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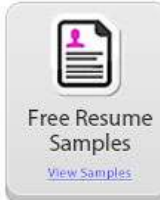
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'Talhotblond': Portrait of a mother from hell

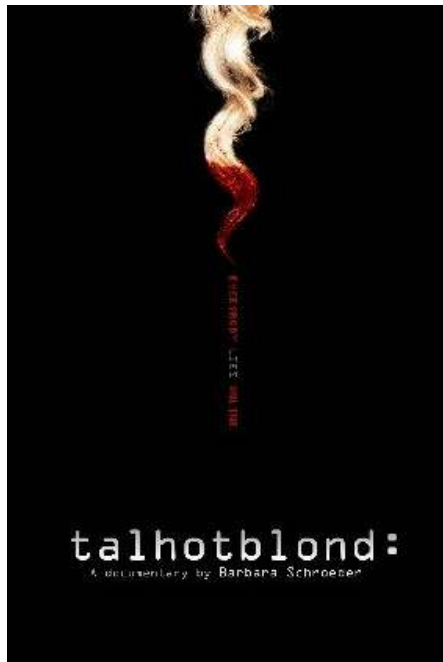


Photo courtesy of Barbara Schroeder.

Mary Shieler, for all of her transgressions, told journalist Barbara Schroeder—the director of the documentary "talhotblond"—that she is getting on with her life. And she has dramatic weight loss, a new hairdo, and perfectly manicured fingernails to prove it.

You would think that Mary just had a fender bender, the way she talks about it—a minor scrape where she could just get up, dust herself off, and ride off into oblivion.

Her daughter, Jessica, would probably disagree with Mary's nonchalance. And the family of Brian Barrett, the young man who was murdered thanks to Mary's machinations, would also probably be none too impressed by the woman's resiliency.

Clinical psychologist Rex Beaber says that you can boil Mary's attitude down to one word: sociopath. "This woman, as far as I know, has never demonstrated a scintilla of appreciation that she was engaging in conduct that was highly destructive to the people around her—including members of her own family," he said. "It was all done to meet her purposes and needs. She is a totally self-centered, manipulative person who doesn't seem to get it—even after a human being has died as a distant consequence of her activity."

And what was the activity that caused so much damage? From the privacy of her own computer, she lured two men—middle-aged Thomas Montgomery and twentysomething Brian Barrett, who both worked at the same company—into a fantasy of Internet sex, which led to a contentious online love triangle. Nothing unusual about that—people have been hooking up on the Internet since we all figured out that we could. But in order to attract these men, and others, Mary took a chat room fantasy to a perverse place: She impersonated her eighteen-year-old daughter and used several photos of the young woman to entice men online.

"She clearly capitalized on her daughter's appeal to men, which is pretty twisted," said Schroeder, whose documentary chronicles the story. "I think that once she realized how the pictures were like candy for men, all of a sudden she had gotten a new camera and there were thousands of pictures on her computer of just Jessi."

As a result of the deception, a jealous Thomas Montgomery—who was so immersed in the online fantasy Mary created that he just couldn't let go—murdered coworker Brian Barrett at their workplace. It was not until he was arrested that Montgomery discovered that he was not talking to a beautiful, young woman who was in love with him—but rather an overweight, age-appropriate stay-at-home mom with no boundaries and no conscience.

Montgomery was sentenced to twenty years in prison for the murder and even though many people believe that

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Mary is morally culpable for creating this tempest in a chat room, there was no [law](#) that addressed her conduct —something that the Barrett family is trying to change.

That is not to say that Mary is not suffering any sentence: Her daughter, who only found out what really happened when her friends suggested that she Google her mother, won't have anything to do with her.

"To me, it's a just punishment that this [mother](#) loses her child. She chose not to be a mother, so she shouldn't have the benefits of being a mother," said Beaber. "One of the benefits of being a mother is to have someone be your child, to love you as a child, and to share their own children with you when they have them. Why should a woman who is so sociopathic and narcissistic have that benefit? Why should someone try to heal that relationship?"

For more information about the documentary "talhotblond," log on to www.talhotblond.com.

This article originally appeared on my [Interpersonal Relationships Examiner](#) page on January 9, 2010.

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Posted by Kenya McCullum at [October 29, 2010](#)

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