

Love online

'What have I done to deserve a gorgeous girl like you?'

He was my dream man, now he was finally coming home

Pam Bossi, 61, Balcatta, WA.

Slumping down in front of my computer, I typed in the words 'introduction agency'.

I'd spent the past few months moping about after splitting up with my partner of five years. I'd also just been made redundant from my marketing job.

I was scrolling through sites when I noticed a dating agency. I'd never used one before but soon I found myself setting up my own profile.

I'm looking for someone genuine and romantic, I wrote.

Later that day I got a message from a man called CJ. *You're a stunning beauty,* he wrote.

My heart skipped a beat. At 60, I couldn't remember the last time anyone had called me stunning.

He told me he worked for a telecommunications company so he hadn't included a profile shot or used his real name in case his clients saw it.

His name was Romano Monti. I plucked up the courage to ask him for a photo and he didn't hesitate to send one through.

My jaw dropped when I saw him. With dark hair, dark eyes and a beautiful smile, Romano was a dream.

From that moment on we spent all our spare time exchanging emails, texts and chatting on the phone.

Romano lived in East Perth but had been managing a project in Kenya for six months. He was due to return home before Christmas.

He was a widower and had a daughter, Diana, 20, who was currently studying and living at his other home in Rome.

He sent me text messages morning and night that were loaded with compliments.

What have I done to deserve such a gorgeous girl who'll be my soul mate, he wrote.

He spoilt me with beautiful cards on my birthday and even sent me a handkerchief soaked in his cologne.

I couldn't keep the good news to myself. "I've finally found a man who appreciates me," I told my friend, Cleo.

She was sceptical. Then I reminded her that three of our friends

who were couples had met online and they were all blissfully happy. She couldn't argue with that!

Weeks passed and Romano and I grew closer. Soon it was December and time for him to come home. Diana was flying out to join us, too.

"This is going to be the best Christmas ever," I told Cleo.

I went crazy buying the two of them gifts and stocking my cupboards with festive foods.

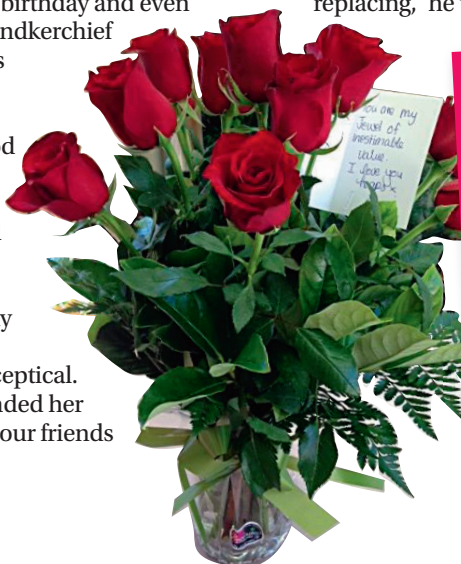
Then the day before Romano was due to fly out I got a text message in the middle of the night. *Babe, a fire is raging on site. I'm on my way there,* it said.

"No!" I cried out.

I knew if the fire was really bad Romano may not be able to fly home.

I couldn't sleep for the rest of the night. I jumped when the phone rang the next morning.

"Three telecom panels need replacing," he told me.



Romano sent me beautiful flowers, cards and photos of himself. He treated me like a queen

to



The photo Romano sent me

another. I just wanted him to be home in my loving arms.

I was so excited when he called me on the way to the airport to fly home. "I'm on my way babe," he said.

But just before he was due to board his flight, I got a text.

I just got dragged away by the loan shark with the help of some hefty and mean looking guys, it said.

My heart ached when I read they were threatening him. He was being held for ransom for five days until he paid them.

He called me in a state. "Please just pay their demands and save my life," he said. "I'm being tortured here."

Suddenly, I had a strange feeling something wasn't right.

I asked if his kidnappers could send a photo of him as proof. But they refused.

I got calls from one of Romano's colleagues asking me to pay the money.

I was in two minds. What if it was true and my man was being tortured? But I'd already given him more than \$100,000. What if this was all a scam?

I spent the next few days holed up in the house with a million thoughts racing through my head.

When the fifth day arrived, I tried to call Romano but his phone was turned off. I sent emails but he didn't respond. I felt my heart begin to

crumble as I realised it had all been a lie. My dreams of spending the last years of my life with someone I truly loved just vanished in an instant.

Christmas came and went. I barely left the house. I spent my time crying and thinking how stupid I'd been.

I hired a private investigator to try to find Romano. All he discovered was that he'd given me a false name and false photos. I'd never see my money again.

It's been months since the incident but I still haven't fully recovered. I couldn't leave the house for a long time and I'm still so embarrassed about it.

All I can do now is warn other people never to give a cent to anyone they haven't met. I lost more than \$100,000 on the promise of a romantic dream. Don't be fooled like I was.

* If you are suspicious of any online activity, contact Project Sunbird on 1300 30 40 54 or www.scamnet.wa.gov.au/ProjectSunbird.

"I just wanted him in my arms"



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