



Katarina MacLeod, a survivor of human trafficking, is the founder of Rising Angels, an advocacy awareness group for sex-trade workers.

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STAFF REPORTER

The text came through at 5:40 p.m. just before Christmas in 2012.

"I need help."

The frightened 18-year-old was sending the message in secret. Her pimp, Tyrone Burton, was forcing her and her best friend to sell themselves for sex.

Starved of food and held against her will, she wasn't reaching out to family, friends or even the police.

Instead, she sent the message to Dean, a "john" they trusted. It was one of several attempts she and a friend made to be rescued from the dangerous world of sex trafficking.

Before Burton, a notorious street-gang pimp in Toronto, coerced them into The Game, the young woman and her 19-year-old friend had been selling themselves as prostitutes for weekends of sex at Dean's Kingston cottage, according to testimony at Burton's trial.

He paid the teenagers seven hundred dollars each for weekends of sex with them both together.

The 46-year old Dean is a wealthy human resources director working for an international company in Toronto who conceded in court that the two girls' ages combined together did not add up to his.

Dean is not this businessman's real name, but the Star is choosing not to identify him because of police concerns that it could deter other johns from rescuing victims of sex trafficking.

With text messages, the pair reached out to Dean, saying they were being held in an

THE ESCAPE

Rescued from The Game

How two young women turned to one of their johns to help free them from the clutches of a pimp

apartment in Scarborough, but they didn't know the address.

"I'm on the 11th floor. He's in the hall. We can't leave. Please. He's here. I'm not allowed to leave the room," one of the young women texted to Dean. The girls were forced to have sex with Burton each morning, then service clients and have sex with him again at the end of the night.

When Dean got the message, he responded immediately.

"Unless I have an address and both of you are out front unharmed, I will call 911. You can tell him that."

The two teens were lured into The Game

by Burton when they had visited Toronto just before a scheduled weekend of sex with Dean.

Burton, who would eventually be convicted of trafficking, advertised them online and withheld their food and drinks until they had serviced a certain number of men and given him the money. They had to call him "Daddy," kiss his pimp ring when entering or exiting a room and were banned from looking into the eyes of other people.

There had been other calls from the girls requesting help over the past week. Once, Dean met the girls at Toronto's Union Station to pay a \$400 debt he owed for a past

encounter. At Burton's trial, Dean told the court he had spotted a man "dressed right out of a movie like a gangster" hovering over the pair. The teens had looked pale and scared at the station.

Later that night, he sent them a text saying they should get into a taxi and come to his downtown condo and that he would pay the fare: "I don't expect sex or anything in return," he wrote.

None of his attempts to rescue the teens worked. Dean said he did his best to warn the young women about accepting drinks that could be spiked, told them to delete their text history and bought a disposable cellphone so he could call the number associated with their online ads to make sure "they were at least alive."

When the two young women ran from their pimp the following week, the first person they called was Dean.

He arranged to meet them at the Fox and Fiddle in downtown Toronto. He was standing in the car park when they suddenly appeared, running toward him in tears.

The young women "were a mess emotionally," Dean testified. They hadn't eaten for days, so he bought them dinner and paid for them to stay in a hotel because they were too scared to be around men.

The next morning, Dean drove them to a police station and ultimately their testimony resulted in Burton, 31, becoming the first pimp to be convicted of sex trafficking in Toronto. The Crown is seeking to declare him a dangerous offender, which would put him behind bars indefinitely.

In all, Dean said he paid the two girls \$5,600 for five weekends of sex. Reached by

IF YOU NEED HELP

East Metro Youth Services
Call Carly Kalish
416-452-3018

Covenant House
416-598-4898

Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto
416-963-9963

Toronto police human trafficking enforcement team
416-808-2222

Peel police vice unit
905-453-3377

Halton police vice unit
905-825-8723
or htvice@haltonpolice.ca

The Joy Smith Foundation
204-691-2455

the Star, he refused to comment.

Because these girls have been isolated from their families and friends, johns are sometimes the only people they can talk to while under the strict control of pimps, police say.

Once a victim is rescued from The Game, social workers and police officers have to be on call 24/7. The Star heard from a number of officers and social workers who have answered crisis calls from victims at 3 a.m.

One social worker, Katarina MacLeod, even knocked on a trafficker's door and had a "screaming feud" with a pimp to try to help a young woman she knew was being trafficked earlier this year.

MacLeod, founder of the Rising Angels advocacy awareness organization for sex-trade workers, received a desperate call from the mother of the 22-year-old.

The mother, who lived in Barrie, said her daughter was being forced to work in the sex trade by her boyfriend. The teen had hidden a cellphone from her trafficker to keep in touch with her mother, but one day the pimp found it and disconnected the number. The mother knew her daughter would have been beaten badly, so she begged MacLeod to check that she was still alive.

After police rescued the young woman, she stayed with MacLeod, but a few days later returned to her trafficker.

"It becomes a real passion for us to try and save these girls," Toronto police sex crimes unit Inspector Joanna Beaven-Desjardins said.

"But even after we intervene, it's like a roller coaster. This is like a disease."