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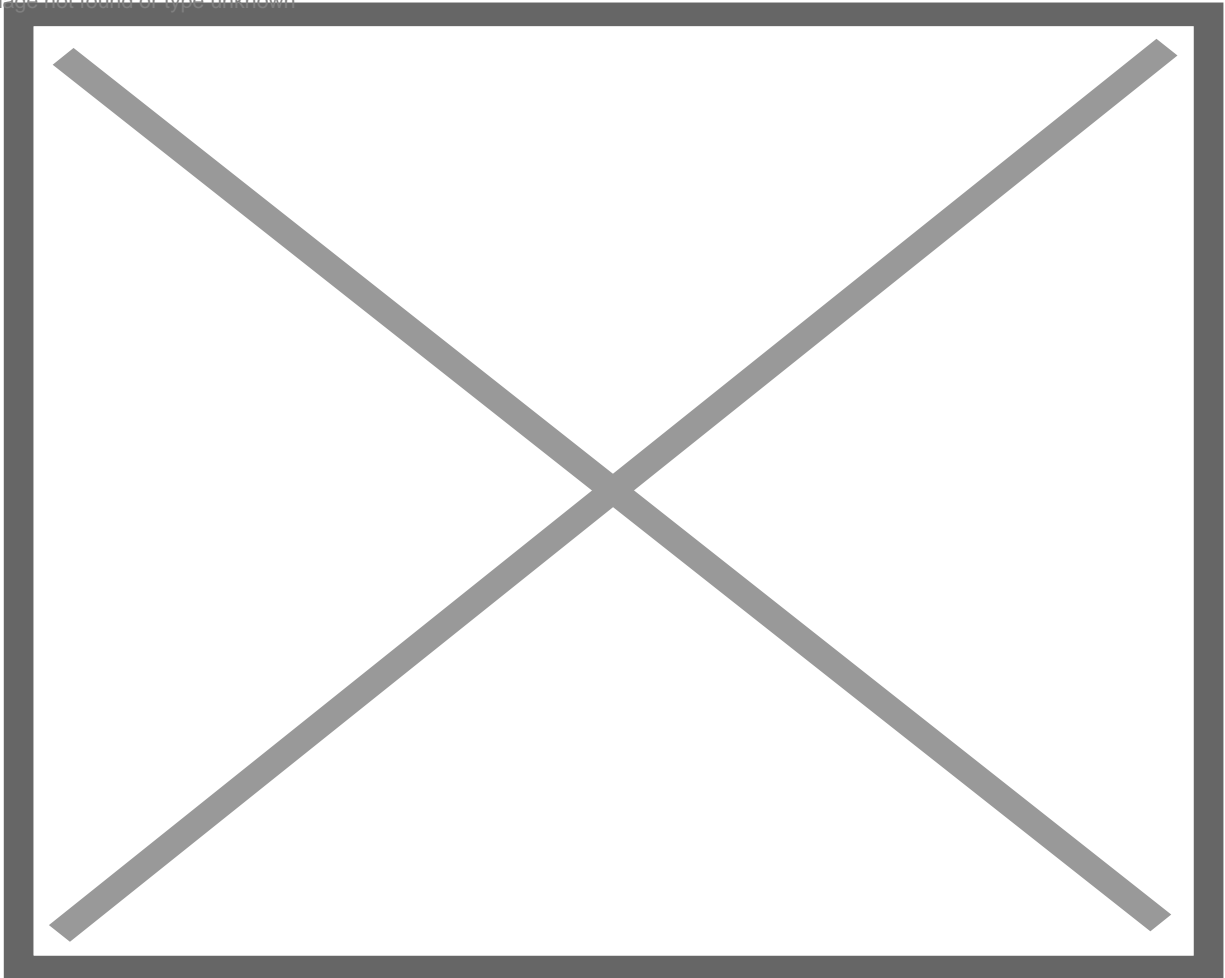
Man Brutally Assaults Girlfriend Over \$19: Victim's Head Slammed, Face Stomped, Ribs Broken

The victim, who sustained multiple injuries including fractured ribs, a burst lip, and facial swelling, told police that her boyfriend repeatedly slammed her head against a concrete floor and stomped on her face after a dispute over grocery money

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Mugshot of Beeri De La Cruz. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — A man was arrested after his girlfriend reported a vicious assault against her, sparked by less than \$20 in grocery money.

According to court documents, officers of the Domestic Violence Unit were dispatched to the Schneider Regional Medical Center on September 25, where they met a woman lying on a gurney,

seemingly in pain. She told them that she was at home the previous night, when her boyfriend Beerli De La Cruz came in around 10 p.m.

The man, who she said appeared to be intoxicated, reportedly asked her to return \$19 he had given her the previous day to purchase groceries. When she told him that she no longer had the money, De La Cruz reportedly became irate, and pushed her to the ground. The woman told police how her boyfriend stood over her and began slamming her head against the concrete floor.

She recounted how he then began punching her, in the face and about the body. She stayed down during the assault, the woman told officers, both because of the force of the initial blow and De La Cruz's strength. At one point, her boyfriend reportedly walked into the living room but returned to where she was lying to stomp on her face and slap her, before picking her up from the floor and tossing her onto the bed.

The assault continued on the bed, the woman told police, as De La Cruz held her by the throat and punched her in the chest. The woman's son came home and attempted to intervene, however De La Cruz approached him threateningly, causing the minor to retreat to the living room crying. The woman said that at that point, she got up to ensure that her boyfriend did not hurt her son. That is when De La Cruz reportedly picked up a dumbbell and threatened to kill them both. He instead reportedly threw a frozen bottle of water at the woman, striking her on the right shin.

The woman told officers that she decided to leave to find help, seeking someone who could lend her a phone, as she did not have one. Her son was able to contact a neighbor, who allowed him to call 911. When officers arrived, De La Cruz was no longer at the residence. Emergency medical technicians then transported the woman to the hospital, where she was treated for her extensive injuries.

Doctors determined that the woman had suffered several fractured ribs on both sides of her body, as well as contusions to her lower back and right shin. There was also visible swelling on the left side of the woman's face, as well as a burst lip. She told officers that the assault was not an isolated incident; however because De La Cruz was the breadwinner of the family, she has hesitated to report previous abuse.

Police made contact with the suspect on Tuesday, when he turned himself into the Domestic Violence Unit. He was arrested and charged with third-degree assault, aggravated assault, and disturbance of the peace, all as crimes of domestic violence. He was remanded into custody to await his advice of rights hearing.

In court on Wednesday, Magistrate Paula Norkaitis ordered bail set at \$5000, which De La Cruz will have to pay in full before being afforded pre-trial release. If he is able to remit that sum, he will be restricted to the St. Thomas/St. John district, and required to report to the probation office every week by telephone. He will be banned from the residence of his victim, and required to maintain a minimum distance of 20 feet from her at all times.

His next court appearance has been scheduled for October 25.

Editor's note: domestic violence is a serious issue in the Virgin Islands and across the nation. If you are seeking assistance in leaving or dealing with an abusive relationship, the Women's Coalition of St. Croix (24/7 Hotline 340-773-9272) and the Family Resource Center on St. Thomas 24/7 Hotline 340-776-7867) may be able to help.