

Bank Transfers and Bonsai Kittens

Received any e-mail requests lately to help some potentate's widow transfer her late husband's fortune? Did you get the warning about certain perfume samples—the poisoned ones—being mailed to people? SOPHOS, an international security company in the U.K., keeps track of current hoaxes, and they have a top 10 Most Prevalent Hoaxes list at www.sophos.com/virusinfo/hoaxes/recent.

In SOPHOS's most recent list, six of the top 10 hoaxes are bogus warnings about e-mails carrying viruses. The e-mail warnings have headers like WTC Survivor (1), Meninas da Playboy (4), Budweiser Frogs Screensaver (5), A Virtual Card for You (7), and Frog in a Blender (9). One of them, JDBGMGR (3) goes one step further. It instructs you to remove the JDBGMGR.EXE file from your computer because it's a virus. The file actually is the Microsoft Debugger Registrar for Java, and it uses a gray teddy bear as an icon. You shouldn't remove the file, just as you shouldn't assume the Budweiser Frogs will slime your hard drive.

Three other hoaxes in the list encourage you to send out a chain mail letter. Hotmail Hoax (2) claims to be from Hotmail Headquarters and says you must forward the letter to at least 10 registered Hotmail users to keep your account active. Bill Gates's Fortune (8) offers you a check for \$245 if you forward its e-mail. It



claims to be some kind of monitoring technique from Microsoft and AOL. And then there's the Bonsai Kitten e-mail (6). This hoax is a Chinese box. It complains about a website that has created a new, inhumane fad—growing kittens in small glass containers. The website it wants you to complain to

others about, www.bonsaikitten.com, is also a hoax. It looks real, but no one's really growing kittens in bottles.

There's a classic chain letter that hasn't made the top 10 yet, but it's a contender. Called The Missing Dollar, it asks you to forward the following puzzle. (Read it if you get it, but don't forward it to five others. The answer is *not* going to appear on anyone's screen.)

Subject: Fw: THIS IS NEAT - please do it
Three men go into a motel. The man behind the desk said the room is \$30, so each man paid \$10 and went to the room. A while later, the man behind the desk realized the room was only \$25, so he sent the bellboy to the 3 guys' room with \$5. On the way, the bellboy couldn't figure out how to split \$5 evenly between 3 men, so he gave each man \$1 and kept the other \$2 for himself. This meant that the 3 men each paid \$9 for the room, which is a total of \$27, add the \$2 that the bellboy kept = \$29. Where is the other dollar?

SEND THIS TO 5 PEOPLE AND THE ANSWER WILL APPEAR ON YOUR SCREEN. ■