

I've always been a very ¹*vigilant/above-board* person. I'm careful to make my online passwords strong, I'm ²*discerning/bogus* about who I trust and ³*streetwise/gullible* when I travel. Aside from one time when I was ⁴*ripped off/preyed on* by a street vendor selling overpriced pineapples and another time when I was ⁵*taken in/lured* by a kid collecting money for charity, who I later noticed spending it on ice creams, I've never considered myself particularly ⁶*gullible/bogus*.

But while I was at university, I met Adam in one of my classes. We hit it off straight away and over a few months we began spending more time together and chatting online. He would often send me photos of his cooking, which was quite a clever ⁷*ploy/scammer* to look impressive.

But coincidences kept coming thick and fast. He would mention seeing a film that was my favourite. He would send me a link to a very unusual song, which happened to be one that I had once danced to in a performance. I began to question whether this was an elaborate ⁸*scammer/ruse*. How could he know these details? I started to wonder if the whole friendship was a scam. Perhaps Adam was one of those people who prey ⁹*on/off* unsuspecting friends. So I waited, almost expecting him to ask me for a large loan for a sick relative.

The final straw came when I noticed some suspicious log-ins on my social media account. They came from Adam's part of the city and an IP address I didn't recognise. I had the sinking realisation that something was very wrong indeed.

When I confronted him, he denied everything and was very insulted by any insinuations and what he called ¹⁰*bogus/gullible* fabrications on my part.

The next day, I re-checked the social media reports and realised that the suspicious log-ins had in fact come off one of my own devices when I had been visiting a friend. They didn't come from a scammer who ¹¹*saw through/purported* to be someone else.

It turns out that all his behaviour had been ¹²*above board/discerning* and those shared details were simply happy coincidences. I had been ¹³*duped/ripped off* by my own suspiciousness. I felt really guilty for accusing my friend of being a ¹⁴*scammer/ploy*.

This story has a happy ending, as we ended up getting married a few years later. However, to this day, Adam teases me mercilessly about the fact that I once accused him of being a ¹⁵*scam/con* artist. He prefers to call it being a 'love artist'!