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Love is Blind---So You Better Wear Glasses



"Evelyn" was looking for love. She thought she found it on Match.com, which quickly moved to Instant Messenger. "He said he was an engineer living in Florida, with his own business and the father of a son. He wrote perfectly –

no 'scammer grammar.' He seemed ideal."

Within two weeks, Mr. True Love had hooked Evelyn. With declarations of love, promises of a life together and, oops, a request for money to help secure a job contract in Cairo. After sending \$22,000 in three wires, Evelyn not only lost her heart and money but also her identity. Her sensitive information was sold to other scammers, including identity thieves and other Romeo rip-off artists.

Romance Scams

Conning thousands of men and women each year, romance swindlers consistently make the top scammer lists. These criminals aren't looking for a soulmate, they are looking for victims who are 'love blind'.

Here is how the scam works: Scammers scroll dating websites, chat rooms and Facebook inventing fake identities, using fake photos of themselves and tailoring their profiles to the target's interests. First there's the wooing, then the undoing. After romancing the victim with quick promises of love, these con artists spring the trap. In some fashion and some way, the paramore begins asking for money or your personal information. Mr. Wonderful may ask for money to be wired for a plane ticket or help with some debt run up by the evil ex-girlfriend.

So how can you spot a romance scam and avoid falling victim? Here are red flags that the person you're dealing with is after your cash, instead of your heart.

- You are asked to wire money or cash a certified check or money order. The check will be for more than what was discussed, but you'll deposit it into your account and send him the cash. Guess what, the check is bogus and you are on the hook for the funds.
- The relationship becomes romantic *extremely quickly*, with quick pronouncements of love or close friendship.
- He quickly asks you to communicate via email, phone or text, some way other than through the dating site.
- Claims to be a U.S. citizen who is abroad, very wealthy, or a person of important status.
- Claims of being a contractor and needs your help with a business deal.
- She makes excuses about not being able to speak by phone or meet in person.
- Claims to be an American, but makes frequent spelling or grammar mistakes that a native English speaker wouldn't.
- Unrealistic photos. Sorry '*Lonely in Portland*', if your catch is "too cute," determine if the person used a stolen photo by running a Google Image search to check the authenticity of any photos.
- Inconsistent communication. Vague or repetitive email responses could indicate you've been hooked by an organized crime ring, and one scammer picked up where his buddy scammer left off.
- Requests to provide your financial details or send funds.
- Requests to share intimate photos or use webcams in an intimate setting which may leave you open to blackmail.

Check These Out For More Love Scams

Valentines Day Phishing Attacks

Love is a powerful emotion. If you've been approached by someone you think could be a romance scammer or, if you have already fallen victim:

- Don't keep speaking with the person
- Ignore their emails and phone calls or other communications. (think about blocking their number)
- Use the dating web site's abuse flagging system
- Report it to [AARP](#) or call our Fraud Line 720-913-9179

Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
And hey, being single isn't so bad...At least for now.



THINK YOU'VE BEEN SCAMMED?

If you suspect you've been scammed or exploited, report it to our Fraud Hot Line.

720-913-9179

SCHEDULE A SPEAKER

Interested in learning more about scams happening in Denver? Do you want to know how to protect yourself from identity theft? Maro Casparian is available for speaking engagements to any group or organization. Contact her by email: amc@denverda.org or via phone: 720.913.9036.

