

# Love on the Line

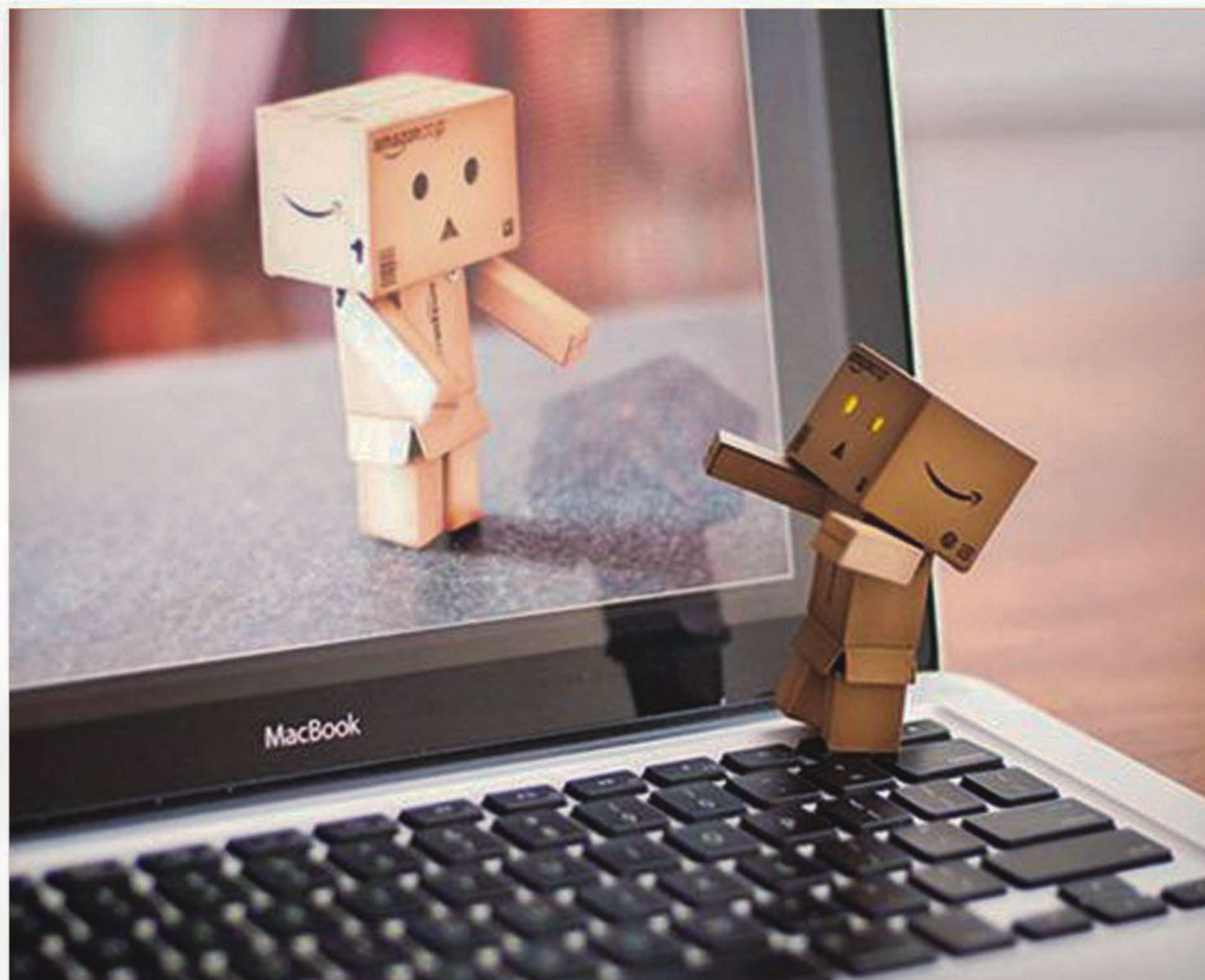
FATIMAH AKHTAR

## Check Box for Meeting People Online:

- Make sure you have video chat
- If they don't have webcams tell them to take a picture with specified gestures
- When meeting in real life always pick public places
- Avoid sharing personal details like phone numbers and home address until they meet the requirements above
- Don't pretend to be someone you're not
- Know that there are people who will do the above

The traditional romance with the girl next door through the window has undergone a revolutionary paradigm shift in recent times. This window in question now belongs to Microsoft, or just about any OS.

*"The easy accessibility of the internet has made online relationships a soaring trend nowadays. Couples can meet with a thousand miles distance between them and talk 24/7 thanks to the miracle of social media such as Facebook or Whatsapp. But does it make you expect more when you finally meet the person? Well, there are disap-*



*pointments like seeing that a person's face differs quite a bit from their Facebook profile picture that was edited with various softwares. Moreover, a person's character and personality can also differ from the phone screen. Thus, online relationships can lead to disappointments when the other person chooses to be deceptive,"* says Rahatul Mahmud.

The disappointments Rahatul mentioned can range from something as trivial as the other person being not as pretty as their profile pictures, to something as dangerous as not being that person at all. Online predators are as widespread on

the internet as online dating itself. These online predators who happen to be adults of varying ages create fake profiles, and prey on teenagers or even younger children. They post false pictures and information about themselves, and put up an act until they meet their unsuspecting victim.

Despite the dangers of it, the internet has brought people together. And the recent rise of social media plays the largest role in people meeting their potential romantic interests online. Facebook has become a huge platform for these cases. Through groups and pages geared towards specific interests, users come across others they can communicate

life. That is: they tend to highlight fragments of personal achievements while quietly sweeping away the failings under the rug. It can become difficult to know a person without knowing the achievements *and* failings.

*"It's easier to pretend to be a lot of things on the internet that a person can't live up to in real life. You meet them and you can only anticipate so much disappointment. Also, it doesn't allow you to get used to the person and their ways if it's exclusively online,"* says Nafisa Naomi.

However in spite of the many risks and dangers surrounding relationships that start online, *they can last*. In 2010, 17 percent of the married couples in the UK met online. Although this reflects the condition in the West, the internet has turned online relationships into a global phenomenon. Thus this strongly suggests that just as internet is a medium for certain people to change themselves completely, for others, it is a space to open up and be themselves. This is more crucial for those who suffer from social anxiety and find it extremely difficult to

express themselves in face to face conversations. The internet is a healthy outlet for them to not only communicate but be able to connect with those who share similar interests. Self-disclosure is simpler when the person you're disclosing to isn't directly in front of you.

*"It's easier to find people with similar interests on the internet, because people around you don't always necessarily care about the things you care about. It's always nice to have mutual interests with your significant other. It's easier to express yourself online, too. You don't have to see the person's face, so there's a lot less fear regarding judgement,"* says Imran Rahman.

Meeting people online can be rough, but it can also work as long as anyone interested is aware of the risks regarding the decision. Besides mediums like Facebook, there are more dating sites now than there were before, and many of them are Bangladesh centred. Googling "Bangladesh Dating Websites" itself results in over a million hits, and a lot of them, relevant.

Online dating culture has also been positive for those who do not fit the social mould; through a few taps on the keyboard, they're able to find people they can fit in with or pursue a relationship with. Your relationship is valid regardless of where you've met your romantic interest – because heavens know most of our friends have become messages on chat logs.



with. That which leads to friendship leads to love? Not always mutually.

*"There are some people who obviously don't know where to draw the line. Just being nice to them turns into an act of encouragement. They just start building on their feelings and you might end up getting messages and posts that are borderline harassment. They'll like all your posts, constantly share things on your timeline, be the first to comment on everything and they'll dig up your first ever post,"* says Rushma Islam.

Being overbearing is always a red flag and the block button is always a good option – especially on a medium like the internet where the interactions are substantially limited. This base of limited interactions result in people creating an image online that isn't replicated in real

## YOU LOOKED HOTTER ONLINE

