

HUMAN NATURE

噬罪人

HUMAN NATURE consists of twenty-five real life tragicomedies that have attracted attention outside of Taiwan's courtrooms. A man in a dispute with his family over the division of a property, a vendor in a street fight, a lonely woman catfished online, a scorned mistress... These may not be complicated cases, but they tell us a lot about love, hate, the wounds that we inflict on each other, our cruelty and our potential for warmth. Often working without payment, Lu Chiu-Yuan is a self-styled lawyer of the people, a crusader for justice and better understanding of the law among the general population.

Having previously worked in finance, Lu Chiu-Yuan qualified as a lawyer only six years ago and has gone on to teach the subject at university. It was when he started sharing his stories on Facebook, however, that he realised the real significance of his new job. He began to ask questions about the nature of punishment, law's role in justice and reconciliation, and the place emotion can play in a lawyer's work. The result is *HUMAN NATURE*, a moving account of the everyday disputes which make up the bulk of the work in Taiwan's courts. 'True crime' as a genre often centers on the most sensational stories, the trials of serial killers or large-scale corruption. But there are more profound lessons to be found in these pages; this is the key to our 'true heart'.

Lu Chiu-Yuan 呂秋遠

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HUMAN NATURE

By Lu Chiu-Yuan. Translated by James Laughton-Smith.

Daddy's Little Girl

The Book of Kings recounts the story of two women who came to King Solomon with a new born baby. The women had both recently given birth, but after one of the babies died one night both women claimed the child as their own and they wanted Solomon to judge who was the real mother. King Solomon ordered the child be split in two, with each women receiving half. On hearing the verdict, one woman cried out, 'I am willing to give up the child!' 'Neither of us shall have it,' the other woman said, 'divide it!' Thereupon King Solomon declared that the woman willing to give up the baby was its real mother and returned the boy to her.

When you deal with family cases, you come across parents using their children as weapons or bargaining chips all the time. On the face of it they claim to be acting with the best interests of the child at heart. But I frequently find myself wondering if these custody fights are really about the child or more about saving face or even getting revenge? Is that a question these parents even ever ask themselves?

I was typing up an indictment that evening. It was gone ten and the sound of my clattering computer keys was the only noise in the office. Suddenly the telephone rang, piercing through the quiet.

'Uncle Lu, are you busy?' A little voice on the other end of the phone asked.

'No dear, what's wrong?' I said. The little girl didn't sound any older than ten. I don't have any clients that young, do I? I thought.

'I came with my daddy last time he came to see you. You asked the lady to buy some fries for me, because you wanted to be alone. Do you remember me?'

'Of course I remember. How can I help?' I did remember this child. Her father had asked me to represent him in a divorce case. The divorce had been settled but custody had yet to be resolved.

I felt sorry for the man, but he was also extremely frustrating. He and his wife had been married for nearly ten years and they'd fought their entire marriage due to his severe depression and her bipolar disorder. They had both taken out protection orders against the other. He loved his wife dearly but separation was their only option. The real tragedy, however, was the daughter, the real victim of their fights. Both had threatened to kill themselves and the daughter too in order to get their way. The child was at risk with either parent and I had at the time felt inclined to advise the courts to take away parental rights from both.

'My tummy hurts. I haven't eaten anything all day,' she said, her voice timid. I felt bad for her. I really liked this child. She wore her hair in a little pony tail and always spoke so sweetly, perhaps because she had had such an insecure upbringing. She wasn't at all afraid of strangers and called her elders 'Uncle' upon first meeting them. Her quest for parental love had already taught her something

about how the world works.

‘What about your daddy?’ I asked, sensing that something had happened. Fortunately, I had given her my card for fear of precisely this kind of situation.

‘Daddy is crying. He says Mummy doesn’t want us so he’s going to take me to a good place. He’s in his room getting ready. He told me not to go in yet,’ she said cheerily.

My heart froze for a second because he told me once while we were sitting in my office that if he decided to kill himself, he would take the child with him. My blood surged and at the time I called the domestic violence hotline right away to request for a social worker to investigate. I knew he loved the girl, but there was something unsettling about his love. He once admitted to me that after his wife left them he would make his daughter sleep in the same bed as him because he couldn’t bear to be without her. But I was no longer handling the custody case as he had insisted on representing himself, so I was in no position to say anything or intervene in any way.

‘Hang on. Uncle needs to ask you a question. Where do you live?’ It was after hours and there were no assistants in the office to help me check the client’s address to give to the police.

‘Uncle Lu, can you help me? My daddy said we just have to go to sleep and we will be in the other place, but I’m really hungry. My mummy used to cook for me when she lived at home and she would rub my belly. But Daddy’s crying. He’s too busy to cook.’ She sounded despondent and my heart was heavy. If I didn’t save her, I’d never be able to eat again. I forced myself to sound cheerful—I still needed to get the address.

‘Okay! Just hold on, Uncle Lu’s going to take you to eat fries. The only thing is, I’m very busy now. I can’t leave the office, so I’m going to send some friends to pick you up and bring you here. Don’t be afraid now.’

She went quiet. She knew something was amiss, but she told me her address in her babyish voice. It didn’t tremble, but it distressed me nonetheless. I told her to turn on the television so that her father wouldn’t overhear our conversation. I also hoped it would distract her because I needed to use another phone in the office to contact the domestic violence line. I quietly relayed the address to the operator and then began to think of ways to stall for time. I could hear cartoons in the background, which was a small comfort.

But this was the difficult bit, keeping her on the line. It felt like I was in a film, Colin Farrell in *Phone Booth* perhaps. Except that this was real life.

‘Do you like Uncle Lu the Lawyer?’ I asked. What a silly conversation starter, I thought.

‘Uncle, you are very nice. Daddy says lawyers are bad, but you’re not.’ What a kind child, I thought. Just then I suddenly thought of the song *I’m Nice but I’m Bad*. I didn’t know if I was going to be able to get her to make a run for the social workers if it came to that.

‘Why does your father think lawyers are bad people? Did he tell you?’ I asked.

‘He said that Mummy’s lawyer took her away from us. He was a very bad man!’ she said.

‘No wonder people say lawyers are worse than vampires!’

‘Vampires? Why?’ Her interest seemed piqued.

‘Because a vampire only sucks blood at night, but a lawyer will suck your blood any time of the day!’ I forced a hollow laugh, but the girl didn’t respond. Okay, my jokes aren’t that funny.

‘Well, you are a nice man, don’t be sad.’ If I was there with her, she would have insisted I squat down and let her pat my head, I thought. In fact, I was touched by her words and I struggled to think of what to say next. There was no way Colin Farrell would have let there be an awkward silence at this point.

‘Where do you usually go to play?’ I hoped this line of questioning would lighten the mood.

‘I always do my homework at home. Mummy and Daddy always used to argue so they didn’t take me out a lot,’ her voice seemed to go quiet again. ‘I’m really happy because Daddy said just now he’s going to take me out to play.’

She went on, ‘He said we’re going somewhere really nice and Mummy would be there waiting for us. I just have to go to sleep. But I’m a little bit scared, because Daddy was crying all the time he was telling me. Uncle, why was he crying if he’s going to take us out and we’re going to meet Mummy?’

How was I supposed to explain that, kid?

‘That place your daddy told you about, it’s no fun. And, you can’t go right now, because you don’t have tickets. You won’t be able to get tickets for a long time,’ I said.

‘What ticket? Where is it? Why do you need a ticket?’ Her questions were like a rapid-fire machine gun and impossible to fend off.

‘Umm...’ I paused, ‘you have to buy the ticket when you get there. I think the place is called Heaven, but we can’t get in at the moment because it’s too full. There too many people inside.’ I tried not to make it too complicated.

‘So, I can’t go now?’ she seemed a little disappointed. ‘What happens if Daddy goes? Am I going to be left here on my own?’

‘Your father isn’t going anywhere. He’s too busy crying. He missed the bus,’ I said.

I should be a children’s presenter, I thought to myself. I could use the stage name Grandpa Guava or something.

‘Oh, you have to take the bus there.’ She pondered this.

‘So why did Daddy tell me to come to his room afterwards? There’s no bus there.’

Was she intent on defeating me with her questions?

I took a deep breath and glanced at the clock. I’d never experienced such a slow ten minutes before.

‘No bus? Do you know what your daddy is doing in there right now?’

‘I can still hear him crying,’ she whispered. ‘He just took a bowl of black stuff into the room.’

‘Where are you now?’ I asked. ‘Your daddy doesn’t like me, so you can’t let him hear me talking to you. You’ve got to help Uncle Lu and hide now, because I’m going to buy some fries for you and your dad won’t like it. He’ll be angry if he sees you!’

‘Really?’ she said. ‘Where do you want me to hide?’

Damn, how am I meant to know the layout of her home?

‘You can hide anywhere, but just don’t let him hear you talking on the phone. Promise me that you won’t go into your daddy’s room and don’t drink anything he gives you. My friends are going get there

in a minute and they're going to buy you some fries. From Uncle Lu.'

'Okay, I promise.' She sounded a bit more cheerful. 'My tummy feels better.'

'Sweetie, you saved me. Do you know that? Don't forget it. You saved me.' I was feeling moved, because she really was a great kid.

'I saved you? What do you mean?' Of course she didn't understand.

'Because you made me remember how beautiful life is.' She wouldn't understand me, I knew that, but I needed to say it. I heard her father start to call her on the other end of the phone.

'Hide! Do you hear? Pretend you're playing hide and seek with Daddy!' I whispered, my heart racing.

'Oh!' she also started whispering. 'I get it.' Her father's voice sounded increasingly strained as he tried looking for her.

'Baby, where are you?' I could hear him very clearly now. I didn't dare speak, but in my mind I was furious. Like hell she's your 'baby'. We both held our breath, scared to make a sound.

Three long minutes passed. All I could hear was the shrill voice of her father repeatedly calling for his 'baby', demanding she 'come out' and stop hiding. I was struck by the irony of his entreaties against the background music of the children's television show. He then switched it off. I could hear that the search was being taken in earnest now.

Suddenly he saw the child hiding in the corner of the living room next to the couch, clutching the telephone.

His voice came like a thundering force: 'Baby, who are you talking to?' The girl dropped the telephone on the floor. Her father picked it up and seeing the number immediately began yelling at me, 'What gives you the right to interfere in my family's business?'

'I'm a lawyer!' I had never felt prouder of my profession.

'What the hell do I care what you are? Get lost!' he shouted.

Just then the doorbell began to ring. I listened as the door was broken down and a clamour of voices came rushing in.

A Typical Lover

She wasn't beautiful. In fact, she wasn't anything to look at whatsoever.

She was the kind of girl who you would pass on the street every day and probably never give a second glance. No, you couldn't even say she was a girl. At thirty-five years old, she was definitely a woman. She wore heavy rimmed glasses, styled her hair in a permanent crop and had thick lips. She had a constantly downcast expression. She'd never had a decent love affair in her life.

Men only ever saw her as a good friend and there she was stuck, always the friend and never the lover. She wasn't fond of socializing so she only had a handful of female friends. Her only hobby to speak of might have been reading those romance books you find in the supermarket. They always seemed to have six word titles like 'The Dashing CEO Fell for Me', 'The Emperor Forced Me to Marry,' and 'A Love

across Time and Space’.

She would sit down to read with some snacks and cola, and by the end of the novel, there’d be a tear in her eye and a bit of snot hanging from her nose. She imagined she was Cinderella and longed to meet her Prince Charming.

Thank God for the Internet then.

Bored one night, she opened up an instant messaging application. Before long, a chat notification from the guy popped up. She didn’t usually meet face-to-face with people she met online. Or more accurately, she never met up with them. The most she ever did was have a short, strictly online affair. This guy was different. He didn’t ask what she looked like, how old she was or where she lived. And he wasn’t one of those horndogs who would straight away ask to meet up for a shag.

He claimed to be a computer engineer, working for some OTC company. He told her everything: his company’s address, his extension number, who his friends were. He said he’d been seconded to Hong Kong for two months, so could only keep in touch with friends via the Internet. He told her how he’d found her profile by chance and how she seemed like his dream girl.

She didn’t believe him. The internet wasn’t real after all. She sighed.

‘You really want to get to know me? I’m not very good looking you know.’ I better tell him now or he’ll only be disappointed later on, she thought to herself.

‘Send me a photo. I want to see,’ he said, not letting it drop.

She didn’t like having her picture taken because they were never able capture her true charm. This time she decided she would send her ugliest photo. At least I can scare him off, she thought.

‘What are you talking about? You’re really hot,’ he quickly typed.

She laughed at the screen. Maybe he really was her knight in shining armour.

‘Okay, let’s be boyfriend and girlfriend then.’ She had forgotten to ask for his photo. All she knew about him was his name, just a name.

Just three days after meeting, they started calling each other ‘husband and wife’. Because he was a server room engineer, he often went offline, and he wasn’t necessarily always at the computer even when he was signed in. During the day she worked part-time in a convenience store, but any free time she had she would go online to see if he was there. She would tell him about her day and about any difficult customers. She felt like just having someone to confide in was enough.

Occasionally, he would come online, telling her that Valentine's Day was coming and he was going to give her the sweetest gift (himself), and how they were going to have several children etc. She was giddy with happiness. This time she thought, it would finally come to something. Even if it had all happened in the space of three days.

‘Are you there dear wife?’ The message appeared on her screen.

Her heart almost jumped out of her chest.

‘What’s wrong?’ She typed hurriedly, putting the bag of crisps she was eating down on the table.

‘It’s nothing. I’ve been doing a bit of work on the side but I can’t let my company find out. The client wants to pay me but I don’t have an account.’ He typed out a long string of words, which was completely

at odds with the usual ‘yep’ and ‘I see’ he usually typed.

‘You’re not part of a scammer ring are you?’ An alarm bell went off in her head. ‘How can you not have a bank account?’

‘My company checks all the employee’s accounts, so I can’t use my account to receive the money, but I need the money urgently. Can you send me your passbook and ATM card?’ He punctuated the sentence with a smiley face.

She hesitated. *Isn’t this the way scammers work?* However, it all sounded very reasonable. He was in Hong Kong. He needed money. And he couldn’t transfer the payment from his side job into his account. Most importantly, he was her Mr Right.

It should be okay, she thought. I know his name, company, position, extension number. Surely, he can’t be faking all that?

‘Please dear. I’m coming back to Taiwan in a week. And the day I come back it’s going to be Valentine’s Day. I can use the money to buy you lots of gifts.’ He finished the sentence with another heart emoticon.

‘You don’t need to get me anything. The best present will be you. Save your money and come back to Taiwan as soon as you can. I can’t wait to see you.’

‘Then can you send those things I asked for to a friend’s house? His name and address is New Taipei City, Yonghe District...’ He speedily typed out the address.

‘Wait, how come I need to send it to your friend’s house and not Hong Kong?’ she asked.

‘My address in Hong Kong is a company dormitory. They’ll find out,’ he quickly responded. ‘Besides, I can’t have you spending so much on postage!’ He typed a kiss at the end of this sentence.

So considerate, she thought.

‘Okay, I’ll see what I can do.’ But she decided she would ask for more details first, then send the things.

The next day, she called the company and she was shocked to find out they had never heard of the guy. She was livid.

Another long day. At last he came online.

‘My dear, did you send it?’ The question came as soon as he appeared.

‘...’ She didn’t answer, just typed out a line of ellipses.

‘Wifey, what’s up?’ The words appeared slowly on the screen. She started to well up and cry.

‘I phoned the reception desk. You don’t work for the company. Why did you want to trick me?’ She had to ask even if it was painful.

After a few moments of silence, he started to type again.

‘How could you not believe me? I love you so much. My company is huge. It’s an OTC company. And I’m often out of the office. The woman on reception is new. How could she know me?’ His anger burst forth on the screen.

‘It’s fine. If you don’t trust me, forget it. It doesn’t matter. I still want to spend my life with you. But if you can’t even believe me about this simple matter, then don’t call me ‘husband’ anymore. I don’t

want to see you again.’

The words seemed to shoot out of the screen like bullets, leaving her nowhere to hide. She felt really guilty, like she had done something terrible by checking up on him and accusing him.

I don't want to leave him! she thought.

‘I'm sorry, I apologise, I'm the one in the wrong,’ she responded immediately.

Several crying emoticons appeared on the screen. Her heart melted.

‘I'll send the stuff tomorrow, okay? Please forgive me for being so childish,’ she pleaded. She added several kisses.

There was no response. She felt like her heart was going to jump out of her chest.

‘You shouldn't be suspicious of me. But I forgive you.’ When she saw his message finally come up she felt so happy she almost jumped for joy.

She sent her passbook and ATM card in the post as soon as she got the chance.

For the next two days she didn't bring up the matter with him again. They just chatted as normal, discussing how many children they would have, where they would buy their house, how they'd arrange the furniture.

After the third day, she never saw or heard from him again. Her online love had vanished. She started to get worried. Perhaps it really had been a scam. In the end, it was too late. She received a police summons explaining that her account had come under suspicion and she needed to attend the police station to for an interview.

Looking at the thick stack of records of instant message conversations, I felt sure that what she had told me was the whole truth.

‘Two hundred and eighty pages of dialogue is a lot,’ I said, ‘but in the ten days you went from becoming acquainted to breaking up, from strangers to husband and wife to divorce. It was a bit quick, don't you think?’

‘He was a horrible man!’ She exclaimed angrily.

In fact, the last thirty pages were all just her, asking him to answer her and explain why the police wanted to talk with her, his beloved wife.

I shook my head.

‘If I'm being honest, there were a lot of warning signs. If it were me, I wouldn't have trusted this man.’

She lowered her head and said nothing. Her tears started to trickle down onto the table.

‘Okay, okay. I know you believed him, but we have to deal with this.’ I wasn't sure how to stop her crying, however.

‘I didn't trust him, but I trusted my love for him,’ she said through clenched teeth.

Now it was my turn to not know what to say.

‘But the court won't base its judgment on how much you loved him!’ I said eventually.

‘What do you think my chances of being found not guilty are?’ she asked.

‘Not guilty? Almost impossible. In practice, fraudulently obtaining a passbook and using it to store

funds for a fraud ring, you'll usually be found guilty of being an accomplice, if not at least an accessory to the crime,' I said.

I continued, 'The court will be of the opinion that someone of your age and experience would have heard about these sorts of tactics and would know not to give your ATM card and passbook to someone you don't know. In other words, the court will typically believe that you had an expectation that the card and the passbook would be used for fraudulent purposes and that there was the possibility that you stood to gain,' I explained.

'Well, if I am found guilty, how bad will the sentence be?' she asked, finally calming down a bit.

'Generally speaking, if you plead guilty, you're looking at three months imprisonment give or take,' I said, 'But the danger is that if you admit guilt, in any future civil compensation case you will be fully liable. Because your actions would be classed as joint tort, so you would be jointly and severally liable with the fraudsters to pay compensation for the money that they transferred into your account.'

'You mean if the total amount transferred into my account was five hundred thousand, I would have to pay compensation for all of that, even though I didn't touch any of the stolen money myself?' she asked.

I nodded hard, because I had to let her know the truth. 'So this is why you need to think carefully if you plead guilty.'

She fell silent again.

I looked at her face, tears streaming down her cheeks.

'Are you saying there's nothing I can do?' She finally spoke after an awkward silence.

'You can choose to plead not guilty and the punishment usually wouldn't be too severe, although harsher than if you had pleaded guilty of course,' I answered. 'But you have to be strong, the courts aren't usually very lenient about this kind of thing.'

'Okay, I'm not going to plead guilty.' She looked up. At some point she had wiped away the tears.

Oh, I thought to myself. It seems like everyone feels like they are invincible once they fall in love.

Sure enough, the prosecutor didn't believe her account and quickly decided to prosecute the case, transferring it to the district courts. Before the court hearing, I sought her confirmation once more.

'Are you sure you won't plead guilty?' I asked.

'I'm not going to plead guilty. I didn't do anything wrong,' she said.

There was no one in the courtroom gallery. She and I sat alone in the dock. The judge seemed like he was already very tired. He had been questioning suspects all day after all. Ours was the last case. The judge called the public prosecutor to read the indictment.

'As stated in the indictment document,' he said simply.

The judge started by telling the defendant that she was suspected of committing fraud and she had the right to remain silent and not testify in her defense. She could appoint a defender and she could submit favorable evidence, he went on.

After reading all her rights he asked her at last, 'Does the defendant plead guilty to the indictment presented by the prosecution?'

‘I am not guilty. I didn’t commit fraud,’ she answered.

The judge didn’t say anything further, just motioned to counsel to speak.

I stood up.

‘Your Honor, in delivering the passbook the defendant did not foresee the possibility of its possible use by a fraud syndicate. The defendant delivered the bank account because she was blinkered by emotion and too readily believed her online friend. From the instant message conversations, it can be found that the defendant had asked this man why he needed the bank account and he gave sufficient grounds. I beg your Honor to consider that the man and woman were in love. Although, the man made statements that are hard to verify, and it was difficult to rationally determine whether the reasons given were true, the defendant delivered the passbook based on their shared goal of living together. We should not consider this accomplice to fraud.’

The judge looked at the accused without so much as glancing at me, and said, ‘Defendant, how could you have possibly not foreseen the possibility?’

‘What?’ She was dumbstruck.

‘That is to say, how is it possible that you did not know that you shouldn’t give your passbook to someone you don’t know?’ The judge repeated.

‘Because he was my husband,’ she insisted.

‘Husband? He was your husband after only ten days?’ The judge asked incredulously.

‘No, your Honor, it was three days,’ she corrected the judge.

I suppressed a laugh, because I knew that the judge would definitely not believe her. After all, he looked so proper and serious.

‘Okay, *whatever*,’ he said, the last word in English. ‘Tell me, is it normal that, having known this man for three days, to trust him and then give him your passbook?’

‘Of course not. I’ve never trusted a man in life before,’ she said. ‘Online, most of them are just looking for a girl for a shag.’ I was too late to stop her.

‘A shag?’ The judge frowned. He seemed not to understand.

‘Your Honor, that’s not important. We’ll elaborate in the plea.’ I suspected that this nearly fifty-year-old male judge really didn’t know what it meant.

He didn’t seem to want to listen.

‘Well, if counsel wants to request to submit further evidence, please submit an additional statement within the week. The announcement in this case is pending,’ he declared, getting up and leaving. The prosecutor gathered up his documents and also left.

Stunned, she asked me, ‘So that’s it? What does the announcement is pending mean?’

‘It means that the notice of whether the case will go to trial is pending. In the vernacular, it means you have to wait a few weeks and then they send you the notice of the hearing. We start preparing for the trial,’ I said.

‘Oh.’ She didn’t seem to understand. ‘And what am I meant to do in the meantime?’

‘Pray with all your heart,’ I said in English, showing off. ‘Pray to the spirits.’

In fact, I already had a pretty solid feeling of the outcome.

A month later, the proceedings began.

The judge examined the evidence in proper order, with the main evidence of course being the records of the instant messaging conversations.

‘We believe that records are not permissible as evidence as they do not confirm to the rules governing proper documents under the criminal procedure law,’ the prosecutor said.

She looked at me nervously and asked, ‘What does that mean?’

‘Not permissible as evidence means that... Hang on, I’ll tell you in a minute. I’m busy.’ I had to ignore her because I needed to answer the judge’s questions.

‘Your Honor, of course the evidence is permissible. Otherwise, we request that the prosecution conduct an inquest into the evidence with us. We can print out every single page of the records if necessary and determine whether the translations are correct,’ I spoke in an unhurried manner because I knew the judge wouldn’t want to do that.

‘The Court will take this into consideration, but the Court believes that there’s no need for an inquest and identification of the evidence.’

Just as I thought. Usually, this meant that the documents would be submitted into the proceedings for evaluation without any issue.

The rest was just a matter of formalities.

The judge was about to complete the examination of the evidence, when he asked, ‘Counsel, do you want to question the defendant?’

In general, few counsels would question the defendant at this time. After all, what could the defendant say that would benefit them?

I raised my hand and said to the judge, ‘I request to question the defendant.’

The judge was a little taken aback, but he let me proceed, just exhorting me to hurry it up.

‘Will the defendant tell the Court when the first time you fell in love in real life was?’ I asked.

I seemed to have scared her. After all, this wasn’t the script we had practiced.

After a paused, she asked me quietly, ‘Why are you asking me this? Do I have to answer?’

The prosecutor immediately objected.

‘This question has nothing to do with the case,’ said the judge, indicating that I should explain the relevance.

I explained slowly, ‘Your Honor, since expectation of possibility is closely related to life experience, I of course have to ask these questions.’

The judge nodded, but added, ‘Counsel, please make the questioning short. Do not waste time.’

Looking down she said, ‘No.’

‘Have you ever had an online boyfriend?’ I asked.

‘Of course I have,’ she quickly responded.

‘And did you meet?’ I asked.

‘No,’ she replied.

I could see that the prosecutor wanted to object, but he didn't, probably because he was also intrigued by what she would say.

'And, how many of these online boyfriends have you called 'husband'?' I asked.

'Just one. Him,' she said firmly.

'How could you start to call a stranger 'husband' after knowing him for only three days?' I asked.

'It's hard to explain when you love someone. I trusted him.' Her eyes suddenly started to well up.

'Your Honor, I have no more questions,' I declared.

The judge did not ask any further questions and moved straight to closing statements.

The prosecutors simply said, 'The defendant is clearly guilty. We request a verdict in accordance with the law.'

I had a lot more to say.

'Your Honour, in this case, the defendant did not have an expectation of possibility. We can see from the conversations that the defendant initially had doubts, which was a normal reaction. In other words, because the defendant had never been in love and had never called another man 'husband' online before, she had decided to entrust her feelings to this person. In the end, she was deceived, but that is how love goes on the internet. She had never had a boyfriend. In real life, we probably might not give her a second glance. In her life, she had never met someone who treated her so sweetly and cared so much for her. From her point of view, of course she would trust this person. Counsel believes that punishing the defendant severely for this would be tantamount to denying her humanity. We believe that the defendant was a hopeless fool who was easily deceived by this man. I request that the Court take into consideration the special emotional and life experience of the defendant and give a verdict of not guilty,' I finished.

The court reporter finished recording what I had said. I checked he had taken everything down word for word. After inquiring about her criminal record, the judge simply asked the defendant to make a final statement.

'I'm guilty of being cheated, but not of committing fraud.' I didn't know where she had got the inspiration, but it was good.

The judge shook his head. He seemed like he wanted to say something, but said nothing in the end. When it comes to matters of the heart, aren't we all guilty, after all?