Who Am I Face-Timing With?

Yanyan Du

BEFORE YOU READ: Note that the first part of this article is a fictional story.

The Story of How A Mother Got Tricked

"Mom, I miss you so much." A mother holds a mobile phone in front of her. She can see her daughter in an online video call. Her daughter is in college, and she hasn't seen her for a long time.

"When are you coming back home?" Mom asked. "When you come back, I will cook all the food that you like."

"Mom, I can come home next week for vacation," the daughter said happily in the video. But then her expression changed. She was sad. "But I have spent all my money. I don't have money for food. And I need money to get home."

"How much do you need? I'll transfer it to you," Mom said. She was distressed by what her daughter said. She stared at her daughter with concern.

But the daughter was smiling again. She said, "Mom, you are the best!"

At that moment, the doorbell rang. "Wait a second," Mom said. "Someone is ringing the doorbell." She stood up and opened the door.

"Surprise! I'm home! I missed you so much. I finished my exams, so I came back early!" Outside the door, the daughter held a suitcase and looked at her mother happily.

"But… I thought I was FaceTiming with you right now." The mother was puzzled. "If you're here at the door, who am I FaceTiming with?"

Meanwhile, back on the phone, the video daughter said, "Mom, I love you. I'll send you my account number. Can you transfer the money quickly?"

The mother and daughter standing at the door looked at each other. The mother realized that the video daughter was a fake. The cheaters used AI technology to not only imitate the daughter's face and voice but also imitate her various expressions. They could exploit the mother's love to steal her money.

New and Ingenious Ways to Cheat Us

Digital tools have changed our lives. We can't live without them. At the same time, more and more internet scams have begun to appear. We may have good security settings, but the cheaters have methods that are always more ingenious. So, how can we avoid being cheated?

We need to always keep our security settings up to date. Also, we need to improve our own awareness. We especially need to be cautious when it comes to online money transfers.

Everything has two sides. A knife can help people but can also hurt them. Water can carry a boat, but can also overturn it. Fire can bring the light but can also bring destruction. The internet is the same. The things themselves are not inherently good or bad, or right or wrong. Whether they are good or bad depends on how we use them.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. What point is the author trying to make by telling the fictional story?

2. Note the metaphors at the end. What does she say about a knife, water, and fire, and how they are similar to technology?

Yanyan Du is from China, and she is an ESL student at Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville, VA. She really likes the weather in Virginia and the people in her school. She feels honored to be able to study there.