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PSYCHOLOGY/RELATIONSHIPS

*If it seems too good
to be true, it is!*

Does he know far more about you
than you know about him?

Is he often in situations
where you can't reach him?

Are you still waiting to meet
his family and friends?

Then you may be involved with a Romantic Liar!

Romantic Deception can help any woman who's wondering about whether her lover is being honest or not. And we're not talking about little white lies. We're talking about heart-breaking whoppers like, "Of course I'm not married."

Romantic Deception outlines the types of lies men tell, the six warning signs that he may be lying, and concrete steps on what to do about it. This book is an essential guide for any woman having trouble with a Romantic Liar.

Second Edition: Includes an updated Survival Guide.

Sally Caldwell has a Ph.D. in sociology and currently teaches at Texas State University – San Marcos.

Darlene E. Adams is a trained researcher who specializes in online investigation.

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Romantic Deception: The Six Signs He's Lying

Romantic
DECEPTION
the six signs he's lying

Dr. Sally Caldwell
with Darlene E. Adams

Dedication

To the memory of my parents—each with a very special way of looking at the world.

Romantic Deception
The Six Signs He's Lying
SECOND EDITION

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This book could not have been possible without the women of courage—the women who stepped forward to tell their stories. This book is for, about, and because of them.

By the same token, I could have never seen this second edition of the book through without the encouragement and assistance of Darlene Adams, the person whose name appears with mine on the cover. It was Darlene who convinced me that I should prepare a second edition of this book. Her finger prints are all over this book, and I am forever grateful.

I also want to acknowledge two close friends—friends who were with me when the idea for the book was born and who remained with me along the road to final publication. Kay Cole and Eric Groves never failed to come through when needed. They were always there with encouragement, useful critiques, and good humor. When it came to support and validation, they provided a reservoir.

Preface

More than 10 years have elapsed between the publication of *Romantic Deception* and the appearance of this second edition, and during the interim there have been some truly headline-grabbing cases of *Romantic Deception* to hit the media. For example, both Scott Peterson (Modesto, California) and Mark Hacking (Salt Lake City, Utah) were found guilty of killing their wives, and each case involved deception of a major sort. Those cases managed to dominate the news for weeks on end. Even more *Romantic Deception* (but no murder of a wife) was involved in the case of Clark Rockefeller (Boston, Massachusetts) and the kidnapping of his daughter—yet another case of *Romantic Deception* and so spectacular that it made its way to the ranks of a made-for-television movie.

As you are about to learn, though, there's a certain downside to concentrating on the spectacular cases of *Romantic Deception*. To the uninformed and uninitiated, spectacular cases can easily send out false signals, as in: *There's no way anything that bizarre could happen to me*. In reality, of course, most cases of *Romantic Deception* are far less spectacular. They don't involve the murder of a wife or the unraveling of a story about a

phony billionaire. At the same time, though, they no less devastating to the soul of the person on the receiving end.

Last evening, for example, brought yet another case to my attention—this time a call from a woman on the west coast. The caller had read a copy of the earlier edition of *Romantic Deception*, and she wanted to talk. She was trying to deal with all the confusion and soul-robbing tragedy that typically accompanies a case of *Romantic Deception*. Her case will never make it into the headlines or onto the television screen, but her case is no less important or lacking in tragedy. The stories and cases and tragedies keep coming, I thought to myself.

By way of background, I decided to write a book on *Romantic Deception* because I thought it was an intriguing and compelling topic. I'd known two *Romantic Liars* in my life—one up close and personal, and the other indirectly at a much safer distance. Both men were rule breakers and renegades, but they were also a lot more. What earned these men the label of *Romantic Liar* and a special place in the world of problem personalities was their *big-time lying*.

For all practical purposes these men were going through life with fake identities; they were impostors of the first order—men functioning with secret lives and phony resumes and presenting themselves in anything but honest terms. They were lying about everything from their marital status to their military history, and they were also lying to everyone around them, including their intimate partners. And that's what I found so intriguing. The more I thought about the question of deception, particularly how it plays out in intimate relationships, the more intriguing and compelling the topic became.

As soon as I began to look into the literature about deception in intimate relationships, it was obvious to me that very little had ever been written about the topic. There was a lot of information about lying and deception in general, but noticeably absent was anything about lying and deception in the context of intimacy.

That's why I decided to do my own research about *Romantic Deception* and *Romantic Liars*.

As soon as I went public with the project and started looking for research participants, I realized my topic was more than just intriguing. The reactions I got told me *Romantic Deception* was very likely a controversial topic. I was immediately hit with questions and criticisms as soon as I placed an ad in the newspaper. The ad made it clear that I was looking for women to interview—women who'd been on the receiving end of *Romantic Deception*.

Some of the calls were from men who asked if I had any interest in the *male point of view*. They wanted to know if I was going to collect any stories about women who went around duping men. There were also some calls from gays and lesbians who wanted to know if I was going to look at *that* side of deception. Finally there were some obviously angry men who yelled, screamed, and called me names as soon as I answered the phone. As a rule, I didn't say anything to them. I just let them rant and rave. Those were the calls that convinced me the project was touching some nerves, and that it was something *well* worth looking into.

I still get the same questions from friends, colleagues, and total strangers—all seemingly interested in the research I've been doing, but equally curious about my focus. *Isn't it a bit unfair*; they ask, *to look only at one side of the issue? Isn't there a danger in only presenting part of the story?* My answer is the same as it was when I started the project. My aim was to deliver a sound examination of a topic I find truly fascinating, taking an in-depth look and producing something that would have some practical benefit. By definition, that meant I had to narrow the focus.

With a more structured focus, I could look at the questions that really intrigued me. For example:

- Do *Romantic Liars* have predictable traits or characteristics?
- Do their lies have a common theme?

- Do they have predictable reactions to confrontations?
- Do deceptive relationships unfold in a predictable pattern?
- Are there certain factors that make a woman vulnerable to Romantic Deception in the first place?

Some men and women also wondered if this book was going to be yet another example of male bashing—the sort of book that has nothing good to say about men. I hope not; that’s certainly not what I had in mind. For the record, I’m not into bashing anyone. I also happen to have some truly wonderful men in my life—men I absolutely adore—who are conversational, witty, charming, heroic, compassionate, literate, and sexy. I’m especially delighted to add that each one has been a source of encouragement throughout the project, continually reaffirming the importance of the project and affording me all the personal time and space it has required. No, I’m not into male bashing—just intriguing, compelling topics.

SECTION I

Introduction and Background

Sometimes it’s real hard for me to realize that he wasn’t the person he said he was. I really cared about the person I thought he was, but that person didn’t exist. It’s crazy.

Jill, age 27

I remember feeling very stupid. And my intelligence is something that I’ve always been very proud of. So I was humiliated.

Cindy, age 31

When I interviewed Jill, her mind was still playing tricks on her—shifting back and forth between Michael, the imposter and Michael, the man he really was. The experience nearly drove her crazy as she spent months doing battle with her intuition and suspicion—day after day trying to convince herself that she’d eventually get the answers to Michael’s baffling behaviors.

When I interviewed Cindy, the memories of her experience with Kevin were still vivid and painful—particularly, how embarrassed she was when she discovered Kevin was married. Like Jill's experience, Cindy's relationship with Kevin was life-altering—something that would forever change her view of how the world really works.

Both women were also robbed of their sense of trust and felt betrayed. Though the details of their experiences were very different, both stories rested on a common theme—Romantic Deception. Both women had been intimately involved with men who were not who or what they claimed to be.

Jill and Cindy were among the nearly one hundred women who came forward when I went searching for tales about Romantic Liars. Like so many of the other women I interviewed, they were *absolutely insistent* that the word had to get out. As Jill, Cindy, and so many of the other women would eventually say to me, *somebody has to put the word on the street about how the game gets played—somebody's got to let other women know what these guys are up to.*

The introductory material you're about to read is a step in that direction. At a minimum, it will give you a better understanding of what Romantic Deception is all about: what the men are like who play the game and what the consequences are for the women who are targets of deception. Equally important, you'll also learn why there's still so much we don't know when it comes to the world of Romantic Liars and Romantic Deception.

You'll read personal accounts of women who've been on the receiving end of Romantic Deception—case histories that individually tell stories of personal tragedy and accounts that collectively serve to warn us about the dangers of Romantic Deception. You'll also be introduced to the issue of vulnerability in a way that might cause you to think twice—particularly if you've been operating on the assumption that Romantic Deception is something that happens only to other women.

So You Think He Might Be Lying

OK. So you're involved in a relationship—one that started out like it had a lot of promise. As a matter of fact, all the right chemistry was there from the very start, or so it seemed. The relationship took off like a rocket, and before you knew what happened, you were thinking *this might be the one. Nearly perfect*, or so you thought.

But now something is wrong. As a matter of fact, something is dreadfully wrong. You can't put your finger on it, but something's not right. It's a thought that races through your mind; it's an eerie feeling in the pit of your stomach. Something is wrong, but you don't know what it is. Welcome to the world of Romantic Deception.

Let's say you're a little further along in the relationship. If so, the strain is probably starting to take its toll. You're starting to get a little worn down emotionally. Chances are you're waging a one-woman battle to retain your own sanity; the contradictions and inconsistencies are more than you can take. You may even be obsessing about what's going on with the relationship, but you don't have the courage to openly question your partner.

The feelings and sensations I just described may be your first clue that you're involved with a Romantic Liar—a man who's been lying about who and what he is. The web of deceit no doubt started weeks or months ago, but now you're getting in deeper. Unfortunately, you probably don't have a clue about what's really going on. It's possible you're starting to act a little crazy. Welcome to Romantic Deception writ large.

This book is about Romantic Deception and Romantic Liars—men who create false identities for your consumption. It's about Romantic Deception from the first stage, when you're getting hooked on your partner, to the fourth stage, when you decide to leave the relationship (even though you find that hard to do or you make several unsuccessful attempts). It's about how the game of Romantic Deception is played and why you and

APPENDIX

Survival Guide

Advice from Other Women

At the end of most interviews, I asked the women if they had any advice for other women—what they would say to other women who were involved in the dating scene. I thought the responses might give me some indication of whether or not the experience of Romantic Deception had changed the way the women went about meeting and getting to know the men they might date. Also, assuming the women actually offered some specific suggestions, I thought the information might be useful to others.

The question turned out to be very revealing. The responses I got were as telling as any of the larger stories I've reported in the previous pages. I've taken the liberty of including a lot of their suggestions here—they're as important as any other thing that I could tell you.

- *Run a background check on him. It's as simple as that.*
- *Get him around your friends and keep him around your friends.*

- Approach dating the same way you would if you were interviewing for a job or hiring somebody to fix something for you. Ask a lot of questions.
- If he always wants to come to your house, there's something wrong. If he really doesn't have any friends, there's something wrong. If he materializes out of thin air and there's nobody around him—no close friends, nobody he hangs out with—that's a tip-off.
- When he starts telling you a bunch of stuff right off the bat, it's a sign something isn't right. If he reels it off like a resume, there's something wrong.
- If a guy has some kind of job where he doesn't have a normal work schedule, it's a red flag. If you don't meet his family members in a real family situation and you don't have a chance to really sit down and talk to them—that's another flag.
- I tell you what I look for in a guy now. When I'm around him the first few times, I look for crisp answers. You know what I mean. When I ask him a question about where he works or where he grew up and stuff like that, I want a crisp answer.
- I don't know if I'd have a guy checked out or anything like that. I guess I just don't want to get totally paranoid. But I'll tell you what I would do. It's what I do now. I won't go out with anybody unless I know somebody that knows him pretty well. I just won't do it. It's too easy to get fooled. It's not worth it.
- I don't know how many times I've heard somebody say you have to take the time to know somebody. Well, it's true. It's real easy to get all infatuated and hop into bed and think you've got true love working. But that's not love and all of us know it. I don't know why we don't take the time. Maybe we're afraid of what we'll find out.
- I guess I really don't like to admit it, but I'd have the guy checked out. I know what it's like to get mixed up with a big-time liar, and I know how smooth they can be. I've

worked too hard for what I have, and I don't plan to risk it. I have friends who spend more time researching where they're going on their next vacation than they do on the guys they date. I wish 'em luck.

- If you're going to be open with him, he should be open with you. If you tell him you're going to make sure he's telling you the truth—if you tell him you're going to check him out—and he can't handle it, tell him to get lost. If you've been hurt before and he can't handle that, he's not worth it.
- I really don't think it's too much to ask to see the divorce papers. I know papers can be fabricated, so I'd say go ahead and look it up at the courthouse. I'd look it up at the courthouse even if some guy showed me the papers. If he has a problem with it, that's tough.
- If a man doesn't give you a home number and a work number and he wants to call all the shots, I'd wonder about that right off the bat.
- If he doesn't give you a home number, there's something wrong. He's married. Even if he gives you a home number, he still might be married. You have to go to his house or apartment or wherever he lives. If that's not happening, something is wrong.
- I'd either do the checking myself or hire somebody to do it. So what if it takes a little time or effort. So you spend fifty or a hundred or two hundred bucks. So what. You might spend that in a heartbeat—buying some new clothes just to impress him. Make the investment. It could save you a lot of heartache in the long run.
- I wouldn't trust a guy even if one of my friends introduced me to him. How do I know that he hasn't totally put one over on them? I don't care how I met him or where I met him, I'd have somebody do a background check on him.
- I used to be sort of a wimp, but not anymore. When I meet somebody, I ask all sorts of direct questions. And I

When you make the decision to look into the background of a potential partner, you're making a statement to yourself and anybody else who has an interest in what you're doing. You're making a statement that you have a high regard for your own well-being. At a minimum, it is an act of high self-esteem. The choice is yours.

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Caldwell's fascination with the topic of Romantic Deception started more than a decade ago and, as she puts it, the topic remains as compelling and intriguing to me as the day I first started my research. As one of the very few scholars on the topic of deception in intimate relationships, Caldwell has appeared on many television and radio shows, and her commentary on the topic of Romantic Deception is routinely sought out by news organizations and the popular press.

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**For more information,
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