



Romance scam warning

Dear Roy

Our fraud and cyber prevention officers are always working hard to help safeguard people against romance scams like the one below.

They've been dealing with an influx of celebrity-based romance scams recently and have some important advice to share...

Imagine caring for your ailing husband in his final days after 50 years of marriage.

He's your rock, your world, your everything. After his death you're suddenly all alone. Your days were once filled with love, laughter and latterly a duty of care, but now you're left with time on your hands.

Struggling through a heavy, grief-filled fog, you seek solace online and connection with friends over social media. You join fan pages of some of your favourite celebrities – it brings you joy to read about their latest work and helps to fill the dark, relentless void left by your recent loss.

Then, one day, while scrolling through social media, you receive a message out of the blue, it's from American Actor and film producer, Jason Momoa. You've been following his fan page and he's reached out to say hello.

You can hardly believe your eyes, but you strike up a conversation – you're not going to pass up this opportunity. You exchange messages for days on end and suddenly you start to feel less alone.

Over weeks of contact, romance blossoms between you and he sends you a picture of a house in Hawaii he's building for you both to live together.

Due to his high-flying lifestyle he has an unusual financial situation and his cash is tied up in his many film projects. He needs you to send him money to help finish the house ready for your arrival.

Things escalate and you hand over more than £500,000 in total, including money from the sale of your home – you're not going to need it, you'll be living in Hawaii with the incredibly successful Jason.

But you're not going to Hawaii, are you? Because the whole thing is a scam.

This might sound ridiculously far-fetched, but it's a true story and it happened to a vulnerable woman from Cambridgeshire recently, leaving her without a home.

You might not fall for something like this, but do you know someone who could? Fraudsters deliberately research their victims and target the most vulnerable in society or those going through tough times.

Fraud and cyber prevention officer, Dave York, said: "Romance scams cause devastation for victims and their families. Scammers target the most vulnerable people and those at their lowest ebb, looking to fill a gap in their lives.

"They brainwash victims for weeks, even months at a time, until they're completely convinced by the web of lies and hand over their money.

"We work tirelessly to help tackle romance scams, but due to perpetrators often operating remotely from other countries, it can be so hard to track them down and bring them to justice.

"The best thing we can do is safeguard victims and prevent people being drawn in by such scams, and that's where friends and family members can help too."

For more advice on Romance scams and how to protect yourself and others, visit our website: <https://orlo.uk/2RMlc>