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Man Arrested on Rape Charges After Minor Claims He Gave Her Marijuana, Pestered Her for Sex

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Mugshot of Dante James. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

ST. CROIX — A 26-year-old man was arrested on charges of rape after an explicit video was posted suggesting he and a minor girl had a sexual encounter.

The VIPD's Criminal Investigations Bureau began its probe into the matter on August 24, 2022, after a man made a report that there had been an explicit video of his minor sister posted on Facebook. It is believed that the video was made in 2021, when the girl was 16 years old.

Police made contact with the now-17 year old, who told them that the man alleged to be in the video, Dante James, had been her steelpan instructor when she was younger. When she got older, police heard, James befriended the girl on social media and by her account, the two developed a

strong friendship.

According to the narrative set out in documents presented before the court, the minor child one day asked James for a ride to a friend's house to collect some of her belongings. When they arrived, however, the friend was not at home. James then reportedly suggested they wait at the home of one of his friends, who lived nearby.

At the house, James and the minor reportedly watched television and smoked marijuana, until the older man began asking the teenager to have sex. After several requests on James's part, the girl says she agreed. Once it was over, James reportedly took her to her friend's house and then took her home.

Once she arrived home, the girl says James sent her a video of the two of them engaging in sexual intercourse. She says she asked James to delete the video, he agreed, and the two did not speak again until she found out on August 23, 2022 that the video had reportedly been uploaded to the social media site.

The girl says she called James to remind him about the agreement they had made to delete the video. James reportedly blamed his girlfriend and her best friend, who he accused of creating a Facebook account in the name of a fictional person and uploading the video. James then reportedly assured the girl that he would handle matters.

On August 25, 2022, James met with police and confirmed that he and the minor met when he was her steelpan instructor, back in 2016 or 2017. He claimed that she messaged him years later, in 2021, and agreed that the two struck up a close friendship.

James claimed that subsequently, with a new girlfriend in his life, his friendship with the minor cooled, as he did not want it to interfere with his new relationship.

That relationship ended, but James says that on August 2022, his ex came to his home to spend time with him. During the visit he told police he fell asleep, and when he woke up he noticed a shift in the woman's mood — she had become combative and eventually left the home. The two later spoke and she reportedly told him that she had been told that James was involved with other women. He says she returned to his house to argue, after which he noticed that his iPad was missing. Although his ex reportedly denied taking the device, James told police that he tracked it to a location near her home.

James told police that his ex informed him of a Facebook post containing the explicit footage. The faces of neither person in the video were visible, but the post accused him of having sex with a minor. James claims that it was the minor who had sent him an explicit video of herself, which he saved on his Snapchat account. He accused his ex-girlfriend of finding the video he had saved and leaking it to Facebook.

However, his ex told police that she had not spoken to James since mid-July, having broken up with him earlier that month. Further, she said that it was her friend that alerted her to the video in question, but that she did not view it since she was still feeling depressed about the breakup. The woman said that although she and James never spoke about the video, his mother called to inform her that James held her responsible for its circulation, an accusation she again denied.

As part of the police investigation, officers asked the minor child to take them to the home in Castle Coakley which James told her belonged to his friend. She led them to a location that turned out to be James's own residence.

James was subsequently apprehended and charged with second-degree rape and visual medium.

In court on Wednesday, a judge ruled that James be allowed to post \$5,000 cash with the remainder of the \$75,000 bail to be posted as an unsecured bond. He will also need to identify a suitable third-party custodian before being released.

James will be barred from leaving St. Croix without the court's written permission. He must surrender his passport and report to the Office of Probation once a week. James is to stay at least 1,000 ft away from the victim and have no contact, directly or indirectly with the victim or any witness. His next scheduled court appearance is on March 24, 2023.

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