

A Strange Love Story

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BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Learn this vocabulary:

suspicious (adjective) = when you think something might not be true or safe

to investigate (verb) = to look into or study something in order to learn the truth

to chat (verb) = talking in-person or texting or messaging online

a *hoax* = a trick or a scam

2. Share a time you were *suspicious* about something. What did you do to *investigate*? For example, "I received an email offering me a refund on something. I was *suspicious* that it could be fake. I decided to *investigate*. I noticed the email was asking me to click on a link, and the link did not look safe."

3. Read the title and headings, and look at the images. What do you think this story will be about?

My Brother Was Crazy in Love

When my older brother has 18 years old, he asked for a family meeting. He told us he was making a trip to another country. He said he met the love of his life.

At this time, I was 16 years old, and I was *suspicious*. I had never seen my brother with a girl. He spent all his days on the computer. I decided to try to talk with my brother. I asked about this girl that I had never seen. My brother showed me a digital photo of a beautiful woman. I asked him, "Brother, what more do you know about her?"

He told me, "I know all about her. We write to each other every day. I want to take a plane to Peru. I want to spend my life with her."

In my mind, I said, "Oh my God, my brother is crazy in love..."



I Decided to Investigate

After that family meeting, my mother was sad, my father was disappointed, and I was worried. I wanted to do something to save my brother. I decided to *investigate* this mysterious woman. I could not believe my brother would go to another country with no resources and no plan after four months of online *chatting* and one digital photo.

Younger Brother to the Rescue

Really, it was very crazy, but the younger brother came to the rescue!

Sometimes, love is like a substance that stops you from thinking. You make decisions that make no sense. I decided I would use my brain, since he was not using his. I began to *investigate* this woman. I used search engines to try to find out more about her. I could not find anything that made her seem like a real person. Her

photo seemed *suspicious* to me. It looked like a magazine photo. Also, it was the only photo my brother had of her.

Together, we found the truth. My brother woke up. He found out that she didn't exist. The whole relationship was a *hoax*. This kind of hoax is called *catfishing*. It is a type of scam where one person pretends to be someone else. They develop a relationship and "fall in love." People are victims of this kind of scam every day. Don't let your love story be a strange one like my brother's. If you meet someone online, be very careful that they are not *catfishing* you!

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Why does the author call this a strange love story? Cite evidence from the text.
2. Read the box about "catfishing." Describe it in your own words. What do you think of the advice about preventing catfishing? Do you have additional advice?
3. A note about language: The author writes about his *older* brother. And he refers to himself as the *younger* brother. These are called superlative adjectives. We use them to make comparisons. In the picture below, label the children as *young*, *younger*, and *youngest*.



4. Try using other superlative adjectives in several sentences.

What Is Catfishing?



Catfishing is when a person online pretends to be someone else. They do this to "hook" you into a relationship. Then they trick you into giving them money or personal information about yourself.

How can you prevent catfishing?

1. **Verify Their Identity:** Search for the image online. See if you can find any details about the person.
2. **Do Not Share Your Personal Information,** especially with someone you have not met.
3. **Trust Your Instincts:** If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.
4. **Ask to See Them in Real Time:** Insist on a video call to confirm their identity.

David Jesus Martinez Lopez is a student at Piedmont Virginia Community College's adult education program in Charlottesville, Virginia. In Venezuela where he is from, he worked as a clinical psychologist. His time in the United States has allowed him to apply all of his knowledge to strengthen himself physically, mentally, and spiritually. He is 40 years old, and every day he feels younger.

