

# Please tell me you're REAL, EAMON

We were in love, but something was keeping us apart

Jan Marshall, 61, Lalor, Vic.

**A** new message pinged into my inbox. And I excitedly clicked on it.

The day before I'd joined online dating agency, *Plenty of Fish*.

At 57, I'd never been married or had any kids.

I was unlucky with men. My one serious relationship, years earlier, hadn't worked out.

So I'd focused on working in IT instead.

But I'd recently moved to Melbourne to be closer to family and wanted to meet

someone to explore my new hometown of Victoria with.

My friend Robyn recommended I try online dating and now I'd just had my first message.

His name was Eamon.

I smiled as I read his profile. He was a hopeless romantic and liked ice-cream and sunsets... just like me.

My heart sank when I read he lived in Burlington, Canada.

*Do you realise I live in Australia?* I wrote to him.

His reply was speedy and promising.

*I would be willing to relocate for the right woman*, he said.

Butterflies filled my tummy as I looked at his different profile pictures.

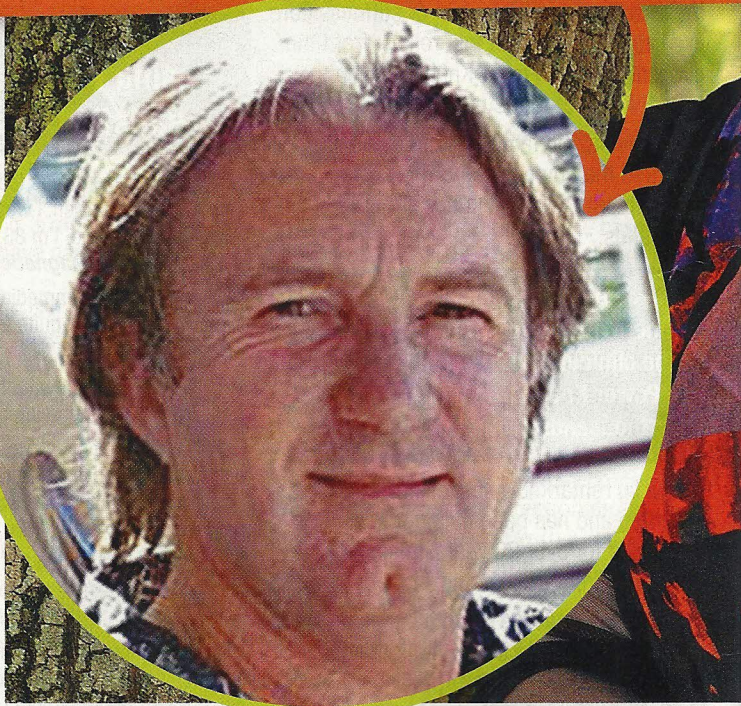
He was so handsome! Respectably grey, he looked very suave in a suit in one image. In another, he was at the wheel of a yacht.

He was a successful engineer.

I was flattered he was so interested in me.

Within hours he sent me a lengthy response and encouraged me to email him back.

Originally from Manchester, UK, he had been married for 10 years before divorcing and had



a 15-year-old daughter. He craved the love of a woman again, he said.

I told Robyn all about him.

"Be careful," she warned.

"He seems a bit overeager. There are predators out there."

I felt disappointed. I thought knew what I was doing.

We carried on emailing and I realised we had so much in common. We both wanted real love and passion.

We started chatting over the phone. He had an unusual accent but said it was because his parents were Russian and Irish.

He nicknamed me Nectar because he said I was so sweet.

I was up at all hours chatting to him and could barely function at work the next day.

We tried to use video chat but Eamon could never get his web-cam to work.

I just wanted to see him. Hear him. Be with him.

I realised I was falling in love.

Ten days into our whirlwind romance, Eamon revealed his strong feelings, too. He told

me he wanted to be with me forever and proposed.

It seemed crazy and impulsive, but I was so in love that I agreed.

We started making plans for him to come and live in Australia.

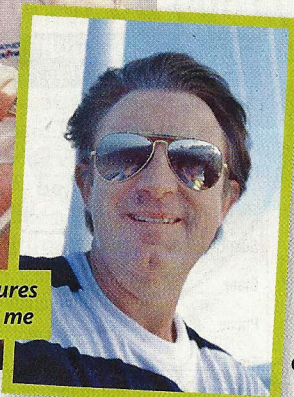
First he travelled back to Manchester to see his daughter.

While there, he was offered a new contract in Dubai. It was worth £900,000 - it'd set us up for life!

*"We were both looking for love"*



The fake pictures 'Eamon' sent me







*I thought I'd found the man of my dreams*

After arriving in Dubai though, he ran into some financial difficulties.

"They're insisting I pay tax for the job upfront," he told me.

If he didn't comply, his contract would be terminated.

"I need to pay them \$50,000," he said.

He had the money - he showed me a screenshot of his large bank balance. The problem was that he couldn't access his English bank account over there. He asked if I could help.

I had \$48,000 in savings.

"I will send it to you by bank transfer tomorrow," I said.

"Thank you, Nectar," he said. "I love you."

He asked the transfer to be made to another name.

"It's the person I'm working for," he said.

It made sense, so I transferred the money.

Six days later, he needed to buy some business materials. He still couldn't access his account so I agreed to transfer him another \$3000 through Western Union.

Over the following weeks he needed more money for business supplies, so I used credit cards to send some over.

I then sent more money to help him to pay out his contract so that he could leave sooner. He'd told me he was being threatened, so I just wanted him out of Dubai and at home with me.

Then on his way to the airport to come to Australia, he was involved in a terrible car accident and wasn't covered by insurance.

I was so worried about him

so I illegally dug into my super to help pay his medical bills.

I knew Eamon would give me the money back when he got to Australia.

I was so broke I battled to pay for groceries.

Finally, he was well enough to leave Dubai.

"I just need money for plane tickets. Then we'll finally be together," he said.

So I withdrew the last of my super fund and sent it over.

That night, I couldn't get hold of him. His phone just rang out. I worried something bad had happened. I spent days sick with worry.

Suddenly, I remembered Robyn's words, "There are predators out there."

My stomach twisted in knots as the realisation dawned. *Please God, no!*

I kept trying to phone him, but there was no reply. *Why was he doing this to me?*

Days passed and the sick feeling in my stomach grew stronger and stronger.

*Had it all been a big lie?* I felt so stupid and ashamed.

I called my mum and told her everything. She told me to contact the police.

They did some investigating and told me all the money I'd sent had gone to Nigeria.

I'd transferred nearly \$260,000 to him.

"How will I ever recover from this?" I cried.

Eamon didn't exist. The scammer had stolen the photos from other websites.

In just 72 days this cyber criminal had stolen my life savings and left me destitute.

Sadly, there were no leads. My money was simply gone.

I had to borrow from family and friends to get by.

My dream of

retiring had been shattered. I'd need to work into old age to make ends meet.

I saw a counsellor to try to come to terms with it all. For months I hid away from the world in shame.

Then one day, I was sick of feeling like a victim. So I decided to educate myself.

I learnt that many online love rats use engineering as a profession as it's easy to justify being in different parts of the world. They also deliberately keep you sleep-deprived so you can't think straight.

Professing love too quickly was a red flag. And of course, a request for money was a sure sign of a scam.

I decided to share my story to

help others. I am now an ambassador for ACORN - the Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network. It's a national system allowing the public to securely report online scams.

I'm also writing a book about my experience and have started a support group - Melbourne Dating Scam Survivors.

Over 800,000 Australians are victims of online scams a year.

It can happen to anyone. You never know who is lurking behind your computer screen.

**"How will I ever recover from this?"**

**WE PAY MORE!**  
up to **\$2000**  
for YOUR story

See page 9 for details.

