



SURPRISED BY FRANK

Within a few short days, it became difficult to tell where he left off and I began. I wasn't looking for love anymore. I thought for sure those days had passed me by. Then, I was surprised by Frank.

Our time together became a microcosm of the life we wanted to have, running at full speed.

It's hard to say where it all began, but I *can* pinpoint a specific series of events that was clear and obvious. So that's where I'll start.

There's an online group in the area where I live called "ReUseIt." The ReUseIt Network helps get material goods from people who have them, but don't want them, to people who want them, but don't have them. Simple enough . . .

I had an old broken-down push mower. It was beyond repair, but could potentially be used for parts or a student project. Before taking it to the dump, I wanted to see if anyone might want it, so I sent an e-mail to the group with the specifics about the mower.

Part of the group's guidelines dictate that you can't include links or attachments in any posts you share. This protects the membership from viruses and unsafe or unexpected content.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about the e-mail system I use . . . It's inexpensive. As such, it reserves the right to do things I don't necessarily like, but never thought twice about before. For example, when I press the Send button, it adds a little three-line, text advertisement to the bottom of my note. Invariably, one of those lines

is a link to further information, but because it's added after I send the note, I never see it.

So, when I posted my offer on July 1, 2011, I was completely surprised to see it rejected on July 2! The moderator of the group, Frank, sent me the guidelines for using the site, prefaced by a two-word reason for the rejection. *NO LINKS!*

I actually had to scroll through the note several times before I even saw it buried in with all of the other text. I couldn't figure out why I'd been sent the guidelines at all. At first, that's all I saw.

I knew there was no way my response would be as short as his direction, and he'd kindly provided his phone number in his signature. I considered writing my reply, but realized it would take significantly longer to explain that way, and it seemed like a two-minute phone conversation would easily resolve the issue. While I'm not a "phone person," I picked up the phone, dialed the number, and proceeded to introduce myself to the man on the other end of the line.

I explained the situation to him. He politely explained the rules of the group to me one more time, just in case I didn't understand them from the e-mail. Then he agreed to remove the link himself this time, but warned me not to let it happen again.

Conversation over, right? Wrong! Somehow in the few minutes we spoke, he picked up on a detail or two about me and he wanted to learn more. The questions were innocent enough, but led to more things to discuss.

What I thought would be a two-minute conversation ended up lasting an hour. So much for brevity . . . But on a Saturday afternoon, I had the time to spare and I sensed he was lonely. I thought I was just being kind by allowing the conversation to take its course. After twenty minutes or so though, I started to realize, *This guy is kind of neat. He's got a great sense of humor. He's intelligent. I like the way his mind works. We have a lot of interests in common.*

We talked about movies, his dogs (Falcore and Bear), my cat, places we'd been, careers we'd had, and so many other things. I told him about being a martial artist and pursuing my black belt in the coming spring.

He was trying to remember an actor's name, but couldn't. So, he finished stating that he was sure he'd remember it at 3:30 in the morning, and he'd let me know. I joked that he really didn't need to, as I expected I'd be sleeping then.

The next morning, I awoke to an e-mail from him. The subject line of the e-mail was "Promised 0330 announcement," and it started "Hey Grasshopper" (a nod to the nickname David Carradine's teacher gave his character in the 1970s television show Kung Fu).

The note provided the promised missing name, touched on some of the things we'd talked about the day before, and ended with:

I really enjoyed talking with you today—you made my day,,,,Falcore is indifferent to the cat, but Bear wants to know more. Does she cuddle? Cook? Date older men (he's 3 ½).

Falcore is female, and Bear is male, as is my cat, Brody. In my response to his inquiries, I ended with:

Bear may be disappointed to learn that the cat is older than he is, and is a boy. Brody is about 4.5 years old now, and is a sweetheart. Yes, he enjoys cuddling. Last I knew, cats don't find cooking necessary, although he does have a discerning palate.

If Bear's questions are a veiled method of learning more about me, well . . . I'm not dating and haven't been for the past 12 years. While I've been busy raising my kids and earning a living, it's not just that. 14 years ago (in August), I was born again in Christ. My one and only dating relationship as a Christian didn't quite go how I'd

hoped, and I realized I needed to take some time and figure things out first. Things like, what does a dating relationship look like in the context of a Christian faith compared to the way I'd been doing things all my life prior to that? I also realized I needed time to straighten things out in my heart and mind regarding past failed relationships. That time gave me the opportunity as well to identify what it is that I want out of a relationship, and what qualities were key to find in a potential partner, which certainly takes a lot of heartache out of dating. I won't go out with someone unless I've already seen some of the key qualities displayed.

I quickly figured out that one thing that was lacking in most of my past connections was friendship. So, I'm not jumping into dating anyone, although I am open to getting to know people. (I even have a profile on a Christian dating site, although little has come from it.)

For the most part, I consider age to be simply a number. I have friends spanning from 100-years-old to friends who are still in their teens. But my ex-husband is significantly older than I am, and thus left a bad impression of dating older men. I'm open to God's leading in my life, trusting that He knows the perfect person for me (not a perfect person, but The One He made with me in mind). If he turns out to be older, so be it! I'm okay with that. The only way I'll recognize it though is to get to know him as a person (not in the context of romance). I know what I want in the last man I give my heart to, and I know what God wants for me. So, I think I'll recognize him when the time comes.

If Bear really wasn't interested in all that, you don't have to read it to him. :-)

I expected that my response was closing a door. Little did I know that it was the key to opening his heart!