



Katie.com: My Story

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Katherine Tarbox was thirteen when she met twenty-three-year-old "Mark" in an online chat room. A top student and nationally ranked swimmer attending an elite school in an affluent Connecticut town, Katie was also a lonely and self-conscious eighth-grader who craved the attention her workaholic parents couldn't give her. Mark seemed to understand her; he told her she was smart and wonderful. When they set a date to finally meet while Katie was in Texas for a swim competition, she walked into a hotel room and discovered who--and what--her cyber soulmate really was.

In *Katie.com*, Tarbox tells her story, an eye-opening tale of one teenager's descent into the seductive world of the Internet. Tarbox's harrowing experience with her online boyfriend would affect her life for years to come and result in her becoming the first "unnamed minor" to test a federal law enacted to protect kids from online sexual predators. In an age when a new generation is growing up online, Tarbox's memoir is a cautionary tale for the Internet age.

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From Reader Review Katie.com: My Story for online ebook

george says

Katie is thirteen, lonely and exploring the internet. She goes into a teen chatroom on AOL and starts conversing with Mark, a 23-year-old man. Mark quickly turns into her best friend and confidant. She tells him everything, trusts him immensely and even falls in love with him. After six months of conversations, she goes to a national swimming meet in Texas and Mark invites himself along so that they can meet in person. She is disappointed to find that he is short, unattractive and much, much older than she thought. But the story only begins there as she goes on to press charges and have him convicted under the Communications Decency Act.

Ugh. I didn't hate it, but I certainly didn't like it very much. Sorry to say, since this is a memoir, but I really didn't like Katie very much at all. I had a hard time garnering sympathy for her when she's spoiled and rich and keeps going on and on about her J. Crew clothes and her Godiva chocolates and her rich community with endless resources. Not that what happened to her wasn't bad--it definitely was. But instead of feeling overwhelmingly bad for her, it just reminded me of the young girls who don't have the resources and determination her family does to bring pedophiles to justice. She was molested, and yes that's horrible, but there are so many unnamed others who have been raped and kidnapped and even killed by men they meet on the internet. It is a good look at how any child can be taken advantage of, though.

Becca Higgins says

This book is good I liked how she never thought it was wrong to talk to and meet up with an older man.

tee says

If this can get published then I sure as hell have a chance.

Fernanda says

I choose "A girls life online" because I wanted to read something similar to the book "Dear Jo"

A girls life online is a book about internet safety.

Kate is a 13 year old girl who is from Connecticut and whose favorite best hobby she is good at is swimming.

The problem of the story is that Kate sets up a date to meet up with Mark a 23 year old (that's what Kate thinks) later in the book she figures out he is an old man of 42 years old. Kate was going to go to a meet she had for her swimming practice and stay at a hotel with her team mates and some parents of the kids and her mom. During the stay at the hotel Mark was going to be there because he promised Kate he was gonna stay there and meet her in person. Kate's relationship with Mark was close, she really trusted him. She could always talk to him and he would understand her. Another problem is that Kate during the night goes to Mark's room number and meets him, once she sees him - she was speechless! He seemed more fake than she expected his shoes all torn clothes all gross. (Mark had told Kate from the beginning he was rich--turns out he wasn't.) The book at the end is solved by Mark going to jail because he had molested Kate when she went to see him in his

room.

I did like these book because i like cases like those and i like when a book keeps me reading because you want to know what is happening. But i also didnt like it because Mark was a lair and hurted kids before kate.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

This is another book that should be read by all teenage girls who frequent the internet.

Sabrina Rutter says

There were a few contradictions, but I'm under the impression more happened in the hotel room than she is telling in this book, so that could be the cause.

When she got caught in the guy's room at the hotel her mother should have told the coaches that this is a private matter and not to bring it up with the team. I feel that the way her parents handled it was wrong.

The book kept my interest for the most part and I definantly think it would be a good idea to have teens read this. It will show them that the people they meet on the internet may not be who they say they are.

victoriarose14 says

Katie.com by Katherine Tarbox is a non-fiction memoir. The main character in the book is Katie Tarbox, who narrates the book. Katie is a blond eighth grade girl who lives in New Canaan, Connecticut. She wants to find someone that will understand her feelings after her best friend left her. The other main character is Mark. Mark is a young man that is understanding and positive. Katie slowly fell in love with him. To Katie, Mark was the only one who understood her feelings. It all started after Katie's sister came home from college and brought her laptop along. Her laptop was fully equipped with America Online, a program on the computer that is filled with chat rooms to talk to people all across the country.

When Mark and Katie first meet online, Katie tells him all about herself truthfully. When she asks Mark about himself, he distracts her and doesn't reveal much. As the story goes on, they get closer and closer. Eventually, Katie falls in love with Mark, and they begin to send pictures of themselves to each other. When Mark tells Katie he finally wants to meet her in person, Katie becomes hesitant. She tells Mark that she can't because her parents don't know about their relationship. Mark explains to Katie that if she really loved him, she would fly out to meet him. Katie agrees, and says that she'd meet him at a hotel in Texas where she had a swim competition.

The turning point in the book is when Katie actually meets Mark. He is a lot older than he said he was. During their meet, Mark touches Katie in inappropriate places, making Katie uncomfortable. Katie's mother came knocking on the door, and the police came in and arrested Mark. Later that night, the police questioned Katie about her relationship with Mark, and there seemed to be a lot of false information about Mark, like that his name was actually Frank.

One thing I disliked about this book was the ending. After Katie actually met Mark and found out who he really was, the book was boring. It told about her life after Mark, and how she recovered from the pain while gaining her parent's trust back. It was hard to read without getting tired. Although I did not like the ending, I did like the suspense leading up to when they met. It was interesting to hear how Katie felt about this experience. She says how she felt scared, and how even though Mark hurt her, she still loved him. I would recommend this book to someone because it is very interesting to see how Mark persuaded Katie to do what

he wanted and how Katie shows her emotions throughout the book. I would recommend this book to a reader who likes drama, real-life stories, or someone who thinks they can relate to Katie's situation. This book changed the way I look at chatting online.

Madison Calhoun says

Rating nonfiction books and memoirs is always difficult for me, because usually someone is writing a memoir because they have an important story to tell-- not necessarily because they are a great writer. I feel bad taking off stars, because sometimes the point of a nonfiction book is to get a message across, rather than for it to be the most beautiful thing ever written. *A Girl's Life Online* is a short little piece detailing a 13 year old girl's online relationship with a 41 year old man (who claimed to be 23), which lead to a sexual assault when they later met in person. This was the first federal case to be brought up against an online predator, so while we hear about these things often today, it was big news at the time. Katie's story is important to tell. Parents and young teenagers should definitely be aware that these dangers exist. I enjoyed the book, but at the same time, had a few issues with it.

Katie's story is frightening, and what happened to her was terrible. The writing, for a young adult, is pretty decent. One of my biggest issues with the book was the flow. Too much time was spent on weird details that didn't apply to the story-- such as the expensive clothes Katie wore to how she got ready in the morning, etc. She also kept emphasizing how much money she (and everyone else in her town) had, which distanced her from me a bit. It also made her hard to sympathize with. Amongst all the random filler sections, I felt like she didn't go into enough detail about her relationship with Mark/Frank. She told us about her feelings, but didn't show the development enough through their conversations. It felt a little odd that they went from small talk to wanting to meet in person so quickly. As controlling as Katie's parents and her whole hometown seemed to be, I can't help but wonder if this book was censored a bit, causing these issues.

There were a few weird things that didn't line up, as well. For instance, Katie gives a speech at the very end, which mentions that Mark/Frank threatened her not to tell anyone about the sexual assault. However, she never wrote that a single time in the book prior, which made it confusing. She would also contradict herself on minor things (she'd say she had no friends, but then introduce two girls she was supposedly close to). It made the book seem as if it were either rushed and sloppy or as if she was trying to cover something up.

Finally, Katie just made a few comments in the book that were unnecessary. She mentions how it is inappropriate for anyone over the age of 25 to watch pornography, which shouldn't really be any of her concern (as long as they're doing it legally, it doesn't affect her). And she goes on and on about how girls face online predators and societal pressures, but leaves out the fact that this can happen to guys, too. I read a few articles about the case after finishing the book, and it sounds like Frank Kufrovich targeted young boys, as well as girls, so it seems odd that she would only mention girls. Maybe I'm just nitpicking at this point.

It may sound as if I'm just complaining about this. It's not a bad book, really. Katie's story is powerful, and I definitely believe everyone should be aware of this danger. She does a great job of showing how horrific society can be, to the point that grown adults can place blame for sexual assault on the victims themselves (even if they are only teenagers). If you're interested in this book, it wouldn't hurt to give it a go. It's short and quick to get through. At the same time, though, I feel like a similarly powerful message could be sent through a fiction book, where the final product is a little more polished.

3/5 stars, but I commend the author for her courage to speak about such a difficult topic.

Natalya Peterson says

3.5/5

I rated this book 3.5 out of 5 stars, but it's definitely on the lower side. This non-fiction memoir was written by 18-year old Katherine Tarbox, telling her story of her online sexual predator when she was thirteen and how that affected the rest of her life. Throughout the book I was furiously frustrated with Katie, her thoughts and feelings throughout the whole ordeal, disgusted by the whole situation, and dreading the outcome. But at the same time, hearing her perspective and events before, I understood what led to that online deception being so easy. She just felt alone and found solace in this perfect idea of a friend, and he eventually became more than that. The ending however was completely contradictory and she stated a lot of things that came out of nowhere! I won't spoil it, but the ending kind of spoiled the book for me. The writing itself was not the best, but it was easy to follow. Reading this book and not being much older than Katie when this happened to her, it's scary. And with the amount of today's technology, children are being introduced into the online world and its potential danger at a much younger age. At the end of the book Tarbox says, "Too many girls seem willing to believe that their worth is determined by other people" (Tarbox 189). I wholeheartedly disagree with this statement, only because it's not just girls, it's everyone born into this society of the "perfect image." For these reasons and more I rated this book 3.5 out of five stars.

Eva Leger says

I agree with some of the other reviewers on a couple things. The book is decently written- it's not great but definitely not bad either. For a 17-year-old first time writer it's probably more than okay actually.

I feel like her mother is a first class bitch. From the first couple pages I got that impression and I held it throughout the book. The only real time I felt, given everything in the book is true and represented accurately, that her mother actually gave a damn was later on in the court case. That's it. It seemed like everything was more for her than her daughter. It was obvious, from some of the books parts, that there was love there, but there is something off with that relationship.

I guess I just have trouble with the whole thing- it had a slight ring of falsehood to it. Maybe not that the entire thing was false but I think the author may have switched a few things to shed the light in her favor. Most people probably would but hey, that's not the truth in that case.

I'm not accusing her of lying, I'm stating my feelings while reading by the way.

She also was contradictory all throughout the book. You'd read one paragraph and she'd tell you she felt this man stole years from her life and that he should pay. Then she'd say she didn't feel he was a criminal in any way. What the hell should he pay for if he's not a criminal?

She thought it ridiculous that the police officer told her she was lucky to be alive. (This was written as if she feels this way NOW, not just THEN.) Because "Mark", who had lied to her about everything personal under the sun, didn't give her reason to think he was capable of that. I guess hiding all of his personal info and making up lies in their place isn't a huge hint for her.

"...But if you're over 25, or married, or you really need it, there's something wrong." This is talking about viewing porn. Um, I'm not exactly an expert on the subject and happen to have never actually owned more than a Playboy mag but I take serious issue with this statement. Because her pervert was found with porn, the one who ISN'T a criminal by the way, everyone who looks at porn or uses porn, is strange and gross and disgusting. It's almost like she never matured from 13 or something.

"...I felt upset when he answered no to the judge's question as to whether he had a criminal history." Hey Katherine Tarbox- HE DIDN'T! This is a COURTROOM- in the eyes of the LAW anything he wasn't convicted of DOESN'T COUNT. "...Why can't we count those?"...In reference to crimes he may or may not have committed. (Again, this is a 17-year-old writing this. An almost-adult here.)

She gives a little of an essay she did in school at the end of the book in which she states that "the pedophile who went "after me" threatened to hurt me and my family." "I went almost a week without notifying my

parents or any authorities." What? What is this from? The authorities were called at the exact time of the incidence in the hotel room.....at least from what I read. I never read a thing about any threats. In fact, I read just the opposite- that "Mark" was calling to talk and offer money for their favorite charity. Did he do that in between threats? Was this left out of the book on purpose? Notification would have been nice so it didn't seem like I was reading about something other than what I had just read about. I didn't get it. I still don't. Oh, here's a good one- "Girls who have goals, real connections to family and friends, and a sense that a world of opportunity awaits them see to be inoculated against this danger." DID I JUST READ THAT RIGHT????? She had ALL of those things and MORE! NO ONE is INOCULATED from this danger! It's like she sat down and wanted to come up with a certain sentence and didn't really give a shit if it sounded decent or not. UGH.....

I'm not pleased at all. After going through all of this again and thinking about it.....I took a star away.

Laura says

This book wants to shock you, to horrify you, perhaps even to scare you. Unfortunately, in this day and age, Katie's story is common, rather than shocking. Any parent who doesn't believe that their 13-year-old daughter may be preyed upon online is living in an amazing state of denial. Katie's story is from quite a few years ago, though, so her story was breaking news then, a fact which becomes more and more obvious as the story progresses.

It is easy to see how profoundly and deeply this experience affected Katie, though I think a large percentage of that has to do with her friends' and family's responses. As horrible as her experience with "Mark" was, I find her parents' reactions almost as bad. This book definitely tells parents what NOT to do when faced with this situation.

The book did not shock me, unfortunately, though I wish we lived in a world in which behaviour like this WOULD be shocking. Katie was very, very lucky to have escaped as children are abducted and killed every year by online pedophiles. Any parent who, inexplicably, is not monitoring their child's internet use should definitely read this book. Also recommended for young people as a wake-up call.

Becca says

It wasn't the style of the book or anything that decreased its stars. It was how it made me feel. I've always tried to deny the fact that real pedofiles, rapists, and cyberstalkers are out there. This book scared me a little.

P.S: I hated how Katie went on and on about how she still loved "Mark" even after he molested her. Um, HELLO?! (But I was glad that in the end she could finally distinguish between the fake Mark and the real Frank.)

Benin says

I had many problems with this book: for one, Katie's parents and the town of New Canaan seem hopelessly stuck in some sort of Stepford Wives type (non) reality. It is no wonder Katie eventually needs a mood stabilizer when the trial is over and she transfers to a boarding school: HER PARENTS!!!! The fact that she was not seen as a victim of a sex offender until near the end of the trial (almost two years later) seemed really shameful. Katie was naive and to equate being a good student and star athlete with being aware of the predatory ways of men at the age of 13, is not realistic or fair. Even more poignant, Katie actually blamed herself and was very confused about her feelings toward "Mark" (real name Frank). This is a classic example of the emotional damage sex offenders inflict on their victims and often shame them into silence. Again, Katie's parents played right into that with their judgmental attitude and hostile behavior.

This book ultimately feels like it was written by a young woman still coming to terms with an event that altered- at least for a few years- her perception of herself and those around her. Katie.com is a cautionary tale even with today's media-savvy teenager who are all too often bullied, lured and tricked on the Internet.

Pamela says

An amazing first-person account of a young girl's seduction by an Internet predator and pedophile in the early days of AOL and its chat rooms. The author was 13 when she met "Mark" in AOL chat, she was 14 when she was molested, and 17 when she wrote the book. While the Internet has evolved considerably from the late 1990s, the same safety issues remain and, if anything, have been multiplied by a factor of 100.

And to be sure, this book is about more than just the Internet. Running through it all is the story of parents in a wealthy suburb of NYC raising a teenage girl and managing demanding careers, and the story of a girl in her early teens, grappling with all the questions and insecurities that come with beginning the transition from young girl to young woman.

Interestingly, I came to this book because I now work with the author, a senior editor on a real estate magazine; and her work on the this book was listed on her resume. I've respected her writing and good work from the day we hired her, but I now have a newfound respect and regard for her as a person -- her courage, her integrity, her inner strength and her all around pluck.

Julia says

As much as I want to say I have enjoyed "A girl's life online", I didn't. Unfortunately, most of the book did not hold my interest. For one thing, the introduction dragged on and on, it took about 10 pages to describe how Katy gets ready for the day and three more on what she does before school and why. Personally, I don't really care about how a girl gets ready in the morning and what she does during her day. Another thing that I didn't like was that between the beginning and the middle of the story just got too tedious for me. It talked about her relationship with her older sister and friends then comparing them to the stranger she meets online. The only thing that I liked about the book was the ending; I thought that the author played it out very nicely. It wasn't exaggerating or going too fast, it played out very nicely. I thought one of the best parts in the book when Katy was trying to get her life back on track. I wish the whole book could have mainly reflected on Katy like it did in the end, because that is what people could relate to.
