

# 'My sugar daddy dr turned sour'

When Helen Croydon joined a dating website looking for an older man, she found a world of first-class travel, highbrow sex parties and endless cash. But there was something missing – love...

**G**lancing around my living room shiftily one evening four years ago, I typed *older men, younger women dating*, into Google. I'd always had a thing for more mature guys (my first boyfriend was 32 when I was 18). Now I was 29, had just come out of a suffocating relationship and was bored with my job as a broadcast journalist for ITN, so I turned to the Internet for adventure.

A site called *sugardaddie.com* seemed to be the most popular, so I set up a profile and, within weeks, I was addicted. Finally, I was meeting interesting men. They were all worldly with successful careers and self-confidence by the bucket-load. Whenever I logged on, there would be 10 messages offering to whisk me away to Florida or the Cote d'Azur and first dates were Michelin-starred restaurants. Like me, these men didn't want full-time committed relationships. I was looking for excitement, not love.

## Powerful aphrodisiac

One of my first dates picked me up in a vintage Chevy and, after a meal at a fabulous seafood restaurant, I went back to his enormous, über-modern bachelor pad off Hampstead Heath. His 47 years brought confidence in

bed. Unlike younger men, he wasn't embarrassed about sex.

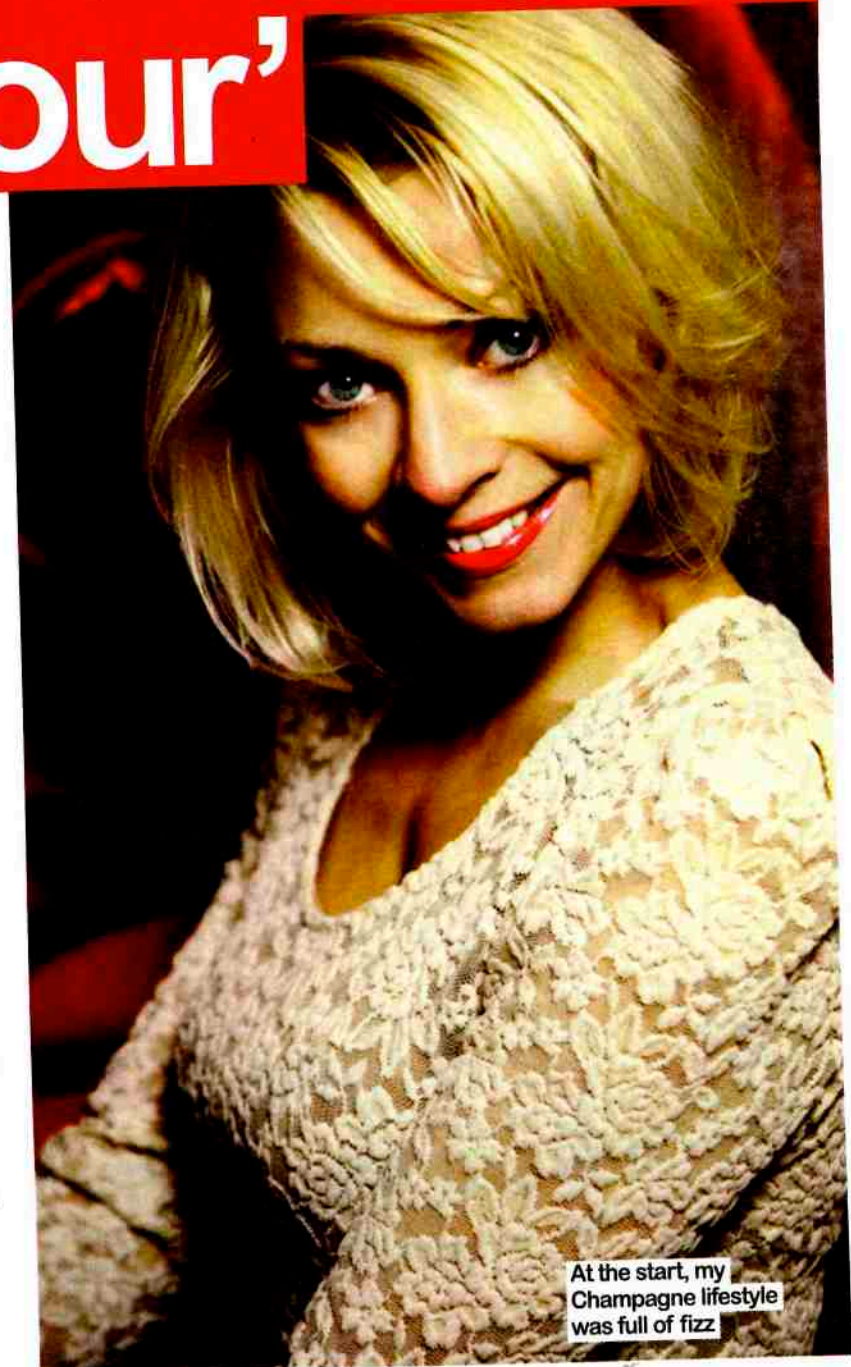
Casual sex had never interested me, but somehow, sex in hotel suites with powerful men had a new appeal. Before long, I found that my relaxed attitude to a low-maintenance relationship was viewed as such a premium by cash-rich but time-poor men, that many were prepared to pay.

When one of my dates told me that one girl had demanded £1,500 a month, I was shocked, but this wasn't unusual. I was propositioned myself: *Looking for weekly dinner/theatre companion with w/e trips abroad – can help with rent?* was a typical euphemism for a compensated relationship.

Once I opened a message inviting me to dinner at a Heston Blumenthal restaurant that evening: *Just dinner this first time. To prove I am genuine sugar daddy, I will give you £500.*

I hesitated – both scared and curious. Sure enough, on arrival he handed me a brown envelope stuffed with £50 notes. I didn't know whether etiquette dictated that I take it away to count or pretended it didn't exist. I was wary he'd want to take things further than dinner, but he simply said in his French accent: "I'd better be calling you zee taxee." I never heard from him again.

While an international blind date had once seemed out of the



At the start, my Champagne lifestyle was full of fizz

question, I now got braver. I agreed to join a wealthy Canadian on business in New York. I flew first class, of course, sipping Pommery Champagne.

On our first day, he took me shopping. I was kitted out in Prada, Louboutins, Seven jeans and La Perla underwear. I'd never bought designer goods for myself. We had an intellectual bond, but there wasn't a particular sexual

chemistry. I enjoy sex and I saw no reason not to sleep with him, but looking back, that was my first ever sexual trade-off.

Each gift-rich date raised the bar on my expectations. The final straw came when I went to a so-called highbrow sex party with one of my regular sugar daddies. A 45-year-old fund manager on the rebound from a bitter divorce, he had an insatiable appetite for

## Thrill-seeking lifestyle

sex. Dressed in fun rubber outfits for the party, he entrusted his BlackBerry to me. A text beeped in my hand: *Will you kindly transfer some money into my account today.*

I realised that my man was willing to pay someone else for what I'd given for free! But the money didn't matter. That was simply the price for the luxury of having guilt-free, non-exclusive relationships.

When a close friend became upset over a failed one-night stand, she sobbed to me: "Do you know how dirty I felt, doing the walk of shame after our night together? It's all right for you being wine and dined in fancy hotels, but what do I have to show for it?"

It seemed logical to accept gifts from sugar daddies, as I was attracted to them in any case, and later I joined another sugar daddy site, *SeekingArrangement.com*. But my first two dates with a view to a payment failed. I fancied one of them. He was nearing 50 and had an alluring calmness. He talked about a shopping allowance, suggesting I join him on trips to his Mediterranean villa. I imagined sex with him and thought: 'I just can't do it.' Yet I remained intrigued by the idea of an allowance.

### Deals between adults

Then I met a handsome ad executive from Chicago. He was staying at the five-star Sheraton Park Tower in Knightsbridge. As we drank Diamond Martinis in the bar, he asked: "What do you want, exactly?"

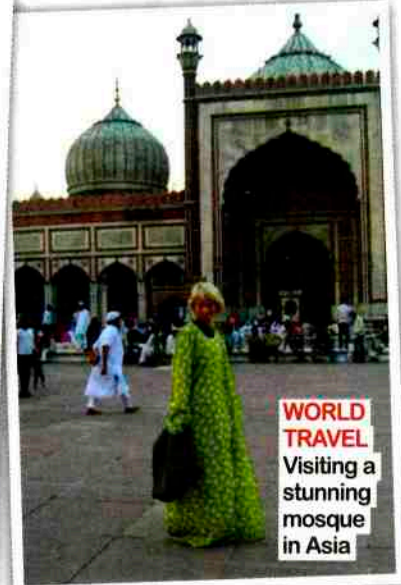
I heard myself reply: "Well, I can be generous if you can." And suddenly, I had negotiated my first deal for providing my



**EXCESS ALL AREAS**  
I could wine and dine to my heart's content



**DESIGNER CLOTHES**  
Posing in the 'gift' of a Prada coat



**WORLD TRAVEL**  
Visiting a stunning mosque in Asia

intimate company. It felt far from dishonourable. It was clear we fancied each other. He saw a cash deposit as a means of ensuring that the first date went further, a glance at the notes telling me it was upwards of £800. We didn't have sex. He massaged me and talked of his unhappy marriage.

I saw him every few months when he was visiting London, sometimes with colleagues and once with a group of mafia-like friends. We didn't have sex until our fourth meeting.

My appetite now whetted for cash, the thrill of a glamorous date

**Although I was paid cash, I was left feeling I wanted so much more from my lover**

alone was no longer enough. I formed an agreement with a lawyer whom I saw weekly. He paid me with a Selfridges gift card, which felt more respectable than cash. Despite his success, he was very clingy. On a ski trip to Colorado I felt so claustrophobic that I snapped: "You have no idea how to relate to other people!"

I had a Malaysian sugar daddy too, who I came close to falling in love with. I visited him in Kuala

Lumpur twice and he visited London often. He'd leave an envelope of euros signed: *With love*. Eventually we stopped the cash arrangement, but then I realised he wanted more from me. Material rewards define boundaries, but when you invest emotionally, there are no limits. He called me every day – it became too much and I ended it.

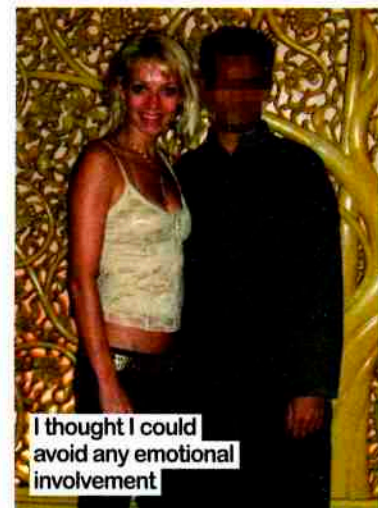
However, he made me realise how closed I had come to real love. On a trip to Brussels with my Chicago ad exec, I was moved by a scene in a Belgian restaurant of husbands and wives gazing at

each other. It looked like true love that had survived for years. I thought: 'I will never

have that. I've made myself the designer girlfriend worthy of admiration, but never love.'

My final date also moved me. I spent two days with the man at the Dorchester and, while I was paid in cash, I left feeling that I wanted so much more from him.

I realised that my fascination with high-flying men and glamorous lifestyles had faded – my motivation had switched to money. I had to stop. Three years



I thought I could avoid any emotional involvement

on, I was still kidding myself that I didn't want love because real love would have put an end to my new source of income.

I'd started out at 29 hungry for new experiences. Now I was a guarded 33-year-old who thought relationships were chores. I don't regret anything, but I learned that we all have a need for deeper emotional connections – something money just can't buy.



»Helen has told the story of her dating adventures in a new book, *Sugar Daddy Diaries: When A Fantasy Becomes An Obsession* (£7.99, Mainstream).