

I'm trapped in Paris! Please send money.

CSO reported details of this scam, often called a 419 scheme, several months ago (See: [9 Dirty Tricks: Social Engineers' Favorite Pick-Up Lines](#)). But it continues to make the rounds on Facebook, according to Cluley, and fools unsuspecting users.

It goes like this: You are on Facebook, when a "friend" uses the Facebook chat feature to send you an instant message. Sometimes it might be a message in your inbox. Either way, the "friend" informs you that they are trapped in some foreign country and have been robbed or have lost their wallet through some other unfortunate incident. They need you to wire money quickly to help them get home. However, on the other end is a person posing as your "friend" that has hacked into your actual friend's account.

This scam is really just a new version of the old email trick that informs a recipient they have "inherited millions," according to Cluley.

"The emails often say something like 'Just give us your bank account details and we will deposit the money,'" he said.

But in this particular Facebook ruse, the idea is to get you to assume it is someone you know and trust on the other end of the IM so you will wire money quickly to help them out.

"People tend to be more relaxed about communications with friends on social networks," noted Cluley. "Also, the scammer can use other information from your profile, such as your wife's name or your children's names, to make it seem more legitimate."

Cluley recently blogged about a friend who was contacted by a scammer looking for money with this tactic. Fortunately, Cluley's friend was clever enough to recognize the scam and managed to trick the criminal into visiting a personal web site he maintains and ultimately captured his IP address. It turns out, as predicted, the person on the other end was at a computer in Nigeria, not Paris.

Sean Sullivan, a security advisor in the F-Secure Corp. security labs, said most of these attacks are the result of a compromised username and password. Sullivan recently criticized Facebook for their security questions protocol, which he thinks use out-dated questions such as mother's maiden name, and said he thinks they should consider having users choose their own security questions.

"Perhaps when the college kids that created Facebook designed it, they never thought any one would be able to guess their father's name," said Sullivan. "But I actually have my father in my network. It wouldn't be too hard to figure that out."