

Good Samaritan's Quick Thinking Stops Alleged Kidnapping After Cryptic Note Discovery

A bystander helped an alleged kidnapping victim escape from her captor at a gas station in southern Utah.

Epigmenio Bustillos Marquez, 53, was arrested Saturday after Iron County Sheriff's deputies were called from the Cedar Band Travel Plaza near Cedar City, Utah, according to KSTU in Salt Lake City.

The woman who called emergency services said she received a note from a woman in the gas station while they were in the women's bathroom.

"I could just tell from the second that she handed me the paper that said, 'Help me, call police,' I knew that she was in trouble," the good Samaritan told the news outlet.

"I think she was really terrified that he was going to peek in, and he would have seen us."

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A picture of the note obtained by KSTU-TV included a call for help, identified the vehicle the victim was traveling in as a Chevrolet Equinox, and indicated that the alleged captor had her phone. The victim also included her phone number "to give police."

The witness took pictures of the white Equinox into which the victim entered, as well as the suspect, then followed the vehicle as it traveled northward on Interstate 15.

"I wasn't panicked or anything. I was just like, 'I'm not gonna let this lady not be helped,'" the woman said.

Police stopped the vehicle eight miles north of the gas station.

When they spoke with the woman in the passenger seat, she was not behaving normally and requested to leave the vehicle.

The victim told officers that she asked Marquez, with whom she has been in a relationship for 25 years, to drive her to her work at a hotel and casino in Las Vegas, but that Marquez started accusing her of cheating.

Marquez then allegedly threatened to take her to Salt Lake City or Denver – rather than her workplace.

The victim also said that Marquez took her phone and hit her in the mouth.

Marquez presented officers with an identification from Durango, Mexico, during the traffic stop, which had a false name and birth date.

The officers later found his actual identification, also from Mexico, in his wallet.

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Kimmi Wolf of the Utah Domestic Violence Coalition told KSTU-TV that the bystander may have saved the victim's life.

"Something as severe as domestic violence, false credentials,

kidnapping – all those indicators point to a high probability of lethality, and had this person been confronted in a different type of scenario, that could have ended very badly,” Wolf said.

“This is a situation that happens often to many people. It’s something we need to draw attention to; it’s not some weird one-off situation,” she added.

The victim is reportedly safe with her family and returning to work.

Marquez is meanwhile being held without bail in Iron County Jail.

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