

The Scam

Martin Butler

PETER'S LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

A cozy, well-kept living room. PETER (60s), a retired man, sits in an armchair. He is speaking into his mobile phone. His partner, EVELYN (60s), sips tea, solving a crossword, from the sofa.

JOHN (V.O.)

(smooth, confident)

Peter, I'm hoping you've had a chance to think about our discussions, and read your personalised investment proposal. Woldingham Investments offers you unique opportunities. The property investments we talked about are available for a very limited time only. The returns are stellar and the investments are tax efficient and come with minimal risk. Were you able to review our website?

PETER

I did, yes! Very impressive returns and great testimonials, but I need time to think through my options.

JOHN (V.O.)

Peter, you know that the window of opportunity is closing. You must act now to secure allocation. I wouldn't want you to miss out on these investments. Let's connect tomorrow at this time to take things forward.

PETER

OK, Let's do that.

PETER'S LIVING ROOM - NEXT DAY, EARLY AFTERNOON

Peter and Evelyn are sat in the living room, talking.

PETER

Do you think I should make some investments?

EVELYN

(without looking up)

As long as it's not those risky quick-money schemes you keep talking about...

PETER

(chuckles)

No, no. What I'm considering is smart. Low risk but good returns.

(beat)

PETER (CONT'D)
Do you happen to know where the
remote went!?

Evelyn looks up, and makes an expression with her hands to indicate that she doesn't know.

Peter gets up and looks around for the TV remote control. Unable to find it, he searches down the back of his armchair. He eventually finds it and also finds an old, unscratched lottery ticket. He scratches it, lost in thought.

FLASHBACK - SMALL SHABBY APARTMENT - MANY YEARS AGO

A much younger, visibly poorer Peter scratches a lottery ticket, heart pounding. He checks the numbers against a newspaper - loses. Much frustration. This happens repeatedly with several tickets.

BACK TO PRESENT

Peter shakes his head, stuffing the ticket into a drawer.

PETER'S HOME OFFICE - LATER AFTERNOON

Peter sits at his computer, the Woldingham Investments website open again-sleek, professional, full of glowing reviews. On his desk is his 'investment proposal'. He's on the phone to John.

JOHN (V.O.)
So, Peter, what do you think?
It's a great day to invest.

PETER
(nodding to himself)
Looks solid. I'm ready to put
money in.

JOHN (V.O.)
Excellent. I'll guide you through
the transfer process now.

Peter logs into his bank, sets up the transfer. Clicks through security prompts.

SCREEN PROMPT: "Are you sure you want to transfer £20,000?"

Peter hesitates, then-BAM-THE SCREEN FREEZES

He hears from his living room a breaking news alert on the TV: Nationwide Internet Outage.

PETER
Oh, for....damn internet's down.
Are you there, John?

Line is silent, no response from JOHN.

PETER'S HOME OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Peter's SON (30s) resets his Dad's router and computer but doesn't resolve the problem.

PETER

The damned internet is still down, isn't it?||

SON

Yes, it looks like it, Dad. Did you need to use the computer?||

PETER

Yes, I was trying to transfer money. Buy some property abroad with Woldingham Investments. They are offering great returns!

SON

You're joking, surely. I saw something about them on the TV recently. They're e a scam!

PETER

(frowns)

No, it's a proper company.

SON

Scammers make fake websites. The second you send that money, it's gone.

Peter absorbs this.

PETER

(quietly)

I almost lost my savings.

BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peter lies awake, restless. A DREAM SEQUENCE: He hears John's voice, sees his own finger clicking "Confirm," watches as his savings disappear into nothing. Images of past lottery tickets. A younger version of himself hoping, losing.

BEDROOM - MORNING

Peter wakes up. EVELYN stirs beside him.

PETER

I had the strangest dream. Almost fell for a scam. It felt so real.

EVELYN yawns, reaches for her phone.

EVELYN

Really? Tell me what happened. By the way, the Internet's still down.

Peter stares at the ceiling, exhaling deeply-relieved.

PETER'S DOORBELL RINGS - AFTERNOON - SOME DAYS LATER

Peter looks at his watch before opening the door to his old friend, Simon. Simon is half an hour later than the agreed time.

PETER

(Slightly sarcastically)
Simon! Did you get lost on the way?

SIMON

Are you ready? Let's go! The golf club are expecting us a little later. It's a great day to play...

Peter makes the connection that Simon was John in his dream, the salesman who almost scammed him...

(beat)

SIMON (CONT'D)

Oh, and... sorry I'm late, by the way. You may not believe the reason: the police showed up at my front door to quiz me about the whereabouts of my brother. I've not seen him for weeks. They wouldn't tell me why they want to talk to him...

PETER

(temporarily lost in thought)
—Ah yes, of course. Let's go

THE END.