She pretended to be a male model named Jamison!

caught on catfish! *Sunny (right) thought she was in an online relationship with a super-cute guy. The truth: She'd been talking to Chelsea (left) the entire time.*

is everyone faking it online?

You want to be seen at your best—and through the filter of social media, it's easy to convince people of *anything*. But could lying online lead to damage IRL? **by devin tomb**

Imagine if all your friends got to experience something *amazing*, and you had to watch from the sidelines. That's how Kelly, 16, felt at the beginning of her freshman year, when everyone in her circle was jumping into relationships—except for her. "All my friends were changing their statuses from 'single,' and I felt so left out," she says. An easy fix, Kelly realized, was to *invent* her perfect boyfriend online: He had blond hair and green eyes and was the captain of the football team. (He was also conveniently located in another state.) She'd send cheery updates after their dates ("Had the best time with the BF tonight!"), bummed-out posts during an argument ("This sucks, we're fighting now…"), and one time, when her parents gave her a bracelet, she posted a picture of it and said it was from him. The fake-romantic gesture got her 65 "likes" on Facebook.

All those thumbs up fueled her desire to do whatever it took to keep the attention going. "It was thrilling at first," says Kelly. "I was popular, which is exactly what you want."

GETTING HOOKED

Cute boyfriends aren't the only thing girls are fibbing about to make it look as if they have it all. Mackenzie, 16, had total FOMO every Friday when her news feed filled up with everyone's awesome-sounding plans . . . which she wasn't invited to. So she decided to fake-post about a few parties, and poof! Instant social stardom. "I wanted people to think I was going out too, when really, I was at home by myself," she says. "If people see it online, they think it's true."

70% of girls admit that they've lied about their life online. SOURCE: SEVENTEEN.COM POLL

SEVENTEEN.COM Find out how to keep it real online with tips from Nev of MTV's *Catfish* at seventeen.com/catfish.

INSTASHAM IF YOU CAN'T MAKE IT, FAKE IT

picture "perfect" *The new site instasham.me was created to help users upload fake party pics and more.*

Jazmine, 21, who has created fake dating profiles to talk to guys in a bolder way, explains it this way: "Lying online is an easy way to get what you want, whether it's acceptance or popularity. You're in control, and nobody can tell the difference between what's real and what's not." That might be the case *at first,* but pretending to be something you're not inevitably leads to a crash-and-burn situation. It's just too impossible to *constantly* have to fake it.

Chelsea Browning, an 18-year-old from Alabama, was featured on *Catfish: The TV Show* for taking a long-term lie to the extreme. She created a fake Facebook account for a model named Jamison and used it for months to flirt with Sunny, a college student living in Arkansas. "We had a very strong connection," says Chelsea. "We talked a few times a day—it was comforting."

OUT OF CONTROL

Nev Schulman, who hosts *Catfish,* warns that even though making stuff up online can make the liar feel good, it's important to remember that the person being deceived has emotions, too. "These are not just online profiles—there are real people behind them," he says.

Did they get hitched just for publicity?!?

faux-mance? *Even though Kimye is in full-force, Kim's ex-hubby Kris Humphries still won't sign the divorce papers until she admits their 72-day marriage was a total sham.*

1 IN 10 teens has created a duplicate or fake online profile. SOURCE: McAFEE'S 2012 TEEN INTERNET BEHAVIOR STUDY.

game over *Manti Te'o was the star of the Notre Dame football team, but when his online GF turned out to be a fake, people wondered if he was the victim . . . or had been behind the deception all along.*

After eight months, that comforting feeling Chelsea once had turned into guilt about lying to Sunny.

But when she finally fessed up on TV, "I was forced to be honest," she says. "It felt like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders."

Kelly's story about her "boyfriend" eventually unraveled too. After a few months, her friends became skeptical of her supposedly perfect relationship and started asking some real-life questions. "I'd post about a date, and people would ask me about it at school the next day," Kelly says. "It got to a point where I couldn't stop making things up about our 'relationship.' I would stay awake at night thinking to myself, Everyone is going to *hate* me if they find out."

After an intervention by her friends, Kelly confessed that she'd been lying. She now says it's better not to post at all than to compete on Facebook. "People are posting constantly and it's hard if you don't have anything to say, but lying just leads to *major* anxiety." It's not always easy to come clean—especially when your fake life makes you feel better about your *real* worries, like not having a BF or being invited to the best parties. But when Mackenzie started panicking that her friends would call her out, she knew she had to stop the faux party posts . . . or risk losing her BFFs' trust. "In real life, *nobody* wants to be friends with a liar."

> **"Lying online is an easy way to get what you want."**

catfish THE TV SHOW

WIN! 10 winners will receive the first season of MTV's Catfish on DVD. Enter code [Catfish] at seventeen.com/freebies.

17 EXPERTS: Nev Schulman, host of MTV's *Catfish: The TV Show,* and Glenn Marron, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist based in New York, NY.