Is this person who they say they are? They might not be...

01 ANATOMY OF A ROMANCE SCAM

A stranger makes contact via a dating app, WhatsApp, email or random DM. They're warm, attentive, and genuinely interested in you. Over days or weeks, a real-feeling connection builds. Then the ask comes. Seven signs you're being groomed:

- **Out of nowhere** - wrong number, random DM, or a too-perfect profile
- **Moves fast** - deep emotional bond within days
- **Never meets** - always an excuse to avoid in-person contact
- **Checks out...** but AI now generates photos that defeat reverse image search, and video calls can be faked in real time
- **Crisis appears** - lost phone, medical emergency, stuck abroad, investment opportunity
- **Asks for money** - gift cards crypto, or a bank transfer. "Just this once."
- **It never ends** - the crisis evolves, the asks keep coming

STOP If someone you've never met in person is asking you to send money for any reason, stop all contact.

02 HOW TO SPOT IT BEFORE IT COSTS YOU

Where did this contact come from? Unsolicited, unexpected, or via a dating app - treat it as untrusted. Real celebrities don't DM strangers. If Brad Pitt has just messaged you out of nowhere, that's a scam. No exceptions.

Reverse image search - but don't stop there. Stolen photos get caught. AI-generated faces don't. A clean result is no longer proof.

Ask them to do something unexpected on video. Touch their left ear. Hold up three fingers. Write your name on paper. Deepfakes struggle with spontaneous prompts. A real person won't mind. A scammer will stall or glitch.

Slow things down. Genuine people tolerate patience. Scammers manufacture urgency. Pressure to act fast is the tactic.

The ask will always have a reason. Broken phone. Hospital bill. Customs fee. Once-in-a-lifetime investment. The reason sounds plausible. The pattern is the problem.

Talk to someone you trust first. Isolation is part of the tactic. If they're discouraging you from telling family or friends, that's the scam working. Tell someone anyway.

If it feels wrong, it probably is. You haven't lost anything by stopping. You could lose everything by continuing.

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