

In desperation, about a week before expiration of my membership of the dating website, I inserted in my profile a sentence I hoped would discourage the ‘baby-babblers,’ as I termed them. ‘My chief ambition,’ I stated ‘is sex with a mythological sea-creature.’

This remark created quite a stir, with remarks like ‘WTF?!’ and ‘LOL!’ or scarcely more literate sentences such as ‘are you kidding?’, or, worse, ‘are you shitting me?’ I ignored such gauche queries.

But I did get a serious display of interest from ‘Wavefoam.’ ‘I love the sea,’ she said. ‘It’s my element. If you are The One, I can help with your ambition.’

I promptly renewed my subscription to the website. After a few more messages we exchanged email addresses, and then, in contravention of all advice for first encounters, she asked me to meet her at her house, in Portugal Place.

Portugal Place is an address I approve of: chic inner city, close to the colleges and theatres and far removed from suburbanites and their obsession with gardens. At the gate I pressed the intercom button: ‘Wavefoam?’

‘Identify yourself’.

‘User name, Whaleroadwanderer. Mundane name, Sebastian.’

‘I am always and only Wavefoam.’

The door clicked.