



ABC - WCPO Channel 9 - Cincinnati, Ohio

## ROMANCE SCAMS

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If you're single and looking for a partner, or recently divorced, you may turn to an online dating site.

It's a great way to avoid the bar scene. But these cyber dating sites

come with a risk, as many who join are finding out.

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"This is the man who contacted me."

Cindy -- who asked me not to use her last name -- was hoping to meet a good man on a dating website. One day, she did.

"An attractive man started talking with me. He was in Africa on business, and would be moving to the United States."

"Andrew" said he was a globe-trotting businessman. And Cindy tells me she thought she had found Mr. Right.

"He started writing to me daily."

But a few weeks into their online relationship, Andrew told her he needed help...before he could come see her.

"He said I'm having a bad day. The shipment I ordered has been seized by customs. I said I'm sorry to hear that, what can you do? he said Cindy, here's where you can help me."

Andrew said he would be back in business if Cindy just cashed some checks for him.

"I have some money orders, but they won't let me cash them."

Suspicious, she did some online searching, and...

"I spotted the same guy on another website."

Her "Andrew" appeared on other dating sites, but his name was "Frank" or "Mark" or "Ken."  
He was one popular dude.

"That's when I realized it's a scam!"

Though heartbroken, all Cindy lost was her hope. Others have not been so fortunate.

"This is running rampant."

Barb Sluppick and Rhonda

McGregor have set up a user group on Yahoo called "romance scams," after being duped by similar scam artists.

Their group now has 4 thousand members. (Click link above)

"We have had people who lost their houses, their cars, their jobs. Because they are so into this person they would do anything."

These good looking dream dates?

Barb and Rhonda say they're actually innocent clothing models. Andrew's" photo was actually stolen from this modeling website in Hawaii.

Dating websites put up warnings about scams, but it's often in fine print.

And when someone emails you a line like this one Cindy received...

"I don't have anyone else I can trust. I thought this was about us. I need you, I'm crying."

...normally reasonable people can do unreasonable things.

The women at "Romance Scams" say watch for these red flags: A foreign businessman, little personal information, and grammatical errors indicating English is not their first language.

And the top tip: Don't fall in love with someone you've never met...So you don't waste your money.

I'm John Matarese.

From:

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