

## **EXCERPTS FROM:**

*The Wacky World of Womanhood: Essays on Girlhood, Dating, Motherhood and the Loss of Matching Underwear*

### **The Glasses**

**By Vicky DeCoster**

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I used to love the story “Little Red Riding Hood” when I was younger. It so happens that a line from that story saved my life. I was in second grade.

I became blind, much to my dismay, at a rather young age. The words and numbers on the blackboard started to become blurry. My teacher, Mrs. Coach, suggested that I make an appointment with the eye doctor. Mrs. Coach was notorious for hitting students who disobeyed her over the head with a yardstick, so I decided to listen to her advice.

Before I knew it, I was being fitted for a pair of new eyeglasses. The doctor tried to soothe my worries by assuring me that my vision would appear “brighter” and “clearer” after I put on my new glasses. I may have been blind, but I wasn’t stupid. I tried on several styles, but there was only one pair I did not like. As a matter of fact, I hated them. Those were the glasses my mother liked.

We purchased a pair of black, thick-framed cat glasses for me to begin wearing in a week. My mother’s reasoning for picking those thick frames was “in case I got hit in the face with a basketball, the frames would be virtually unbreakable!” I considered climbing onto the roof of the eyeglass store, but unfortunately, I couldn’t see well enough to get to the roof of the building without my glasses. I was doomed.

One week later, I slipped on my new frames. I cried. My mother smiled. “They’re beautiful!” she exclaimed. “They’re the best I’ve ever seen!” I retorted angrily. As I left the eyeglass store, I knew my life was over. I would be the laughing stock of my second grade class.

The next morning, I awoke with a feeling of dread. I ate breakfast slowly, knowing it was my “Last Supper.” As I crossed the street to start up the last hill to school, I felt as though I was walking to my funeral. The first classmate saw me as she guarded the school patrol post. She laughed and pointed at my new glasses. “You look like a dork!” she yelled. I muttered under my breath, “I have braces,” but it didn’t make me feel any better. I knew that eventually she would have straight teeth and what would I have? My blindness would just get worse. I’d probably have to use a cane by the time I reached tenth grade.

The school loomed ahead of me. I had to think of a plan ... and quick. These so-called friends of mine would eat me alive. I had to come up with some creative way to keep the teasing to a minimum. Then, I remembered the story of “Little Red Riding Hood.” The wolf was smart, and I admired him. He was sneaky, and I already knew from past experience that I could be just as sneaky. The time I reached the front door of the school, I had formulated a sure-to-succeed plan.

I entered the classroom to bouts of hysterical laughter from my classmates. Mrs. Coach tried to calm the class down, but her efforts at threatening with the yardstick were futile. I smiled and nodded to each student as they pointed and giggled. I walked to my seat and sat down. “First step completed,” I proudly said to myself. The worst was over.

During recess, a boy from my class walked up to me. “Nice glasses,” he said sarcastically. Now was the time for me to strike back. I slid the glasses down on my nose and said, “The better to see with, my dearie.” The boy was speechless. I grinned and walked away. From that day forward, until the day I bought my first pair of contacts, each person who made a sarcastic comment about my glasses received the same line in return. They were always speechless, and I was always the victor.

I went home that day and told my mother what happened. She hugged me and told me that she, too, was proud of the way I handled the situation. To this day, she loves to tell people the “eyeglass story.”

My experience taught me a great deal. First, I learned that no matter what you hear, what you believe about yourself is the most important. Second, keeping your sense of humor is a great way to protect your self-esteem. Finally, when someone says a mean line, “if you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all,” just smile and treat them as if they’re your best friend. That’s the way to win.

know what to do.

I still have that first pair of eyeglasses. They are in the top drawer of my writing desk. Every once and awhile, I pull them out and hold them in my hand. Sometimes I put them on and my kids and I laugh hysterically. Most importantly, what I realize when I hold those glasses is how strong I was in the face of an insecure moment. Those glasses helped shape me into who I am today.

**Dial-upconnection.com**  
**By Vicky DeCoster**  
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Men and women have been pointing at each other for centuries. "Look at the dark-haired guy over there in the corner," she would whisper to her friend, "He's hot!" He used to see her in the produce aisle squeezing oranges and said to his friend, "She has hot hands!" Times have changed. Now, we hook up our modems, surf until we see something we like, and point and click. One step and we have entered ...

"another world beyond that which is known to man, woman and gorillas. This is the world of creative thinking and our world is the world we call 'The Cyber Dating Zone.' There is no turning back."

Women love to shop, especially while wearing fuzzy slippers. We shop for all kinds of items on the Internet, including men who hopefully aren't wearing fuzzy slippers. Site after site offers profiles and blurry photographs of men looking for love and at least, someone to skinny dip with after dinner on a hot summer night. In order to meet a man via cyberspace, a woman creates her own profile on a dating site. An example of a well-written single woman's profile follows:

I am a: Female  
Located in: House arrest on 123 Anywhere Street  
Education: Street smart (at least until five months ago when I was arrested)  
Body type: Pear-shaped  
Eyes: Crossed  
Hair: Whatever shade L'Oreal has on sale this week  
Turn-ons: Skinny dipping and body odor  
Daily diet: Whatever you pick up for me on the way over  
Drink: Day and night  
Income: \$35 a week  
My place: Think minimalist

More details about me and who I'd like to meet: I am an emotionally unstable but funny (looking) female who happens to make some bad choices in her life. Currently under house arrest for the next six years, I have many interests that include testing my computer system on my ankle bracelet; seeing how long I can wait before washing the dirty dishes in the sink; and watching soap operas until my eyes cross (see above under "eyes"). Work is NOT the most important thing in my life ... as a matter of fact, it has absolutely no importance in my life. Honest and open communication is very important to me in a relationship, as I expect it to come from you and not me. I hope that you find eating in bed intriguing since a bed is currently the only piece of furniture I have. If you can't seem to find the time to help others in need, then please don't respond, because I have a lot of needs — including food. Intelligence is a turn-on, but don't expect me to know or understand what you're talking about, especially when it comes to mathematical equations or balancing a checkbook. I have many items on my "to do" list including (1) writing a book on how to escape from house arrest, (2) traveling to a foreign country (once I escape from house arrest), and (3) learning how to scam people using creative Internet schemes. I firmly believe that eventually I will find my ideal mate through mutual attraction and especially through my ankle bracelet. The key to my ankle bracelet.

So, there you have it. Use the above profile as an excellent example of how to showcase yourself on-line. Put on your slippers and surf for a man. Internet dating is fun, cool and especially exciting if you're under house arrest.

**Just Another Day**  
**By Vicky DeCoster**  
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Six years into motherhood, I stood in the driveway and yelled, "The ball will just have to roll down the hill!" THUMP, she

shuffle. The sound of my walking cast knocked the pavement as I headed back into the garage. Six weeks in this cast injury from overuse while running on the treadmill. That's what I get for trying to run away from home ... at home. My knee is at the top of the hill. "Our only ball in the whole world – LOST FOREVER!"

Hiss, bubble, hiss. "Oh no!" I yelled as I walked faster. "Is that the water boiling over on my stove?" THUMP, shuffle, THUMP, shuffle. Just as I made it in the kitchen to clean up the water, the doorbell rang. THUMP, shuffle, THUMP, shuffle. A 10-year old daughter stood in a large puddle on the porch. "I went potty in my socks!" she said proudly. Ring! Ring! "Does anyone know where the cordless phone is?" I yelled. I found the phone on the fifth ring, just as the cordless phone rang. Ding-dong. Ding-dong. I went to the front door – no one. I THUMP, shuffle, THUMP to the back door where the old man stood at the patio door. "Charlie threw sand in my eyes and I'm hungry!" THUMP, THUMP, THUMP. All shuffling is this time, it is the sound of my head banging against the wall. "Is it time for bed yet?" I ask to anyone who might be listening. I take a tissue and blow my nose because I'm battling my sixth cold in six weeks.

Ring! Ring! This time, I am close to the phone and make it in time. A friend is on the other end. "Is this a good time?" she asks. Ironic. I can't remember the last time I had a good time, let alone any time. Oh wait ... there was that minute of romantic love between my husband and I shared last night. We only had one nasal strip left between the two of us. We were so plugged up, I don't know if we could have smelled a scared skunk in our bedroom. As my husband placed the nasal strip on his nose, he glanced at me with a forlorn expression. Sighing, he slowly peeled off the nasal strip, taking all the dead skin from the top of his nose from the last few years. "Here you go, honey," he said as he handed the nasal strip to me. I don't think I'd ever felt so much love for him on my wedding day. "Dat iz so domantic!" I gasped in his face with sinusitis breath. With a horrified look on his face, he rolled his eyes. "Did you brush your teeth tonight?"

Kids really change your life. Before I got married, I dreamed of bathing little babies in warm water, kissing their sweet heads, and helping my cheerful, motivated children with their homework. Experienced parents told me that kids weren't always cute and sometimes they threw up on your shirt or worse, on your face. They didn't always want to do their homework and some were just downright lazy. Sometimes you didn't even want to kiss their sweet heads, because quite honestly, their heads were covered in dirt, bugs and other kids' vomit. I attributed all these comments to disgruntled parents. After all, it was obvious they gave their kids social misfits. My children would never, ever, never, ever, never, ever throw tantrums in restaurants, mouth off, or take a walk outside in front of the neighbors.

Eventually, I woke up. I think reality struck the day I carried a hysterical child under each arm to the car at the mall, as they pulled off their pants and yelled, "We don't love you anymore!" As I burned rubber and made a fast get-a-way in my practical sedan, I wondered, "Whose idea was this anyway?" Certainly not mine. Must have been that husband with the exfoliated skin. Driving home, I held a tissue as one child blew her nose, quizzed the other one on math problems, and made a grocery list. In the corporate world, they call this multi-tasking. In my world, they call it just another day.

Motherhood is a tough job. It doesn't come with a generous sign-on bonus, health insurance, and lunch meetings where you have to cut up anyone's meat. It comes with a lot of patience, love, and understanding ... and some of that you hope to give to yourself. There are many days you'd like to forget, and many you wish you could remember forever. Childbirth is a great experience; motherhood – the pain is intense; the work is hard. The reward speaks for itself.

It is quiet in the house now. They are sleeping. THUMP, shuffle, THUMP, shuffle. I slowly walk to their bedroom and look for angel wings sprouting from their little backs. Then I realize they have made Superhero capes from my Victoria's Secret lingerie.

My headache is back.