

CYRANO INC.

MAY-JUNE 2020

Today I am 46, nice looking, I own my own home and drive a nice car. I like sports and movies and Italian food. I'm divorced (and that's a long story but I promise not to talk about it all the time) with 2 kids, and I'm ready to meet my soulmate and hope that she likes watching sports too. I am also 31 and I spend most of my free time at the gym, but I'd like to meet someone cute who doesn't want to be too serious right away. I'm also 82 and horny.

Words, these are just words. The man behind them could be shallow, coarse or maybe just not able to express himself very well when he communicates with a lady. Or maybe he isn't. Maybe he has a way of saying things, can spin a phrase or make a statement sound like a compliment, or sound so casual, the conversational equivalent of sitting in an Adirondack chair in the sun with a cold beer in your hand. That is who I strive to be. That is how I have to be today for the 46year-old, and the 31year-old and 82year-old and anyone else willing to pay me for my words.

Welcome to Cyrano Inc.

It's a business that I wouldn't have thought of before the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, I thought of it on one of my many neighbourhood walks, trying to break the monotony of isolating at home. It is a business that probably wasn't needed before the lockdown. Maybe if it would have petered out if we had just one wave of the virus but by the third wave I had more and more clients lining up. Men looking to meet a partner through on-line dating, but because of the pandemic they were looking at weeks, maybe months of on-line chatting before ever hoping to meet face to face. Men that didn't think they could write that often, that much, that well that their connections / matches / winks would remain interested. So, they turned to me. This is where Cyrano Inc. comes in. I write for them, pretending to be them, creating the conversation that will lead to love. Or lust, whatever they prefer. But payment is up front, there are no guarantees! What happens after I put my proverbial pen down is not my doing.

There is a cost, this is a business. \$100 up front for the research, so I know who you are and can get in your skin and sound like you. If these communications lead somewhere it would do no good to sound totally different. Then it is an additional \$25 for each response that is longer than one sentence. The hope is that it will be many responses if things go well. There is a contract signed between me and each of my clients. The business has done better than I could have imagined. There have been lots of long conversations, every exchange garnering me \$25 and the satisfaction that I am stepping someone closer to a meaningful relationship. I am reminded of a line from the James Earl Jones character in the movie *Field of Dreams*: And they'll pass over the money without even thinking about it, for it is money they have and peace they lack. Peace ... love ... same diff.

Here is my on-line ad: Tongue-tied Romeo? You've seen someone on-line and are having trouble finding the right words? Cyrano can help you and that conversation that you want to have. Kick the chat up a notch or 11.

It's not that everything I write is gold, it's not! But I try. And having met my wife through on-line dating qualifies me, doesn't it? And it's not as though every other man needs this service. Most people are able to converse on-line just fine. But there is a small percentage that struggles to find the right word, or any word at all, and for them I can help. A small percentage of the thousands in the city that are using on-line dating is still lots of potential clients.

I have Bruce to thank for getting it going. Bruce is a very nice guy, but his work is his life and you could bet him everything he owns that he can't go 60 seconds without talking about it and you'd own it all several times over. He had sent quite a few messages to women of the on-line dating sites he was trying but he wasn't getting past the first or, occasionally, second message. I read them and they were primarily focussed on his work and not on the women he claimed to be interested in meeting. When I mentioned what I would have written instead, he asked me to do it. From that I developed an approach that I refer to as "CITA", and it is what I follow in every on-line message I write.

C: start with one or two compliments from something you have noticed in her profile or pictures

I: identify with one or two things about her and how she has described herself

T: tell one or two things about yourself that you think *she* would find interesting

A: ask one or two things that you think she might like to tell you about

Compliment, identify, tell and ask. Then wait for a response. After sending messages to a few women, and dealing with the flurry of responses, Bruce kept going on his own, a convert to CITA and a man suddenly with romantic options. The last he told me, two of his connections had led to face-to-face meetings and now he and one of those gals were busily disregarding the six feet of physical distancing suggested by our health officials.

His neighbour Tyler employed my services as well, but his actions led me to add a clause to my agreement: no editing of the responses without running it past me first. Tyler didn't so much edit as he added a few inches to the response.

After I explained CITA (Tyler's eyes glazed over), and wrote a response to a woman that Tyler said he had fallen in love with at first sight (she's hot man!), and he read it (wow, I never knew I could talk that much), he agreed to send it a little later. I texted him the next day to see if he had heard back from his one true love.

Tyler: She liked what u said.

Me: Good. What's next?

Tyler: Nothing. She told me to fuck off.

Me: What?! You said she liked it.

Tyler: Ya. She said she couldn't believe I could say such nice things then send her a dick pic.

Me: You sent her a picture?

Tyler: 👍

Me: Of your ...

Tyler: Sure.

Me: On the very first email?

Tyler: Too soon?

Oh Tyler. He was on his own after that.

My short contract was thus made a tad longer, restricting responses to words AND pictures I had approved. Descriptions of body parts below the shoulders was not part of the service. The contract also describes the services I provide and the payment structure, and includes a waiver which absolves me of any responsibility for situations which may transpire over the course of time such as pregnancy, marriage, heartbreak, infection (venereal or worse in this day and age ... viral!), or other potential dangers awaiting Romeo and/or Juliet.

Most often I am helping the guy who is just having trouble getting started. He has made an attempt or two but isn't having any success. This is a common exchange that I would have with a new client:

Me: Okay, what did you say in your message to so-and-so?

Client: Hey

Me: Okay, after that?

Client: Maybe what's up, whatcha doing. What series are you streaming this week? I can't think of anything else. I send that and see if they respond.

Me: Do they?

Client: No. Well, a couple of times, but I get nervous or run out of things to say so I don't answer. It just ends there. *(IMPORTANT PANDEMIC NOTE: this client and others like him are often good-looking fellas. Prior to COVID-19 they could rely on their good looks to get them that first face-to-face meeting, they didn't expect long back-and-forth conversations that would go on for weeks or more before a potential partner was willing to venture outside the safety of their homes and possibly breathe the same air as them)*

Me: Fair enough. I think I can help. I can answer with what I think you should say. *(I explain CITA)*

Client: That will make me sound good?

Me: I hope so. But not better. I want to sound like you. Not smarter, not funnier, just you. You are a good guy, I'll try to let that out, then you can take over.

Client: I'll take over? *(Sounding worried already)*

Me: Sure, but not right away. Let's nudge this along slowly.

And we do. Sometimes it takes lots of messages for my client to gain the confidence to write his own, sometimes they take over almost right away. Once the conversation with a particular woman becomes

familiar, my guy is able to take over, is often keen to be sending his own messages. In either case I am compensated for my time and words and my clients are happy. The thank-yous are sincere.

There are no testimonials, however, in my advertising. It would be nice to see the many happy couples I helped to kick-start, here is what Jack and Diane have to say ... except that Jack would never, should never, admit to Diane that it wasn't him who initially liked her hair parted the way she did on that picture on the boat, or asked her who her favourite sibling from her big family was and why, or talked about their shared love of Jack terriers. It's best that Diane stays in love with the Jack she has, start to finish.

So back to work ... I have a message to send to my 46-year-old client who thinks Newbeginnings2020 is cute.

Hi "Newbeginnings2020". I wanted to send you a message to let you know how great your kitchen looks, the one in the picture where you are holding a glass of wine. Your smile is the perfect accompaniment! Did you have a hand in designing the kitchen or buy it that way? And you play pickle ball! I do too. I get out to the courts off Main St as often as I can now that the city is letting us do that sort of thing again. Where do you play? Would I be able to handle your serve? I hope to play more, this lockdown has had me cooking my favourite Italian recipes and I need to stay in shape! Looking forward to hearing from you.

Yup. I think he will like that. I hope she responds to him.

Now on to the message for my 82-year-old client. He tells me that all he really needs to say is that all of his equipment works, which worries me because that sounds like Tyler all grown up! But he's paying me to say more than that, so here goes:

Hello "Aged Like Fine Wine" ...