

# Eat, Pray, Network

*by* Kim Conklin

That morning when she logged on, an old illusion soared across her social networking stream, cutting her like shrapnel. Softly backlit, the photo showed her as part of a matched pair playfully leaning on one another, look as much like brother and sister as a couple.

The image was startlingly unfamiliar. Looking at it, no one would guess it had been their last attempt, their last failure. No one would believe that they had never really been that way, or that the life they shared was built on mind games, manipulation and subterfuge.

No one would know that the woman in the photo no longer existed.

She looked through other albums and saw other illusions with new eyes. She hastily deleted two, then left the rest as markers of a deceased daydream.

The next morning, sunshine filled her heart. She happily recalled a conversation five months earlier with a woman she had known was only pretending to be her friend and was probably one of his lovers. She had gone along with the ruse anyway because she was weary of counting, of caring. The other woman had offered the latest bullshit bestseller advice: *In three years, you'll be happy again.*

She smiled, wishing she could tell the other woman that it hadn't taken nearly that long and to be very, very careful or one day she would no longer recognize herself in the mirror, and that in the end, a life of pretending isn't a real life.

