



date-line
predator

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Date-line Predator – episode 1

She turned on the computer and slipped one swollen foot out of her fluffy pink slipper and waited with eager anticipation for the screen to flicker. Who should she be today? Mai Chin from Thailand? She was becoming very popular. Or maybe Sarah De-Miles, the sophisticated city slicker she'd created last week. Either way she'd have to check for messages on all profiles before she was through and her own would probably be the last. There was never anything there. After all who would be interested in her? She'd tried that; that was how it had all started.

“Mum can I have a drink please,” Toby interrupted, cuddling Oscar his favourite teddy bear close to his chest.

“Not now. Get back to bed. It's school tomorrow,” Beth replied irritated. Wretched kids. Always making demands. Didn't they realise this was her time? She had little else to look forward to, did she? Overweight and saddled with three demanding kids, all before the age of forty. She pulled her plump hands with nail bitten fingers through her bedraggled hair, lit up a cigarette and turned back to the screen, stopping just for a moment, feeling slightly guilty. But not for long. An addict will always overcome their guilt of neglecting other things. And that's what Beth was; a chat room, date-line addict.

It hadn't been deliberate. It had all started shortly after Christmas. That time of year when you feel you've given too much and received too little. A time when daily routines seem to stand still, before people return to work and their everyday lives. Chloe had been asked to find out things about China for her school project and Beth had only been trying to help her.

"Besides Miss Lockett said we could use the computer this time and we could even try to talk to people in China if we want to," she'd insisted, tossing her long fair hair out of her elfin face.

So later that day Beth had tried to do a search and China had led somehow to chat and chat to free chat rooms. Curiosity had got the better of her and she'd typed in her profile and somehow managed to register herself on the DaisyDatingForAll site that day. Chad hadn't known and still didn't. God help her if he ever found out. But they'd been married ten years now and he'd stopped taking an interest in what she did years ago. Shortly after the birth of Maisy, her third born.

Beth turned back to her screen eagerly, vaguely aware of Chad snoring already in the sitting room next door. He'd be gone soon. Out of her way. He'd wake up in about an hour, go into the kitchen, make himself a drink and go upstairs to bed without a word. She knew this. Their routine was as firmly implanted in her mind as the faces of her three children. She didn't care anymore. She had felt neglected and ignored for years. But now his indifference no longer mattered. It served her purpose. She was free at last. Free to be whoever she wanted, engulfed within the more interesting worlds of the profiles she'd created.

She logged into the Mai Chin profile she'd created and swiftly pressed on the "messages in" icon showing that there were six messages waiting for her. Mai Chin's description read:

"I very nice girl from Thailand and I looking for very nice man to make very happy. I shy and new for England and want to be very good wife for nice man. I like cooking the nice meal and want to be very good girlfriend and look after you."

She was stunning; even Beth had to admit that. It had taken her some time to find the right image on the internet, of a young innocent looking Thai girl with long black hair and green eyes. But it hadn't been difficult once she had found the right picture to download the same and insert it in the dating site as a photograph of Mai Chin. Similarly Mai Chin's details had been easy to create. She was everything Beth was not, but wished she was. Aged 23, slim, 5'3", a student nurse, single, non-smoker, who drank occasionally, rented privately and wasn't sure if she wanted children. Of course her English wasn't perfect, but that added to her innocent appeal, Beth had decided. She browsed through the messages received and suddenly her eyes lit up with excitement.

"So glad you replied Mai. I'm everything you're looking for in a man and can make you very happy. I wonder if we could meet up for dinner this week?

Love Oliver"

"I like have very nice dinner with you this week please darling," Beth typed in furiously.

It was Oliver267, one of the men who she'd sent a message to when she'd first started on

the dating site. He wasn't interested then when she'd asked him if he'd like to chat "as I think we may have some things in common" under her own profile. He'd replied quite rudely "You must be joking darling." In fact he was the only one to have replied to that message, even though she'd sent it out to ten men. But being ignored was preferable to being insulted Beth felt. Besides, Oliver267, at forty six, was far too old for a young girl like Mai and under the marital status of his profile box he'd ticked "married or cohabitating."

Just then the "messages in" icon started flashing and Beth smiled slyly to herself as she pressed to display his reply. He was obviously on-line and she felt the sweet smell of revenge taking hold of her.

"Can I have your mobile number to phone you to arrange something please Mai darling? You're so beautiful. I can't wait to meet you. I'm certainly gonna make you very happy darling.

Love Oliver"

"I do not have the mobile Oliver. I lost on bus yesterday. I want to meet you very much and have nice time.

Love Mai"

"Can I have your e-mail address then please Mai?"

"I very sorry. No my computer machine. It belong to lady who lovely child's I look after for au-pair. She be very cross if she find me on machine."

“I thought you told me you were a student nurse last time we spoke Mai?”

“Yes I am the student and I au pair for lady I live with. I student for nurse and I very good to look after you Oliver. I look after the childs very good here. I very nice life in England and I want very nice man to make better. I have night off tomorrow from work and I like very much for nice dinner with you.”

“Ok Mai. Can I pick you up and we’ll go for dinner somewhere nice? What’s your address darling?”

“Sorry no address. Lady not like strange man to come to house. I meet you station darling.”

“Fine. Is Ealing Broadway Station at 8.00pm ok for you? I notice from the site that you live in that area.”

“That very good Oliver. I like see you very much. I go now cause I cook nice meal for childs before lady come home. I see you tomorrow darling. I not be late for you. I very good girl for you.

I loving you Mai.”

Beth clicked on the “log off” icon and laughed to herself. She’d show him - Mr. You Must Be Joking Darling Oliver267. Of course she’d have to arrange for someone to look after the children tomorrow night so that she could drive past and see if he turned up.

Beth felt smug. Too smug to even notice Chad's annoying snoring tonight and the usual sight of his back rejecting her in bed as she slipped into a deep dream like state where she was young, pretty and desirable once again. Little did she know then the dangerous path she was to embark on. If she had, she might not have made the arrangements to ensure she was at the station that following night.