

Fat Sex

By Rebecca Jane Weinstein

Alice in Cyberland

Everybody's doing it. It's one of those things that is so pervasive, it's nearly a given. And yet very few admit to it. Like the act itself, there is a dichotomy in action and attitude that is difficult to fully comprehend. Unless, of course, you are human. What is this secret that is virtually impossible to avoid? Sex on the internet. Sex in the internet? Sex with the internet? Who (or what) is it exactly that people are having sex with? Themselves? Not exactly. But kinda.

Take Alice -- she learned about sex from the internet, which would not be terribly surprising if she were in high school, or even college. But Alice was 35. She wasn't a virgin and had even been married with what she thought was a good sex life. But it took the anonymity of the World Wide Web, and the risk taking that it permitted, to learn about the kind of sex portrayed in books and movies: sex with reckless abandon.

Jerry Ropelato, a researcher on the subject, says according to compiled numbers from respected news and research organizations, every second 28,258 internet users are viewing pornography. In that same second 372 internet users are typing adult search terms into search engines. Every 39 minutes a new pornographic video is being created in the U.S. It's big business. The industry has larger revenues than Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo, Apple and Netflix combined. Yowza!

But, porn and internet sex, are not exactly the same thing. Internet sex involves another person, or "person." It also often involves a connection and emotions. Even "love." Come on! Love? Most people aren't even who they present themselves to be. The whole point of internet sex is it offers anonymity. Or, the ideal forum for lying. It's fantasy, if not delusion. True? But that doesn't stop people from doing it, and feeling that it's real. "Real?" Defining real is difficult enough. The internet has perfected disassociation. That said, from the perspective of the person sitting at the keyboard, it's as real as the nose on your face.

In a book called Love and Sex with Robots, David Levy discusses the emotional and physical relations between humans and the inanimate objects they desire. He addresses the question of love with robots and then moves on to the mechanics of having actual sex with them. He uses a comparison to ways in which humans fall in love with each other, their pets, and their motorcycles (though doesn't consider sex

with pets or motorcycles). He says that from there it is a short emotional leap to the feelings people are expected to display toward robots. This may or may not in actuality be science fiction, but Levy is totally serious.

For Alice, It started as an experiment, as well as a response to loneliness, and also an opportunity to take some control. This was in the early days of the Web and dirty chatting was still in the underground. Alice would speak to men that she hoped were really men (both in gender and age) and ask them questions. The kinds of questions she was afraid to ask without the internet's invisibility. She would make up stories about herself, creating different personas depending on what she was trying to learn. What did men really like? What did they really want? What did they really do? And most importantly, did they want to have sex with a fat woman? Because regardless of Alice's experiences, good or bad, she was certain they didn't.

Since women are trained that beauty has a certain look, it is often difficult for large women (and large men) to fully internalize it, and believe it, when a partner is attracted. This may translate into insecurity, which is never good for sex. A study published in the May 2011 Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy concludes that obese women and men were significantly less sexually satisfied than the general population. Professor Truls Ostbye at Duke University, author of the study, states "our findings contribute to a growing body of research that indicates obesity is associated with reduced sexual functioning and sexual quality of life."

According to a fairly unscientific evaluation, there are at least 125 common sub-genres of pornography. All of them represented on the internet. Many of them not readily available anywhere but the internet. Some of them illegal in every state. According to an even less scientific assessment, there are about a zillion internet porn sites featuring BBW's (big beautiful women). An accurate accounting of how many sites actually exist would be virtually impossible. But even if there are considerably less than a zillion, there are many. And many of anything that involves commerce reflects a market size willing to pay.

When Alice started her internet schooling, there were considerably less than a zillion BBW porn sites; and frankly, without that reference, it was difficult to know how pervasive the predilection was. Where does one learn something like that except the internet?

So, Alice progressed with the internet. They got more explicit together. First there was cybersex: talking dirty in emails or instant messages. This soon led to webcam sex: you know, doing stuff on a webcam. Alice didn't show herself on the webcam. First of all, Alice was lying about what she looked like,

and even if she weren't she was sure no one wanted to see her fat body on their computer screen.

Internet sex was a new world for everyone involved and it was exciting. Boundaries were definitely being pushed. The most important and exciting thing Alice was learning from her cyber teachers was that everything she knew about what men liked was wrong. Well, not everything, but when it came to bodies and sex appeal, magazines, TV, her girlfriends, were full of crap. Men didn't want sex with skinny women, they wanted sex with women. (Some wanted sex with men, but size, of the body, wasn't a factor there, either).

Slowly, Alice started posing questions more to the point. Have you ever had sex with a large woman? Have you ever had sex with a, um, fat woman? Have you ever had sex with a ... really fat woman? Did you like it? Some did, some didn't, but no matter what their response, the worst that happened was a blank screen. As it turns out, many of them liked fat women, because they have big tits, and big asses, and places to squeeze, and put things. Men liked to put things places. That was far more important than a slim waist and a flat tummy. Boy, did men like to put things places.

"Do you have any pics?" That's the age-old cybersex question. As old as cybersex, anyway.

"No."

"Do you have any pics?"

"No."

"Do you have any pics?"

"Uh, yes?"

Alice took some carefully cropped pictures of herself. Send.

"Hot!!" OMG.

Some years later Alice decided to take it up a notch. Or a couple of notches. She decided to go live. By this time cybersex was a cliché. Now there were all kinds of websites, for chatting, streaming video, and meeting. "Swinger" sites were all the rage. Well, all the rage that no one talked about in polite company and everyone pretended not to know about. Considering the vast array of these sites and massive numbers of people on them, it's fair to say they were all the rage. Admittedly, or not.

Depending on which rating you look at, the most popular internet dating site is Match, or eHarmony, or PlentyOfFish, or any number of other popular internet dating sites. The most popular "swinger" "dating" site is AdultFriendFinder. It boasts that it is "the world's largest sex and swinger personals community." Open for business since 1996 it has nearly 35-million members. Facebook has 39-million members. But

facebook is free and AdultFriendFinder charges upwards of thirty bucks a month, or you can purchase a considerably discounted yearly membership for about 160 bucks. A bargain at twice the price.

Also, facebook is to AdultFriendFinder as Disneyland is to pull the shades and the lock all the doors. On AdultFriendFinder, you can chat, upload photos, browse groups, and watch live streaming videos. These are not your grandmother's live streaming videos. There are approximately 160,000 groups on AdultFriendFinder, representing many of the 125 sub-genres. Of those, 2025 are specifically related to BBW's. So that means around 12% of all the groups are related to BBW's. If all the pornographic sub-genres are weighted equally, each would represent less than 1% of the AdultFriendFinder Groups. Clearly the BBW groups are not weighted equally. And there is no pun intended there.

In phase two, again, Alice started off slowly. First the lies, then the questions, then the pics. But the men on these sites weren't there to chat, and Alice knew that. And she was there too, so maybe she wasn't there to chat, either? She tested out various words to articulate her body size. Substantial. Plus size. Large. BBW. Fat. She reworked her profile. Kept it simple.

"Are you single, attractive, around my age, and healthy? Do you love extra large women? Can you also hold a decent conversation? Single only, please."

You've got mail.

"RE: hello there."

"hello. i noticed youve been checking me out!!! what are you looking for??? i love extra large women ... do you have any pics? if youre interested please feel free to write back."

"RE: RE: hello there."

"You looked at me so I looked at you. I'm looking for a diversion, I guess. I'm not sure. What are you looking for? So you like extra large women?"

"RE: RE: RE: hello there."

"yes I like extra large women!! i'm just looking for fun and everything that goes with it!!!"

It's true, not all men were interested. But she certainly wasn't interested in all men, either. For instance, this one wasn't a match. Alice had a thing for punctuation. Man after man asked her about her body. They weren't appalled. They also weren't shocked. They were, um, turned on. They had seen fat women before, and, how to put this? Liked them. That was shocking! They asked her all kinds of questions. Not to mock her or shame her, but to woo her. Or at least get her in the sack. Men still liked to put things places, and they wanted her involved. OMFG.

So Alice went on a date. At first she really did just go on dates, regular dates. She was cautious about who she met and what their expectations would be. After all, these were men from the I-n-t-e-r-n-e-t. Except it turned out these were men from down the block, and across town, and guys she had seen around, and friends' husbands (ugh). These were regular men. Tall, short, handsome, homely, thin, fat. Men with issues and insecurities, lies, truths, and carefully cropped pictures of their own. They were -- humans, just like her.

"Nobody likes who the fuck they are. Except fat, black women. Fat, black women don't give a fuck what you think. She's going out on Friday night.... She's like, 'I'm sexy.' 'I am sexy, yes, I am!' 'I am the sexiest motherfucker here tonight!' 'Yeah, I got a gut. There's some good pussy under this gut!'" (Comedian Chris Rock from *Bigger and Blacker*).

After a number of dates, Alice started going on "dates." There was no pretense. No dinner before the show. Some internet "conversation." A bit of investigation to assure she wasn't preparing to meet an axe murderer, someone with a wife, or a really ugly guy. She knew this was dangerous. It was risqué, to say the least. Don't bad things happen to people when they let their guard down -- this much? She rationalized. If I met a guy at a party, I wouldn't even have time to Google him first. It's true.

Once, in a state of true reckless abandon, she visited a man who really gave her the creeps. He still had Halloween candy out in April, and offered it to her, apparently as an aphrodisiac. He showed her his etchings. Almost literally. They were photographs, but on the laptop, so viewing required closeness. He was just, ick. She made sure to stand the whole time and, not terribly gracefully, made her exit. Sitting in the car, she was ashamed, angry with herself. How stupid could she be? Also, she was sort of exhilarated. Still, she decided to limit her reckless abandon to the bedroom, not en route.

That was the worst of Alice's experiences. The others were great. The notion that women can't have sex without love? Horseshit. The notion that women can't have great sex without love? They didn't know what they were missing. She noticed she started to think more like a guy. Get 'em in, get 'em out. Comedienne Kathleen Madigan on casual sex: "forty-something is where it's at.... Every man that gets caught having an affair -- why? Because you're having an affair with a woman in her 20's.... If you want to have an affair with someone, have an affair with someone my age. I'm too tired to tell anyone what I did tonight. I'm not texting anyone. I don't care. As a matter of fact, I'm not even going to let you stay the night." (From *Gone Madigan*).

Sometimes they brought dinner. A drink. One guy brought bottled water. Worried about

dehydration? Sometimes there was a meaningless conversation on the couch, which served no purpose but foreplay for making out, which was foreplay for the main event. Every time, the sex was fantastic. Fan-fucking-tastic. This was not your ex-husband's sex. And there was, every time, full nudity. Or perhaps more apropos, nakedness. Liberating nakedness.

During these activities, whether Alice was substantial, plus size, large, BBW, or fat -- well, if anyone cared, they didn't speak up. And it certainly didn't affect the performance.

One time, Alice did actually date a man. Dinner out, real conversation. He was just post-divorce, and understandably had issues. A nice man, handsome, bright. He had a bit of equipment failure though, more than once. This threw Alice for a loop. Though he said it had happened before, he was too embarrassed to elaborate, and Alice was too irrational to hear him anyway. She was sure it was her substantial, plus size, large, BBW, or fat body causing the defect. There was some crying. Enough humiliation to go around. And that was the end of that.

But she got back in the saddle.

And Alice learned about sex. She learned there were lots of things about sex she didn't want to know about. She learned that the good sex life in her marriage wasn't all that good. She learned about reckless abandon. She learned that self-consciousness and shame really were antithetical to good sex. She learned that men find it way hotter when a woman is free and open and not plagued by the need to hide her body. She learned that when the woman had a good time, so did the man. She learned she had a lot of places to put things. She learned that men liked those places.

Remember that study at Duke, where Professor Ostbye proclaimed obese people are less sexually satisfied? It was co-authored by Kishore Gadde, director of Duke's obesity clinical trials program. Why was it co-authored by Gadde? Because the study was done with the 225 people who were just about to begin an intensive weight loss program at the Duke obesity clinical trial program. Yes, these were the same people who signed up for that program. If they were feeling all sexy about their bad selves, perhaps they wouldn't be signed up for intensive weight loss? Just speculating.

That's not to say Alice was living in a fairytale. Alice wasn't naive. She knew there were different rules for sex and for relationships, as far as men were concerned. She thought she knew that anyhow. This learning experience didn't exactly put her out into the real world. All her schooling was behind closed doors.

Let's be honest. She also learned that not every man she encountered wanted to bed her. And vice

versa. She learned that she had the ability, the right, and the available pool to make that choice. She learned that when men made that choice about her, it was alright, because there are always more where that one came from. She learned that no one completely and totally loved themselves and that being a little insecure was not the end of the world. But acting on that insecurity beyond reason was not a reflection of someone else's perceptions. So she learned some important things.

And then she learned something else. Here's where the story gets romantic. She also learned that there was a prince charming, a knight in shining armor, a hero, a man who wanted to be with her in public, laugh at her jokes, spend the afternoon. In other words, a guy who liked her and whom she liked back -- whom she let spend the night.

It remains to be seen if they live happily ever after. But if not for sex on the internet, Alice would never have met this man. Not because they met on the internet, but because the internet was a good teacher and to get to this point, she had a great deal of learning to do.

By the by, this man is heavy, stout, rotund, corpulent, or like Alice, fat. The sex is great. Full of reckless abandon. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, Professors Ostbye and Gadde at Duke University. Perhaps next time you have 225 people who are not sexually satisfied and on their way to the obesity clinical trial program, you should first direct them to the computer lab. While 90% of people who lose weight gain it back, 99.9% of people who gain reckless abandon never lose it.

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The above article is an excerpt from FAT SEX, a forthcoming book by Rebecca Jane Weinstein, founder and president of PeopleOfSize.com (<http://www.peopleofsize.com>), an online community and social networking site which provides information, support, and interaction for "people of size." More information can be found at <http://www.FatSexTheBook.com>.

Book Summary:

Large-size women and men tell their true stories of social and self-acceptance in romantic and sexual relationships. Though they sometime face bigotry and experience shame – they are often heroic and live remarkably fulfilling lives. The stories are compelling and told with sensitivity and humor, connecting people on profoundly important aspects of their lives.