

'Who are you REALLY?'

When Julie's new boyfriend flashed his ID, she clocked something unnerving...



I believed I'd found true love

Wheeling my suitcase along the concourse, my phone pinged with a message. *Catch a cab*

to the hotel, babe, I'll meet you there, it read.

My heart fluttered as I pictured my new boyfriend Truman waiting for me, muscly arms outstretched.

Having fallen victim to scammers and time-wasters, I'd been all but ready to give up on online dating.

But then I'd started chatting to Truman, who seemed so genuine.

We'd talked about working abroad and helping less fortunate children — something we shared a passion for.

He wasn't shy of his success and told me about his million-pound business.

At 38, he was a bit younger than me, but I wasn't bothered by the age gap.

Only, while I lived in Hong Kong, Truman was based in Manchester — so he'd invited me over for a holiday.

In the weeks leading up to my

trip, Truman showered me with affection. I am happy that I may have found my soul mate, he'd said.

Originally, he offered to book my hotel but at the last minute he asked me to arrange it.

I found myself following the link he'd sent to an expensive hotel in Manchester city centre. And now, I was en route to finally meeting my dream man in the flesh.

At the hotel, I quickly topped up my lipstick in the room before heading down to reception.

There, I spotted Truman leaning against a pillar, smiling warmly as he met my gaze. His photos didn't

do him justice and my stomach flipped as we embraced.

Truman suggested that we hire a car for the duration of my stay. 'You'll get to see more,' he reasoned.

He vowed to pay me back, and insisted we didn't need to insure it, so I put the hire car on my credit card.

As we drove away together, Truman was so complimentary towards me.

'You're the woman of

my dreams,' he gushed. 'We're going to have a great future.'

He then took me to a nearby shop, boasting of his plans to buy half the business.

'I'd love to move to Hong Kong,' he went on. 'I just need the money to complete this deal, then I can make money in the shop, sell up, then move to be with you.'

I wanted nothing more than to settle down. So I agreed to lend him £3,500 for his business venture.

'I'll pay you back,' he promised. The following day, he took me to withdraw the money.

'Amen, thank the Lord,' Truman cheered, kissing the hefty wads of cash.

His strange behaviour made me feel a little unsettled. But I told myself he was just passionate about his business.

Later, Truman dropped me off at my hotel.

'I'll pick you up later,' he said.

But hours went by without word from him, and I began to

feel anxious.

Had he taken my money and run?

Then, at around 9pm, he called to say he was in the hotel's VIP lounge with friends.

I found them surrounded by expensive bottles of alcohol and gourmet food.

Truman proudly announced that he'd paid, but I was furious he'd left me waiting while seemingly splashing my cash.

Later at the bar, I clocked Truman's ID while he was ordering some drinks.

Noting his date of birth, I realised he was 36, not 38, and that he had another name.

Alarm bells began to ring, so I challenged him.

'Who are you really?' I said.

'I lied because I wanted an older woman who didn't want



I paid for the hire car

He took cash from me



Truman wasn't the man I thought

children,' he said.

Still, it didn't explain the different name. I didn't know what to believe.

Later, at a takeaway, we got chatting to two women who asked where I was staying in Manchester.

'Wow, that's posh. Aren't you lucky to be treated to that,' one of them said.

Since I'd paid for it myself, I quickly shook my head.

But when Truman saw me, he grew aggressive, storming out.

Back at the hotel, Truman was in a foul mood and I began to feel on edge. He wasn't the person I thought he was.

So the following morning, I sat him down.

'I really don't think our relationship is going to work,' I confessed.

He excused his behaviour and made promises about our

future, assuring me he would come to Hong Kong as soon as he possibly could.

I desperately wanted to believe him. *Maybe I've misjudged him, I thought.*

Later, Truman told me he needed to pay £400 in rent by the following day. He begged me to help him, and somehow, he persuaded me to go to the ATM and withdraw the money.

That night, Truman said he was popping out, and I crashed on the hotel bed, exhausted. When I awoke hours later, he was nowhere to be seen.

Where are you? I messaged. Suddenly, I felt a rush of panic — he had the car that was registered in my name, and all my money. I became frantic. I was due to fly home that day.

I went downstairs and asked for the car rental number, telling the receptionist everything.

Then, as I walked outside for

a cigarette to calm myself down, Truman drove into the car park.

After parking, he barged past me and headed for the lift. I nervously followed him to the room.

Once we were alone, he lost his temper completely.

'You're a twisted liar. You didn't tell me you smoked!' he yelled.

I remained outwardly calm, but inside I was terrified.

'Please give me the car keys,' I asked politely.

'I'll return it when you're gone,' he spat. Eventually, he threw them at me. Then he stormed past me, knocking me sideways into the wall. He swung the door open, smashing it into my face and crushing my body. Shaking, I followed him downstairs to the car.

'Please watch me, and if this guy starts to beat me, call the police,' I whispered to a man in the car park. After demanding I open the boot, Truman pulled out bags of new clothes and shoes.

'Where's my money?' I asked him, shaking.

'It's all f*cking gone, f*ck you,' he spat. 'I don't care if I go to jail.'

Then he hailed a taxi and disappeared.

I was left on the street trembling. How could the man I'd fallen head over heels for treat me so terribly?

Shaken, I went to my room, quickly packed my case and headed to the airport.

When I finally took my seat on the plane, I sobbed uncontrollably with a mix of relief, sadness and humiliation.

Back in Hong Kong, I realised I'd suffered severe bruising on my hip, arms and head.

My friends were all so eager

to hear about my trip.

'He wasn't who I thought he was,' I admitted. 'He was manipulative.'

Mortified, I couldn't face telling them about the money I'd lost.

Days later, I sent a statement to Greater Manchester Police.

Writing it all down, I could now see the warning signs I'd missed.

Taking into account the money I'd spent on flights, a hotel and the car hire, Truman conned me out of almost £6,000. I wanted closure, so I emailed him.

His response was immediate and ludicrous. *You're a liar, you owe me £12,000 for my Vertu phone, I know you've taken it.*

If you don't transfer me £12,000 I'll contact your work and tell them you're a thief and a liar.

He was trying to blackmail me!

I sent our correspondence to the police, hoping it would help my case.

Six months later, I was informed Truman was a known criminal, with convictions stemming from the late Nineties under more than 20 alias names. It terrified me that I'd fallen victim to a professional scam artist.

A few weeks later, I received an update that he'd been arrested.

But then came the news that they weren't charging him with assault, due to a legal loophole.

Although I was disappointed, I wasn't convinced I could go through with the court case — I didn't have the money or energy to see it through.

Instead, I wrote a book about my experience, entitled *Fool Me Twice*. I want to warn others about making the same mistakes.

I missed all the warning signs because I wanted to believe what I had with Truman was the real deal. I'll never be so naive again.

Jules Hannaford, 53, Hong Kong



I'll never be tricked again

'I was left on the street trembling'

'I was finally meeting my dream man'

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