



ROMANCE/FRIEND SCAMS: THEY GIVE LOVE A BAD NAME

You meet someone on social media or through online gaming app. Or maybe you meet them on a dating app or because of a wrong number text. Soon the person wants to write to you directly or start talking on the phone. They say it's true love, or maybe they say you're a good friend. But they live far away and can't see you in person. Then they start asking for money due to a small emergency or talking to you about "guaranteed" but "secret" investments. At first, the money requests are low but quickly rise. But know this: Criminals, now armed with artificial intelligence, can look and sound like anyone. These criminals are trained and can be incredibly convincing.

The [Federal Trade Commission reported](#) that Americans lost \$1.14 billion to romance scams in 2023. That number is likely low as heartache and shame result in underreporting. The Howard County Office of Consumer Protection provides [some tips](#) on how to spot and avoid a bogus suitor or friend this February.

Blurb with graphic version:

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