

Internet love costs woman her life savings

Part one 📹

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By CLARA TUMA
KVUE News

Andrea Little has learned a hard lesson about Internet dating: believe little of what you read and none of what you see.



"They hook you in, and once they know you're willing to pursue a relationship, what aren't you going to do for the love of your life?" she asks.

Little fell in love with a man she "met" on the social networking site My Space.

Though she never laid eyes in person on the man she knew as Joseph, she talked with him on the phone and exchanged e-mails and instant messages with him for two months.

Not long after the romance blossomed, Joseph started asking for money, and Little obliged.

"Originally I thought he was in Virginia Beach, and I thought, 'Oh, that's long distance,' and then slowly through the course of conversations he let me know he was actually in Nigeria working on a business contract," she said.

Little began sending "Joseph" money orders -- a couple thousand here, \$5,000 there -- convinced he was on her way to her arms.

"He showed me [a picture of] his finished project that was going to wrap up in a couple of weeks and then said, you know, if you can just front me the money for my plane ticket and my remaining hotel bill I'll be there," she said.

Little sent him the money, but "Joseph" didn't make his scheduled flight to Austin. Instead, he sent her a photograph of a trunk-full of money -- which he claimed was all his father left him.

"Joseph" claimed he couldn't get the money out of the country unless he had thousands of dollars more to bribe officials.

"You're like, well, it's your inheritance, you know, I'll see what I can do," she said. "I don't have that kind of money, I sent what I could and I was in the process of securing a cash advance."

That's when the bottom fell out of Andrea Little's love affair. She'd sent him more than \$50,000 -- everything she had -- and he was still demanding more.

Little's sister discovered the man calling himself "Joseph" wasn't "Joseph" at all -- and wasn't even the man in the picture.

Instead, he was a scammer based in Nigeria who was featured prominently on

"romancescams.com."

The picture he used as his own was actually that of a model living in St. Louis who didn't know anything about the scams.

Turns out the same picture used for "Joseph" is also used on several dozen other profiles on all kinds of web sites -- including Magnum and David on My space, David-James Luv on Black Planet and Anthony Sanders on Blacklooker.

"It's difficult, because you feel like you've been advantage of more than once," Little said, "And he's relentless. He's still trying to get more money."

She feels twice victimized -- by both a scammer and her own naiveté.

"It's devastating, because not only do you realize somebody swindled you out of money, they've also taken that trust from you," she said. "You believed in them, so it's to me it's even a bigger crime."

Man claims his identity was stolen for love scam

Part two 📹

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By CLARA TUMA
KVUE News



If you don't know Carlos McLaurin as Carlos, you might know him as Kelvin4love from myrichsugardaddy.com, as Aaron on Hoverspot.com or as Anthony Sanders on Blacklooker.com.

He seems like he's active on social networking sites - even though he has a different name, age and hometown on every site.

But looks are deceiving.

Carlos McLaurin is, in fact, a victim of identity theft. His pictures have been hijacked by someone in Nigeria using them to lure women into sending them money overseas.

He's a model/actor living in St. Louis who finds himself in the middle of an international scam he has nothing to do with.

"They use all different kinds of names, but it will be my face, so be careful," McLaurin says.

An Austin woman, Andrea Little, is one of dozens of women who fell for Carlos McLaurin's picture, which she thought belonged to a man named Joseph she "met" on Myspace.com.

"I really thought this is the man of my dreams," she says. "I really thought he cared for me, and I really thought he wanted to come to Austin."

Little believed she was engaged to the man she knew as “Joseph.” She wired the man using McLaurin’s picture everything she had - more than \$50,000 - before she realized the whole relationship was a scam from someone who wanted her money, not her love.

McLaurin says he doesn’t know Andrea Little, but wants to know who’s using his image as part of a Nigerian scam.

“That’s not how I want to get money,” McLaurin says. “I’d rather go to Hollywood where they want to give me the money for how I look instead of having to talk women out of their hard-earned dollars.”

Steven Byrd doesn’t know who Little is either, but as the agent-in-charge of the Austin Secret Service office he’s heard her story dozens of times.

“Typically, the relationship if you want to call it on line, is developed solely to get into their purse or their pocketbooks,” he says. “Once that money crosses US boundaries, especially into a country that we don’t have the working relationship with as well, it’s very difficult to get your money back.”

He advises extreme caution when dealing with any relationship that begins on the Internet.

To file a complaint, go to ftc.gov and click on the consumer protection tab.

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