

FROM MY SON

One morning, my phone received a message from my son, who was holidaying in Western Australia. Within minutes, I found myself caught up in what seemed like an ordinary family problem.

Son: Hey Dad. I broke my phone this morning. I'm sending this off from a colleague's phone. Can you text me back on this number: 04.....? It's pretty urgent. *(Ended with a red heart)*

Owen: Sorry to hear about your phone." I hope this will sort things out. Dad.
(I replied to the new number I was given.)

Son: My phone got wet, as well as my SIM card; that's the reason for the new number. I've put my phone in rice. Any more ideas on how to get it dry as soon as possible?

Owen: Google suggests silica gel in a container or bag. Apple says not to use rice. Don't use a hair dryer, but a cool breeze is best. Mum tried silica gel. It helped, but it didn't fix it. You could get silica from the chemist, I think. Maybe some time in a breeze in the WA sun. These are my thoughts.

Son: I've tried almost everything to get it dry, but I am frustrated because I really need to get this sorted as soon as possible, as I don't have access to my accounts now because I can't receive the text messages from them. I have two payments that need to be paid today. It's stressing me out.

Owen: That's a tough spot to be in.

Son: Yes, I know. Is it possible that you cover them? I will send it back tomorrow or the day after at the latest. It's a total of \$4908, if that's not too much to ask for.

Owen: Mum's the business manager, and she is just rushing out to a doctor's appointment in Deepdene.

I then asked one simple question: **"Where are you right now?"**

The message was marked as read.

There was no reply.

Our phones allow us to see each other's location. When we checked, my son's phone was still active in Western Australia. At that moment, the truth became obvious.

This scam began with urgency. This is a common tactic scammers use. People respond differently in an emergency. Their usual careful thinking is undermined.

I was shocked, but here is how the scammer built on the crisis.

The phone is broken, then wet, then the SIM card has failed.

There was confusion; my son is always careful, but I thought it could be because he had no phone.

The frustration and panic were transferred to me.

Here is the solution: "Could you pay these bills for me?"

Then reassurance: "I'll pay you back tomorrow"

The request is carefully crafted. It appealed to my love as a father. If I helped, I would be rescuing my son from a crisis. The amount was large, but the promise sounded reassuring: "I'll pay it back tomorrow."

It was designed to sound reasonable, responsible, and urgent—all at once.

It's all a clever process. At first, we were hooked in; then alarm bells started ringing.

It wasn't my son at all. It was a Scam Son.

The first phone number used begins with +212 7 72 and originates from a mobile phone in Morocco. I also discovered that all mobile phone numbers in Australia begin with 04.

I am always annoyed that scammers just disappear without any feedback for their actions. They are hated, so they escape, and that keeps them hidden and protected. So this time I sent this SMS.

Why are you building your life by deceiving other people? You have enough intelligence to build something honest instead. Be creative. Do something worthwhile with your life.

I received no reply.

Perhaps I never expected one.

What stayed with me was not the silence, but the thought that somewhere, someone spends their intelligence deceiving strangers instead of building an honest life. That seemed the greatest tragedy of the whole incident.

But I hope this story receives a reply—from you, the reader. If it makes someone pause, check, and verify before sending money, then the scammer has lost, and the reader has won.

What should you do if this happens to you?

- You should not call the new number. I should not have replied to the new number, even though the scammer already had my phone number.
- Call the person's number you already know or contact another family member if necessary.
- Don't respond to the urgency they set up (as I did). Pause and check; it could save you thousands. If you need a check, ask a question only the real person would know. E.g., what is your mother's maiden name?
- They may try again. Block the number on your phone and report the spam.

Scams happen too often, so stay alert!