

A Scammer, A Diamond, & Ransom

J. Morewood Osborne

Primix Publishing

(636pp)

979-889194081-9

A lonely man falls for an internet scheme in the cautionary novel A Scammer, A Diamond, & Ransom.

In J. Morewood Osborne's based-in-truth psychological thriller *A Scammer, A Diamond, & Ransom*, a catfishing scam functions via internet dating profiles, chats, and email.

During the summer of 2010, John, an Australian widower, tries out a free dating site that he learned about on social media. He responds to an intriguing message from a Londoner, Beck, who portrays himself as someone at a crossroads: he's lost a partner to cancer and is supported by his mother. As each man divulges more about himself, their situation intensifies, with everyday exchanges escalating toward shared hopes and fantasies and and rhapsodic sexual details.

But the men's flirtatious chatter soon becomes insidious. John is all too willing to believe Beck, whose first request for money is followed by more requests. Several of their exchanges also cover the logistics of a planned meeting, which is delayed, resulting in added pressure. For the audience, interest in the men's untested bond wanes as the book progresses.

As the men's flurry of messages continues, the questions of when and how John might discover that he's being deceived remain central. But even after he learns the truth about Beck in a manner that's outlandish, he elects to resume their correspondence, pushing the book toward an anticlimactic conclusion.

Further, too little is shared about either man to make them feel fleshed out. They are archetypes at best, with Beck standing in for generalized greed and John for naivete. Their winding, effusive declarations of love are unconvincing. John's reluctance to heed his friends' warnings clashes with his own creeping doubt, and his thoughts about what transpires with Beck are shared in quite plain terms too. Even information about his own background is handled in a dry manner. The book's scenes and settings are quite stark as well.

Told in a back-and-forth epistolary manner, the story is one in which questions are posed and replies follow; its progression is too repetitive in form to hold interest. There are hints at John's loneliness and attendant willingness to trust strangers, but his hopes about making real connections despite the virtual divide leave only fleeting impressions. And the red flags around Beck are too plain; that it takes John so long to notice them dampens much of the novel's suspense. For instance, Beck claims to hold a degree in hotel management and tourism—which happens to coincide with John's concierge profession. It's a detail designed to manufacture rapport that John somehow takes at face value. Italicized, rearward-gazing commentary from a decade in the future interrupts the text further.

In the winding novel *A Scammer, A Diamond, & Ransom*, an online relationship between strangers becomes tangled and dangerous.

KAREN RIGBY (June 21, 2024)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to

Source: <https://www.forewordreviews.com/reviews/a-scammer-a-diamond-and-ransom/>

have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.