



RESCOM
CHATTER
MARCH 2021



Spot the Easter Bunny and win.

**A lot of reading this month but I hope it will be
Informative and Entertaining**

**Happy holidays and for everyone travelling
take care and remember that it is the
other drivers that can cause accidents**

FROM CHAIRMAN HENNIE

March 2021.

Dear fellow residents,

A loud cheer could be heard in Phases 1 & 2 when work finally started on the installation of the long awaited fibre. Parts of Heron drive and the cross roads in Phases 1 and 2 are a bit of a mess, but it's all going to be worth it for all those who have been waiting for fibre. For the Phase 1 and 2 people, an explanation will be going out explaining what will be happening in your home and what your options are.



In November 2018 a revised set of House rules was published. Those rules have been issued to all new residents who arrived after that date. They have not been issued to any residents who arrived before that date. Copies of those rules are available on request from the Village manager's office.

In clause 2.1.7 those House rules are defined as " ... this set of rules and guide lines applicable to all Evergreen branded villages, including Village specific rules and guidelines as detailed in Annexure A hereto;". The Annexure A rules specific to our village are in the final stages of preparation and will be published as soon as they are finalised.

A reminder that the minutes ResCom meetings are not confidential documents and are available from reception. If you're interested in receiving them regularly leave your name with reception and they will be delivered to you as soon as they are finalised and published, normally 2 - 3 weeks after the ResCom meeting.

An appeal from management: an average of 6 Telecare morning calls are not answered on any one day. Those residents are called from the Care centre and on average, 2 are found to be home while the remaining 4 do not answer their phones. Nurses then go to investigate and without exception those people are not at home. When asked why they didn't answer their morning call, the answer is always "I forgot". As you can understand this all means unnecessary extra work for the staff and the appeal is: Please remember to answer your morning call!

To end on a lighter note! Wilma's story of the National Peanut Butter and Jelly day reminded me of my days in boarding school in Rhodesia. At teatime we were always given a sandwich and everybody's favourite filling was "saw dust", or a mixture of peanut butter and golden syrup - yummee! Who else can remember "saw dust" sandwiches from their school days? Even today I still treat myself occasionally with a peanut butter and honey sandwich.



Igor's Fan Page



Oh dear Igor has been up to it again.
He presented his owners with a new friend
as below





Dick and Kiloran hosted some of our newer residents
Shelia and David Rackley and Anna and Lawrence Squair

It was the wearing of the Green that
brought everybody to the St Patricks
Night social on the 17th March 2021





Last night Evergreen Broadacres celebrated St Patricks Day for the first time in 2 years much to everyone's delight.

Needless to say everyone rescued all their green clothing and accessories from the moths and dolled themselves up with hats, headrests, rosettes, wigs, scarves, glitter and shamrocks to mark the anniversary of St Patrick's death (remember this is an Irish day).

Huge thanks Laurraine, Marilyn and their teams of table decorators and the bottle whisky that was raffled and won by Heather Allen.

Also a big thank you to all the Bistro staff for the lovely meal and especially for the divine Whiskey and Guinness pudding (I didn't have it but this what everyone told me)

from Kiloran O'Townsend





WHY WAIT
LIFE IS URGENT

FOURWAYS URGENT CARE

FAMILY PRACTICE AND WALK IN CENTRE

- Drs Frankel and Blair
- Physiotherapy
- Sr Ann Richardson's Baby Clinic
- Travel Clinic
- Aesthetic Medicine
- Chiropractor
- Ampath Pathology
- Radiology

THE HUMAN DIMENSION IN MEDICINE... CHOOSE WELL.

FIND US
LIFE IS URGENT

FOCUS ON DELIVERING PROMPT CARE FOR LESS SEVERE INJURIES AND ILLNESSES OUTSIDE OF A TRADITIONAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT.

7 SUNSET SQUARE
1st Floor
Cnr Sunset Ave and Sunset Lane
Fourways
2055

010 900 2224

NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED
OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

FOURWAYS URGENT CARE

Came across this facility the other day rather than queuing up and being referred to all sorts of specialists you just walk in and get seen by doctors with loads of back up such as Xrays and Pathology Labs on the premises.

As they say "No appointment needed and open 7 days a week"!



Dementia - Part 2

I am always worried by the people I meet who have obviously led very active lives, but now are living in a closed world of their own.

What causes this, and can you prevent it??

(from Keep Sharp: Build A Better Brain At Any Age, by Dr Sanjay Gupta, is published by Headline, about R300.00 also check out YouTube for reviews)

Although there's no doubt that brain-training videos, puzzles and crosswords can improve some aspects of memory, research has found that their benefits do not necessarily extend to brain functions such as reasoning and problem solving, which are also key to brain health.

You need to stay as involved as you can in life, through mixing socially with other people and enjoying stimulating activities.

Why now it's time to put on those dancing shoes and other surprising activities that really do work out the brain.

These force the brain to acquire knowledge continually and work with it in ways that ultimately build new networks and strengthen existing ones in the brain.

Just as using many different muscles during exercise improves your overall health, using your brain in a number of challenging ways improves your brain health overall.

If people who have suffered a devastating stroke can learn to speak again — and those born with partial brains, or who lose significant brain tissue to disease, or surgery can propel their brains' rewiring to work as a whole — think of the possibilities for those of us who just hope to preserve our mental faculties as we age.

Exercise your brain in the right way and you will be able to tap into the 'plastic' power of the brain and boost its ability to rewire itself and strengthen its networks.

Here are some great ways to bolster your mental resilience and build brain matter through active learning and finding a strong sense of purpose in life.

Master a new skill

Research shows that knowledge — whatever you decide to learn — pays off. So, I urge you to pick a new skill, whether it is playing the piano, cracking computer coding, salsa dancing or writing a novel (it could just be a long letter to your GrandChildren perhaps telling them about your life).

It doesn't matter what the topic is, as long as it gets you out of your familiar mental rut and on a path to more knowledge and aptitudes.

Just grasp any opportunity to learn about a topic that has interested you recently or that you wish you had explored when you were a bit younger.

Find a sense of purpose

Having purpose is all about seeing your life as being deeply meaningful, setting goals to aim for and having a clear sense of direction.

With many of us in lockdown, it is easy to find yourself floundering a little, or just living a kind of half-existence. But I encourage you to spend time working out what your sense of purpose could be.

This is a profoundly powerful skill well worth acquiring because having a sense of purpose is a great way to keep your brain plastic and preserve that cognitive reserve.

In the past 20 years, dozens of studies have shown that older people with a sense of purpose in life are less likely to develop a slew of ailments — from mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease, to disabilities, heart attacks, and strokes.

And they are more likely to live longer than people without this strong undercurrent. In fact, feeling you have a strong purpose right now might reduce your risk of suffering dementia in the future by up to 20 per cent.

The brain-boosting benefits might be partly explained by the fact that -purpose often fires the motivation to remain physically active and take better care of yourself. And this in turn helps you manage stress and makes you less prone to dangerous inflammation.

Purpose often engenders a love for life and all the experiences it offers. It also puts a damper on depression, which can be common as we get older, and is a huge risk factor for memory decline, stroke, and dementia.

Volunteer and help others

Find out ways you can volunteer regularly for a good cause in your community.

Studies show that those who do so are far less likely to be blighted by anxiety, depression, loneliness and social isolation — plus they benefit from having a great sense of purpose.

One large 2018 survey found that over50s who volunteer at least once a year have higher mental wellbeing scores than those who don't.

For even better cognitive reserve, take up a leadership role in a group or organisation you already belong to — even if it is just online for now.

Take up and new language

Speaking two or more languages (even if you learned the second decades after the first) can slow age-related cognitive decline, and being bilingual can protect your brain if Alzheimer's does strike, studies reveal.

It is thought that the complexity of a second language acts as part of your cognitive reserve, shielding you against symptoms of decline.

Learn a song - and sing it!

Singing is a great way to build cognitive reserve too.

That's because if you want to sing a song, you must first retrieve the words and be able to say them. This complex process typically involves the left side of the brain. However, when you try to actually sing those words, you use completely different parts of the brain — those which handle pitch and tone.

All of this information must move to and from the right-hand and left-hand sides of the brain to sync up and integrate the data.

Adding a rhythm or a beat means you have to start charging up the back of the brain (the cerebellum) too.

Music is a great enterprise to undertake — the mere act of learning a new skill, such as playing the violin, has proved to be a great way to effectively 'rewire' parts of the brain that are responsible for fine motor control.

The brain really is a wonderful thing! I feel so privileged to have watched an MRI scanner image of the brain of someone singing a song — it is like seeing a light show on a clear night sky.

This complexity is apparent when you see people with even advanced dementia who can still sing songs from their childhood without a problem.

It shows how collectively, disparate places in your brain can still coordinate and work together, even when different parts of the memory system begin to fail.

Join an online class

A traditional class-based learning programme is a much more effective way to build up cognitive reserve than any brain-training programme.

That's because classes (whether in an actual classroom or online) usually involve a level of complexity that offers long-term benefits.

Complexity is critical — you can't just sign up and be passive. To build cognitive reserve you must use your mind in a way that takes you slightly out of your mental comfort zone.

Live class-based learning requires using cognitive skills, such as visual comprehension, short- and long-term memory, attention to detail and often numeracy — all of which is enhanced by the fact that you usually have an element of social interaction with fellow classmates.

Whether at a bricks and mortar college or in a virtual classroom you get the chance to communicate with others regularly through lively conversation, and this adds an extra beneficial dimension to the brain-boosting process.

Encourage deep focus

You know that feeling when you are totally immersed in an activity without distraction or any sense of agitation? That deep focus, which sees you absolutely absorbed and enjoying a feeling of intense energy?

That's 'flow', and it is very, very good for your cognitive reserve.

Finding flow does not mean you are stressed — you can feel blissfully relaxed while being challenged or under pressure at the same time.

You need a clear sense of purpose to truly be in the flow and it is a great state to occupy. Think about the last time you were in the flow. What were you doing? How long has it been since that time? Who were you with?

I encourage you to list those experiences. They may inspire you to find new routes to flow today.

Those brain myths debunked

As we age, we're doomed to forget

There is a kernel of truth to this myth because some cognitive skills do decline as you age, especially if you don't employ strategies to pay closer attention and help you remember.

But although you might have been quicker at picking up a new language or memorising a list of random words when you were younger, as an older adult you are more likely to have a superior vocabulary and to be a good judge of character.

You'll score higher on tests of social communication and diplomacy, such as how to settle an argument or deal with a conflict.

The other good news about an ageing brain is that we tend to improve over time at controlling our own emotions, weathering stress, and finding meaning in our lives.

Older people can't learn new things

Learning can take place at any age, especially when you get involved with cognitively stimulating activities such as meeting new people or trying new hobbies.

Because our memory is dynamic and it is possible to grow new neurons, we can continue to change our brain's information, capacity, and ability to learn. Although mastering new skills, such as a second or third language, might take an older person slightly longer, this doesn't mean you cannot achieve the feat.

Never say 'never'. Even people diagnosed with cognitive decline can continue to learn new things.

...But computer games may help

Any product that says it can reduce or reverse cognitive decline should be viewed with caution, in my opinion.

Video-based brain games have come under fire for being over-hyped, for example. However, I admit that some 'speed training' games may show promise.

These are short, simple games where you hit a button when you see a red car on a fast-moving screen, for instance — and the way you focus while rapidly processing visual information seems to be surprisingly effective at slowing dementia.

One impressive 2016 study found that 11-14 hours of speed training over six weeks was enough to cut the risk of developing dementia by 29 per cent.

As the player answers correctly, the game becomes more difficult with more distractions making the targets harder to identify, and the speed is increased.

An interesting study in 2013 found a game called NeuroRacer, designed to help boost multi-tasking networks in the brain, really could work.

After older people played NeuroRacer three times a week for a month, they improved their ability to multitask beyond the level of even 20 year olds who played one single time.

Better still, those cognitive improvements lasted for six months with no more practice.

The reason this appeals to me is that certain cognitive abilities not specifically targeted by the game (specifically working memory and sustained attention) also showed enduring improvement.

These skills are important for everyday tasks, such as handling the post and dealing with bills, planning and cooking meals.

Video games will never be a panacea, and a few unscrupulous companies will continue to sell video games on the back of false brain-boosting claims, but I am optimistic this could be a useful way to build cognitive reserve in future.

These are the members of the Broadacres ResCom

Communications	Leader:	Chris Edwards	[89]
Environment	Leader:	Hennie du Preez	[72]
Projects	Leader:	Basil Bold	[90]
Finance	Leader:	Jim Goodwin	[129]
Governance	Leader:	Royston Knowles	[9]
Hospitality	Leader:	Laurraine Lotter	[77]
Safety & Security	Leader:	Graham Brickett	[126]
Chairman	Leader:	Hennie du Preez	[72]

Emergency Numbers

Other than the Telecare unit which is to be used for personal emergencies whilst in the unit.

Reception desk -	087 809 3366
Guardhouse - (Thorburn Security) -	071 173 2406
Care Centre - (Unique Health) -	011 568 4307

It is advisable for the residents to store these telephone numbers in their cellphones in case of need.

It will help if you enter these and your local relatives as ICE (In Case of Emergency). This is the first place emergency response personnel look for when trying to contact your carers etc.

So for an example the entry : 'ICE Daughter 084 123 4567' would be found very quickly if you are not able to tell them.

Remember to wear your Buddy Band at all times and your emergency button (it is waterproof)

FINANCE PORTFOLIO

ResCom Bank Account :- FNB Acc No 62847606037



Welcome to our newest residents.

David and Marion Presbury - 128
David and Shelia Rackley - 52



We hope you have many years of happiness in our wonderful village.



Those crafters have been at it again. Lynne Turner 'turned' the plain old hen egg into a Easter delight. She showed other crafters how it is done and here are some with their finished marvels.



Evergreen's Knit and Natter Group

We were delighted to be able to gather again in the Clubhouse for our weekly Knit and Natter. This warm and social group has over the years produced many items, knitted, sewn or crocheted, for various charitable organizations and events.

One of our main charities is the Baragwanath Hospital Comfort Committee (BHCC). This organization, run by volunteers, distributes the goods it receives to various clinics around Gauteng. For this charity we knit, crochet or sew many different things which, along with toiletries and some food items, are packed into Mom and baby comfort packs and given to the patients attending clinic appointments. The clinicians tell how these gifts bring smiles to their patient's faces - and, most importantly, they encourage them to continue coming to the hospital for their children's vaccinations and health care checks.

Over the years we have made and donated numerous items to the BHCC - during 2020 we donated almost 2000 items that included baby jumpers, beanies, leggings and toys for the babies, as well as scarves and blankets for the grannies and fiddle muffs for dementia patients. All our donations are acknowledged by letters of thanks - and we are invited to their annual tea party where, over a cup of tea and some delicious cakes, we can meet many other enthusiastic volunteers. Unfortunately due to COVID there was no party this year.



Some of the most recent items, including a sweet little bunny

We have also participated in several other charitable drives, such as knitting blankets for Mandela's day, and scarves and beanies for the Diepsloot schoolchildren.

While many of us continue making these items at home, it is during our meetings that we can exchange ideas, view the work done and learn from each other. This interaction is vital for continued stimulation and motivation, thus our delight at being able to come together to knit and natter again.

Although the charitable drive is a great incentive, it is not restrictive and many other beautiful things have been made for personal use or for family and friends.



Rainfall Report for March 2021

March provided the usual unpredictable results (see table below) with a measurement appreciably below the average for this month of the year.

Barring some really unusual downpours in April we can expect the Autumn/Winter pattern to prevail.

Dam levels across the country continue to show an appreciable improvement over the same week last year (85% vs 67%).

But the drive to conserve water remains a national imperative however, as the low-rainfall months are coming.

Rainfall in mm for 2020/2021

Apr 2020	72.4
May 2020	23.0
Jun 2020	15.5
Jul 2020	0.0
Aug 2020	0.0
Sep 2020	5.0
Oct 2020	21.8
Nov 2020	211.9
Dec 2020	107.5
Jan 2021	153.5
Feb 2021	165.6
Mar 2021	64.9

12 Months 841.1mm

Rainfall for March over the years

2013	28.0
2014	210.3
2015	83.1
2016	251.4
2017	16.8
2018	184.0
2019	14.8
2020	81.1
2021	64.9

Average for March since 2013 is
103.8mm

Just Like That.....

Brain surgeon, military hero and (yay!) my new fiancé... Sounds too good to be true? That's because it's a scam - as CLAUDIA CONNELL reveals in this hilarious account of how she turned the tables on fraudsters extorting fortunes from women around the world.

With romance scams booming in lockdown, I play along when I'm targeted to see how these con artists operate and why so many women fall for their lies.

- 'Catfishers' browse dating sites and social media accounts for victims to scam
- They then woo them over several weeks before attempting to extort money
- UK victims were conned out of £63 million last year according to Action Fraud
- Claudia played along to see why so many women fall for con artists' lies

My fiancé David wants us to set up home together in England. I'd rather we live at his ocean view mansion in California.

Whatever we decide, he wants me to know that I have captured his heart in a way he never thought possible, after he was so cruelly widowed five years ago.

David's 15-year-old son, Larry, also adores me. He calls me 'Mom' and regularly emails me from boarding school.

As for me — well, what woman doesn't dream of being swept off her feet by a dashing handsome, hopelessly romantic surgeon who just so happens to be filthy rich?

The only trouble is that my fiancé, the man calling himself Dr David Smith, is none of those things. He's an invention, what is known as a '**catfisher**,' someone who orchestrates an elaborate online romance scam. They browse dating sites and social media accounts for victims, then woo them over several weeks before attempting to extort money.



*Not Love Actually: The Handsome 'David',
wooing Claudia online,
was in fact using an image of innocent Dr
Fernando Gomes
who lives in Brazil!*

So I decide to catfish the catfisher.

It all starts when I receive a "friend request" on Facebook. The profile picture shows an insanely good-looking man but there are no other details.

I accept the request and instantly get a private message. The handsome stranger introduces himself as Dr David Smith — a brain surgeon no less. He's originally from LA but currently fulfilling a peace-keeping mission on behalf of the United Nations in Afghanistan.

Romance fraudsters, who mostly appear to operate out of Nigeria or Ghana, often claim to be military. It provides the perfect 'security' cover story for never being able to speak or video call as you'd expect in a normal dating situation.

Cutting straight to the chase, David says: 'I want to respect your status as a woman,' and then asks if I'm single, have children or own a big house. So far, so unsubtle. I answer his questions and pose a few of my own. One of the most common catfish tricks is to claim to be a widower, having lost their wife in the most tragic of circumstances. It tugs at the heartstrings of the victim and proves that the man wooing them is not afraid of commitment.

David tells me his wife was killed in a car crash five years ago. Bingo! She was the love of his life and he's spent many days weeping at her grave. 'Life has been very sad to me since the loss of my late wife,' says the grief-stricken doc.

I do a 'reverse image' search on the extra pictures David has sent me of himself (where you upload photographs to an internet search engine). I discover that the dashing chap in the photos is indeed a brilliant brain surgeon — but not the man messaging me.

He's Dr Fernando Gomes and based in Brazil where he is something of a celebrity with 820,000 followers on Instagram.



*The Real cynical Claudia Connell
with tongue in cheek!*

After a couple of days of posts sent via Facebook, David suggests we start communicating via Google Hangouts (a private messaging app) and I agree. This is a textbook move by catfishers as they know that Facebook could remove their fake profiles at any time.

David's certainly passionate and determined to sweep me off my feet. Within 48 hours of making contact, he declares he always wants to be by my side. The next day, he tells me that he is looking for his soulmate and — guess what — he's found her. Me!

He wants to know everything about me, and is a born romantic, declaring: 'My favourite colours are both white and red because the white stands for a pure heart and the red stands for love. When you add both of them together you have a pure hearted love.'

David paints a bleak picture of life in camp where he's been for five long years and claims to be ambushed by 'Isis' on an almost daily basis.

'Do you get to do much brain surgery there?' I ask.

It transpires that — despite being a brain surgeon by trade — he can turn his hand to anything. **He amputates limbs, patches up bullet wounds and, when he's not tending to the sick and dying, he is fixing tanks, cleaning the camp and cooking for the men. What a hero!**

He sends me what he claims are two pictures of where he's stationed. Another reverse image search establishes that one is of a refugee camp in Guatemala. I don't need to search for the second picture because there, in the forefront, is a sign that reads: 'Camp Delta, Guantanamo.'

I ask him if he's in Cuba but he insists he's in Afghanistan and that the Guantanamo sign is a deliberate ploy to confuse the enemy. Cunning.

I soon come to suspect that I'm being messaged by several different people. Some have a good command of English while others are barely literate. David seems to be online at all hours of the day and night.

Oddly, I'm rather enjoying our communication and eagerly await David's fictitious updates. **Has he been ambushed for the third time this week? Has he rescued a soldier from a burning vehicle? Are his staff in LA taking good care of his mansions and sports cars?** And, of course, he tells me I am beautiful at least 12 times a day.

I can understand why a lonely or vulnerable person might become addicted to the attention.

A week passes and he's yet to ask me for money and I'm curious — and a little impatient — to know how he's going to do it. He's starting to drip feed me information that will no doubt be pertinent when the sting finally comes.

The poor soul has experienced many tragedies. His parents are dead. His mother died in childbirth, his father in a plane crash. He has no brothers and sisters and he cannot access his bank account from Afghanistan. He wants to retire but he isn't allowed to until the UN agree to his request.

They sound like the worst employer — they didn't even give him any time off **when he was shot in the arm. Or was it the leg?** David gets it mixed up.

Another time he tells me that 'cheating and lies' made his last relationship end.

When I ask about the relationship that ended in 'cheating and lies', he tells me it was his wife whom he kicked out after he discovered she was sleeping with his best friend. **Hang on a minute. The wife whose death devastated him? Whose grave he wept at?**

Whenever I question him about changing his narrative, he has a handy deflection tactic. 'How is the weather with you my dear woman' he'll ask, like some maiden aunt.

I may be paying attention but David certainly isn't. Sometimes, I deliberately get his name wrong, calling him: **Daniel, Douglas or Donald. He never notices.**

As our virtual relationship enters its second week, David is convinced I'm the woman of his dreams. 'My love you deserve the entire world. I am unable to give you the world but I can give you something more valuable. I can give you my heart, my soul and all of me.'

I mostly respond to his passionate declarations with 'OK then' or 'how sweet'. My lack of ardour doesn't seem to deter him.

I do, however, ask my beau what it was that first drew me to him on Facebook. 'Your sparkling blue eyes my love.' **My eyes are dark brown, but who cares about such trifling detail when two people are destined to be together?**

David is full of plans about our future. We are going to live together in a huge house in London with 'a view of the sea' (**only with a very powerful telescope, Darling**).

In a new twist, at the end of week two, he tells me about Larry, his 15-year-old son, and emails me a picture of my future stepson. Clearly, I'm meant to be charmed by the photo — which a bit of research reveals shows a child who looks eight years old posting a letter to Santa. Larry is remarkably small for his age.

He's a boarder at the elite Santa Catalina School in Monterey, California. The school does exist — **but it's a girls' school**.

Over the next few days, Larry messages me — sometimes even at 4am his time, which triggers my maternal concern — to tell me about his day.

But then he drops the bombshell that he is being bullied because he doesn't have a mobile phone or iPad. His father can't send him money because he can't access his bank account in Afghanistan. I know what's coming but I fend it off at the pass by saying I am going to ring the school.

'I won't stand by while any son of mine is being bullied!' I message. Suddenly, Larry decides the phone and iPad don't matter after all and I shouldn't bother his teacher.

Having failed to con me into buying the electronics, it's time for David to step in with the big guns.

Three-and-a-half weeks in, he messages me to say that the UN has finally agreed to let him retire. But there's a catch. The rotters are insisting he completes a final highly dangerous rescue mission.

Quite who a brain surgeon with no combat training is meant to be rescuing is unclear. But, as a sweetener, the UN has given him \$1million severance pay. In cash. David wants to send the money to me for safekeeping.

I'm instructed to email a courier company with the highly improbable email address of: 'savingscompany676@gmail.com' with my postal address.

I email from a fake account, giving a fake address and instantly get a reply from someone called Albert Johnson, claiming to be a diplomat. Albert wants me to send £5,700 (\$8,707) in 'taxes and fees,' so that they can then courier me the million dollars.

I immediately message my fiancé and say I'm confused and can't possibly send such a large sum when we have never so much as spoken. I tell him I simply must see the face and hear the voice of my beloved. David sends a three-second long video of him blowing me a kiss, lifted straight from the Instagram account of Dr Gomes (the man whose identity he has stolen.) Nice try.

I give my fiancé the silent treatment. 'I see that you don't love me any more, my heart is broken,' he messages in desperation.

When I don't respond he unleashes a forlorn Larry on me.

'Mom, you promised to always make me happy, why are you making me sad?' he pleads. Weirdly, I feel guilty for upsetting my fake stepson.

Finally, reluctantly, David agrees to a phone call. I can hear why he resisted for so long. Suddenly, a man with an accent that isn't American, is on the end of the phone and I can hear children playing in the background. It's so hopeless I almost feel sorry for him.

Over the next few days, David bombards me with messages. He claims his life is in danger but until I pay up he can't leave the camp. That doesn't work so he sends endless saccharine declarations of love and pictures of huge red hearts. After three days of silence from me, he quits and our month-long, giddy romance is over.

As a cynical journalist, I saw the scam coming a mile off. But I can't help but feel sorry for the thousands of women who fall prey to such scams and lose their life savings. Action Fraud receives an average of 700 complaints a month but, as many victims are too ashamed to come forward, the actual number will be far higher.

Over time, even I began to see how a vulnerable or lonely person, who'd never heard of **catfishing**, could get drawn in.

The scammers usually work in large, organised gangs, meaning you rarely go an hour without some form of contact.

The criminals then split the profits. I wonder what has happened to my 'David', who has probably been scolded by the boss for not landing his fish.

Tracking the gangs down and bringing them to justice is rare — but not unheard of. In December 2020, Operation Casanova resulted in 19 suspects (from Italy and Nigeria) being arrested in Turin. They'd conned thousands of women in 22 countries (including the UK) with one victim having handed over more than £1million.

And what of the man in the pictures — Dr Fernando Gomes whose image has been used thousands of times by scammers trying to con women all over the world?

I track him down to his office in Sao Paulo. The exasperated father of four tells me: 'I first heard about people using my image and even my name, creating fake profiles and deceiving women, about three years ago. I know from the messages I get that many have been tricked into handing over money.

'It's very upsetting. Despite being well known in Brazil, I still need more people to know about this so we can end this deception.'

As for David and me — four days later he messages: 'Honey, without trust we have nothing. Sweetheart, send the money.' Finally, I do what every woman should do when approached by strangers on the internet. Block and delete.

A funny story but with a serious message. Please, please be careful out there.

Just read the Mail On Line another woman was swindled out of nearly £500 000.00 in a near identical scam as above

**I was happily watching
the Bermuda
Philharmonic
Orchestra, when the
guy on triangle
disappeared**

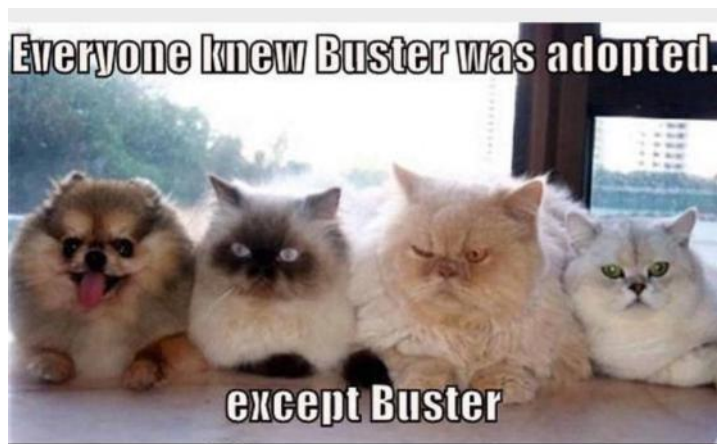
A world where a baby elephant has
a fluffy ostrich as a pillow is my
kinda world.



**WHEN THE CAT GETS
IN TROUBLE FOR
SOMETHING YOU DID.**



Everyone knew Buster was adopted.



except Buster



BREAKING NEWS : Yorkshire main shipping route of pork pies is blocked !!

Fred Slathwaite , Captain of the vessel, said " One minute we were fine , then a gust of wind caught us !!"

"Yorkshire is expected to loose as much as £3.45 a day until the carnage can be cleared , which could potentially take weeks to clear " a spokesman said.



Last year I replaced all the windows in my house with those expensive, double-pane, energy-efficient kind. Today, I got a call from Home Depot who installed them. The man complained that the work had been completed a year ago, and I still hadn't paid for them.

HHHelloo.....just because I'm blonde doesn't mean that I am automatically stupid. So, I told him just what his fast-talking sales guy had told me last year... that these windows would pay for themselves in a year.

Hellooooo, it's been a year, so they're paid for, I told him. There was only silence at the other end of the line, so I finally hung up. He never called back. I bet he felt like an idiot!!!



Electric cars will be everywhere in 2030!

So what happened to these from 1917??

Petroleum that's what