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cybersex addiction

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SYNOPSIS

A cautionary tale of the internet's profound effect on human sexuality. Each month a quarter of a million North Americans make sexual contact with each other without ever having met eyes, without ever having said a simple hello. The internet has actually removed touch, removed human contact from sex. Cybersex addicts are messengers with a communiqué for all of us about technology's ability to accelerate our alienation from each other.

In that most intimate of human interactions, sexual encounters, the boundaries no longer exist between computer and human. O.com is the story of real people whose virtual worlds became more compelling, more 'real', than the outside world.

Nicole is a 35-year-old woman who shares custody of her 12-year-old son. Tragic turns in her life—the death of her father and job layoff due to downsizing—lead her to seek entertainment in an adult chat room. Her real life quickly begins to pale as she spends more and more hours each day seeking intimacy and self-assurance in cyberworld. She has been a year in cyberworld, is now fluent in its language. And because cyber life is 24/7, Nicole finds it hard to connect with the outside world... she says there's a "time difference".

A highly-regarded lawyer, Allan earned a reputation for integrity, for really caring for his clients. He manages to keep an obsession with pornography somewhat in check... until, in 1999, his office connects to the internet. One day he goes on-line for some business and decides to check out a sex-site, and

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he becomes aroused. He locks his office door, feeling that he owes himself a “break”, and masturbates with the erotic pictures on his computer. He becomes obsessed with orgasms on line. The ability to act out hidden or repressed sexual fantasies make him hunger for cybersex in ways he didn’t hunger for real-life sex. He begins to live almost wholly within his secret virtual world... becomes unable to work anymore, and checks himself into a mental institution..

Nicole and Allen are new addicts, part of a growing high-risk group for cybersex addiction which includes housewives, salesman, lawyers—no one is immune. A huge online survey of internet users revealed that more than 8 million North Americans pursue sex online for at least 11 hours a week. Cybersex is a brand new drug, arguably more dangerous than crack cocaine. But this drug comes in such a familiar box that even as access to it expands exponentially along with the internet, we’re only beginning to look at its profound effects on sexuality in North America and around the world.