

Scammers and Their Enthusiastic Victims

An acquaintance of mine has a job which frequently involves sending electronic money transfers for individuals. A huge chunk of that money is sent to Nigeria (and other “less than ideal” places). Often the senders are elderly, or people who are really lonely (the two categories overlap). And she sees the same people come in over and over again. They often want to tell her the story of why they are sending the money.

To her credit, she has tried to tell the people they are being scammed (and has gotten in some trouble at work for doing so). The denial is strong and none of them want to believe it. They will go to any lengths to tell her she’s wrong.

One guy is sending money to a “woman” who is coming to America to be his bride. She keeps needing more and more money due to various problems that crop up. But, finally, a week or so back, he was sending her the money for the plane ticket! Hallelujah!

But, oops. Apparently, her taxi was involved in a terrible wreck on the way to the airport. Now she’s in the hospital unable to speak, but the hospital was able to get in touch with the man to tell him how much he must send to pay her hospital bill. So that she can recover and come marry him, of course. Ugh.

It’s the same story every time. And she’s seen every variation.

She has practically given up trying to help the people– although she did save a guy from getting scammed out of \$9,000 a few months back, and he was very grateful. Of course, he was back sending money to someone else before the week was out.

Part of me thinks “*a fool and his money are soon parted*”. Another part of me feels really bad for the fools, and a deep hatred for the scammers who take advantage of them.

Part of me is also angry at the fools, knowing that as long as idiots keep making scamming pay, evil people will keep going into the business of scamming. Those who send the money only encourage the scammers and recruit more of them into the ranks. It pisses me off.

I’ve seen libertarians justify scammers by saying no one is forcing their victims to pay; that it is voluntary. That, again, if you’re too or gullible to keep your money, then you deserve getting scammed. I don’t see it that way. I see it as a property rights violation– theft, by lying. Lies told to harm the innocent, facilitating theft, seems to be archaism in my mind.

I think I would be fired from the job my acquaintance holds because I don’t think I could be a middle-man in the scamming business.