

Mother shares heartbreaking story of losing daughter to human trafficking

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Jane took my coat and I sat on the couch, taking in the room in which I sat. It was stale and cold. I wondered if the heat was on. Little fans, or maybe heaters, rotated in the corners of the small room. Across from me, Jane sits with a coffee, the mug revealing a smiley face.

A year and a half ago, Jane's only child, Mary, was taken into the world of human trafficking. On that night, Mary opened the front door and got in a car waiting in the parking lot. Jane chased after it, chased after her daughter, trying to open the locked doors, trying to get to her daughter.

That was the last time she saw Mary. Since then, Jane has been exhausting every way of getting her daughter back, but to no avail. That's why she decided to talk to me. To tell me what it's really like in Halton.

From the surface, Jane looks like an everyday mom. She has a pleasant smile and kind eyes. When she speaks, I can tell she is exhausted in every way financially, emotionally, mentally but there's no denying it: the room may be cold, but the woman whose living room I sit in is a ball of fire—a woman not capable of going down without a fight. If I hadn't been sitting in her cold house, I never would have guessed she had suffered such a devastating loss.

I open my notebook and grab a pen.

Without prompting, Jane jumps right into her story.

In December 2013, Jane's daughter, Mary, was involved in a vehicle collision in Hamilton, and came out of it with a head injury. For the next couple of years, she stayed home, spending most of her time on her computer, namely, Facebook. That's how the gang found her, Jane tells me. That's how they knew who she was, where she lived, and how they learned everything about her.

She was targeted by a gang, Jane says. I had no clue what was going on.

Jane explains the year before the gang of pimps actually took Mary, they inundated her with attention through Facebook. Then one night, she just up and left, getting into their car.

I ask her, How did they take her? Did she go willingly?

No. She had a head injury, right? So these people really did a number on her head. They didn't physically force her, but they threatened her and she's clueless about this stuff, Jane answers. So, yes. She walked out the door under her own steam, but they were in the parking lot and took her.

The days following Mary's disappearance, Jane couldn't make heads or tails of anything. She called Halton Police, she called Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Services of Halton (SAVIS) but she still didn't

know how to get help, or how to get things straight.

It sounds so crazy, but you have to remember: when your kid's in this situation, just the images you live with in your head all the time, it makes you do some crazy shit, she says.

She called the police incessantly—the VICE unit, specifically—and a few officers visited her at her house and took her statement. But then they left, and Jane didn't know what to do.

So she did what she thought would get her somewhere. She took to Facebook—the very platform the pimps had found Mary on.

Jane plastered Mary's face wherever she could. While searching for any information on Mary, Jane got in contact with a girl who was in a same situation as Mary, right down to the gang. This girl provided Jane with information regarding Mary's whereabouts which hospital she had visited, or where the gang had most recently taken her.

I would go there and I would stake out the hotels, I would pretend to be a hooker, I would see if a pimp would pick me up, I had friends pretending to be johns, Jane tells me. I don't even know. I followed her everywhere.

Through Facebook and other online sites, Jane was able to track the gang and gathered a lot of information about them, including

their names, what girls they had working, and what weapons and drugs they were selling.

Jane also started to track down the johns people who visit the girls for their services and in some instances, followed them to their houses. One of the houses she watched had toys in the front yard.

It still bugs me to do this day. Here he is, hiring these girls, and being so crude and so rude, she says. What do you teach your kids? That it's okay for your daughter to be in that? Or do you have a son, and it's okay that your son exploits?

According to Jane, pimps in Halton exploit these girls a certain way, and she saw it all happen with her own two eyes.

They rent rooms in these hotels, and rather than circulate hotels, they get one room, she explains. They install a head girl, and then they rotate the girls.

The girls stay in the cheap hotel, and bring the johns into the expensive hotel, and then they pop out the screens and pass the money through the window, she says. I used to sit there and just watch this, all day long.

Jane put all of her energy and money into finding Mary, or at least talking to her. She had her own business but lost it because she wasn't working.

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