

Cyber Security Story Time

by Amy Williams, PhD, CISSP

Don't Be Blake (or Bruno)

Blake's dreamy smile abruptly fell from her face when she walked in the house and saw Bruno with his head in his hands, rocking back and forth in his favorite chair. Bruno looked up and couldn't believe it. Overwhelmed with a mix of relief, joy and anguish, he burst into tears and rushed to hug her.

Blake was confused but maintained the hug without asking questions. She'd never seen Bruno like this and selfishly wanted to linger in one moment of not knowing some terrible news. This welcome was stark contrast to her expected homecoming.

Eight years ago, Blake read "Eat Pray Love" and became obsessed with going to an ashram for a technological and mental detox. She talked to friends, posted requests for opinions about different retreats on social media and otherwise obsessed. When she finally booked her trip, she shared every anticipatory moment, hoping for a travel partner. She also knew that the ashram prohibited contact with the outside world so she wanted to share her delight while she could.

Ultimately, Blake ventured off alone. It was incredibly challenging at first but by the end of her time away, she was renewed and blissful. To prolong the feeling, she left her computer and cell phone off for the journey home, opting to journal in a notebook about everything she could remember. She couldn't wait to be home and

tell Bruno everything, face to face.

Now, however, she was wracked with guilt over not being available to her husband for whatever had transpired in her absence.

"Bruno, what is it?"

"I thought you were dead!"

"What? Oh honey, I told you I would be off the grid so...."

"No, they told me they would kill you!"

"Who?"

"The guys who kidnapped you!"

"Wait, what? Someone was kidnapped?"

"They told me they had kidnapped YOU! And that if I didn't wire \$200,000 by midnight on June 17th, they'd kill you! I maxed out our home equity loan and the credit cards but could only manage to put together \$138,000. I wired the money and pleaded with them to release you but no one responded. I was sure you were dead and clearly you weren't even kidnapped! Oh, what have I done? How will we pay our bills?"

It took a while for it all to sink in. Blake's pre-trip social posts were set as 'public' hoping to collect more feedback about ashrams. She also regularly posted, proudly, about her husband Bruno.

This was enough to set cyber criminals trolling for the remaining information they needed to contact Bruno and scare him into wiring funds as soon as Blake was scheduled to leave.

This month's column is a twofer. Don't be Blake or Bruno. Wait to share vacation photos after you return home. Otherwise, you are letting robbers know when to attempt physical break-ins plus providing a good timeframe for duping friends and family about your safety. Don't make sensitive, personal information publicly available on social media. Also, if you hear that a loved one is in danger,



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try independent means of locating them. Even in this scenario, Bruno could have contacted the FBI or the embassy.

Unlimited Technology cares about everyone's cyber safety.

We hope these stories are thought provoking as well as entertaining.

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