

Sextortion victim: Be careful in online search for love

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Reported by Jeremy Finley



NASHVILLE, TN (WSMV) -

In the swipe right, swipe left world of online dating, a News 4 I-Team investigation found simply submitting your photo can result in an extortionist taking aim at you.

It happened to a Middle Tennessee man, who asked the I-Team to conceal his identity.

He agreed to tell his story, along with his attorney David Raybin, to warn other people looking for love online not to make the same mistake he did.

While many people choose to use online dating websites, this victim chose to use Craigslist's personal ads, which is filled with very adult content.

"Didn't you kind of expect this to go south?" asked chief investigative reporter Jeremy Finley.

"I thought, why not?" the victim said.

It became a classic case of boy meets girl, girl extorts boy. And the victim's attorney said it's happening to a lot of people not just using Craigslist.

“My law firm has received approximately 30 phone calls, 30 victims,” Raybin said.

The victim said he felt safe using Craigslist’s personal ads, because it requires you to be 18 years old to enter.

But that requirement is only a quick click acknowledging your age, nothing more.



The victim then met a woman who he thought was between 25 and 30 years old.

He allowed us to use the content of the text messages they exchanged. The I-Team is not showing the pictures she sent him because of their adult content.

The woman then asked the victim for a picture, which he obliged, but only sending a photo of his face.

She then texted, “Will you have an issue with me being a mature 17?”

The victim then responded with a text reading, “I think I need to pass. Underage is a problem.”

Soon, the victim’s cell phone rang with the caller ID reading, “The Davidson County Sheriff’s Department.”

The caller, saying he was from the sheriff’s department, asked if the victim knew a young girl because his number had been seen on her phone.

“They said, ‘Are you sure? Because we’re looking for their family and friends because there’s been an accident,’” the victim said.

Then came another call, this time from the girl’s father.

The victim said the father explained that the girl had been involved in a car accident and he’d found her phone and that she’d been sexting.

The father vowed to press charges.

The father even sent a text message reading, "You will be sorry you attempted to lure (the girl's name) to your home, predator."

The victim said the father then made an offer to settle it quietly and even sent over a contract.

"They wanted a little over \$4,000," the victim said. "I'm in a panic mode at this time."

Fearing he was about to be arrested for an online sexual relationship with a minor, the victim called Raybin, who told him he was being extorted by a scam artist.

"That's exactly what it is. It's sextortion," Raybin said.

The first clue: the Davidson County Sheriff's Office doesn't investigate crimes or car accidents.

The I-Team found reports all across the country of people being charged with extorting people who they'd met on social media.

Scam artists are accused of posing as minors to extort people looking for romance.

"I had one client pay almost \$20,000 over a period of time," Raybin said.

While the victim in this case didn't lose any more, he lost his desire to seek out a relationship on Craigslist.

"Stay off of it. Stay off of it completely," the man advised.