online. It took a long time for her to muster the courage to share her story after battling the shame of choices that landed her in a dangerous situation she counts herself lucky to have survived.

Jules has always had a passion for people and their stories, so she started her podcast 'Hong Kong Confidential' in 2017 to provide a platform for sharing the stories of interesting and unique people in Hong Kong. Just as she knows the importance of sharing their stories on her podcast, she feels that her story can make an important contribution to the safety of those navigating the complicated—and sometimes illusionary—internet dating world.

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