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'Dark side of AI': How teen girl allegedly faked threats from 2 boys — and cops bought it



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Key Points

Kumayl Raza was arrested and charged after Rida Rustam accused him of sending her threatening, sexual messages.

Rustam later confessed to having fabricated the messages, and is facing charges herself.

An expert working for Raza's defense analyzed the teens' phones ultimately discovered the alleged ruse and informed police.

On the day of his high school graduation ceremony, class president Kumayl Raza was supposed to be delivering a commencement speech, but instead stood on his front lawn praying in pajamas while a SWAT team searched his house.

A girl had accused him of threatening to shoot up his graduation ceremony at Plymouth High School, the same girl who had accused him of sexually threatening and stalking her on Instagram, in text messages and emails, and convinced authorities to arrest and charge him based on screengrabs like this one:

"I'm gonna burn down ur house with u in it, then tie up ur f-----g burned body and choke u and f--- u so bad and shoot u in ur ugly f-----g face."

Raza insisted he never wrote such messages, and spent months professing his innocence. But no one would listen until his lawyer hired a digital forensic expert who discovered evidence that would vindicate the boy, and backfire on the girl.

Turns out, police records show, it was the girl who was creating the threatening messages and sending them to herself, which led to prosecutors dropping the charges against Raza — and charging the girl instead.

In a cautionary tale for parents, teenagers and law enforcement alike, Wayne County prosecutors are now pursuing criminal charges against an 18-year-old Plymouth Township girl for allegedly framing Raza *and* his best friend in a case that highlights the growing dangers of social media and the emerging world of artificial intelligence, where lies can be made to look like truths.

In this case, a teenager fooled the police for more than three months by repeatedly giving them threatening screenshots, emails, texts and handwritten notes — claiming they were from Raza and his friend, Ibraheem Haq, when she had allegedly created them all herself. According to the private forensic expert who investigated the case, she also used a popular AI engine to do a risk assessment of what she was doing, bought her own Virtual Private Network from a provider in Mexico City, and ran data through that VPN to throw off Instagram from tracking her location.

"That's kind of how she duped the police," said Avery Thompson, the cellphone forensic expert who investigated the case, stressing: "Law enforcement has to be very cautious about what is being presented to them as fact. ... I think this is going to occur more often as we integrate AI into our lives. This is kind of the dark side of AI."

According to Thompson, the local police didn't have the expertise or technology to figure out the frame job, and wouldn't discover it until Raza's graduation day. That's when Thompson got on a Zoom call with police officers as they raided Raza's house: "I showed them that she was creating all this chaos, not Kumayl."

The clues were all on the girl's cellphone, said Thompson, only the police had missed them.

Teenage heartache and rejection allegedly pushed high school girl to extremes

Plymouth Township Police Chief James Knittel declined to comment for this story, citing the ongoing criminal case against the girl: Rida Rustam, a college-bound honor student who was 18 when she allegedly started sending threatening messages to herself.

Rustam did not return requests for comment. Her parents declined to comment.

According to police records, Raza, his lawyer and Rustam's attorney, the case involves multiple factors: teenage heartache, rejection and flirty texts between two impressionable teens. The girl allegedly liked the boy, but he didn't like her in the same way and cut ties with her after she made him feel — as Raza put it — "uncomfortable." They didn't go to the same school, but were both part of a close-knit Pakistani Muslim community in metro Detroit, shared cultural and social ties, and met at a homeless shelter, where they tutored children.

Raza says their relationship was platonic and that Rustam wanted more.

But Rustam's lawyer, Mark Haider, said that's not the "whole truth." He alleges Raza sent his client messages that were sexual in nature, subjected her to sexual behavior, made fun of her afterward, then cut ties with her after returning from a religious pilgrimage. Asked if he had proof of this, Haider said he does not but that he believes his client.

Raza denied engaging in sexual communications or behavior with Rustam, saying this is just one more example of her being "manipulative" and "lying" to portray herself as a victim. And given all she put him through, he said, he's disappointed she's still making up lies.

Haider noted Rustam was dealing with two types of rejection: Raza had cut her off as a friend, and then had her removed from his student organization.

"What really triggered her was getting kicked out of that group," Haider said, noting his client had listed the organization on college applications, and feared fallout from her ouster.

"I think she had difficulty dealing not only with the rejection from the boy, but from losing that group that she was so dedicated to. She was growing in that organization, and then it was snatched away," said Haider, who stressed that he doesn't condone the girl's reaction to the rejection.

But she never went into this with "ill intent," said Haider, stressing his client is an inexperienced and impressionable adolescent.

"She's tremendously remorseful," Haider said. "Look, (her) family was fooled as well. Everybody got fooled. But now that the truth is out there, we're going to do everything we can to rectify the situation."

Haider, meanwhile, said this is a painful and difficult situation for Rustam and her family, too.

"I believe that many of the issues facing society today — especially young people, social media, harassment and mental health — are present and the dominating factors in this case," Haider said. "These are young lives here. ... For everyone involved in this it's a difficult time. I will do all I can to ease the pain for everyone."

'We've been terrorized'

For Raza, the pain has been excruciating. He was falsely accused of a crime, pulled out of class by a security officer, placed in a police cruiser in the school parking lot while students looked on, jailed for four nights, charged with felonies, arrested a second time and banned from giving his commencement speech.

The list of trauma goes on, all because, Raza says, he stopped communicating with Rustam, and eventually had her removed from his student organization because — he maintains — she wasn't fulfilling her duties.

It was after Rustam got kicked out of the club, police records show, that she launched her alleged payback scheme, which included messaging herself threats on platforms such as TextNow, Instagram and Gmail. She created an Instagram account that mimicked Raza's legitimate account by adding an extra character, according to the report. She would then send herself threats using this account, but then altered the screenshots by removing the extra character before taking the images to the police.

In a June interview with police, Rustam admitted to lying about all the threats, according to her confession obtained by the Free Press. As she told police in the interview, she created the ruse because she "was mad" at Raza and his best friend, and wanted to get them both "into trouble." It worked as Haq - Raza's friend and vice president of the student group that the girl was kicked out of - also got arrested, charged with stalking, and jailed four three nights — though his charges were also dropped.

And two lives nearly got destroyed in the process.

"We've been terrorized," said Sara Syeda, Raza's still-reeling mother, who blames much of her family's nightmare on what she described as "police incompetence."

"We are extremely disappointed in the Plymouth (Township) Police Department for being fooled by a teenager," said Syeda, noting she remains perplexed at how and why police "just blindly believe photoshopped messages?"

"My entire family was terrorized because of their incompetence," Syeda said.

On a recent afternoon in her living room, Syeda fought back tears as she recalled the April day her son was pulled out of his AP literature class by a school security officer, and the nightmare that transpired. Her teenage son — an honor student,

class president and student council president who had never been in trouble before — would wind up in handcuffs that afternoon, then in jail, accused of threatening a girl he had befriended his junior year in high school.

According to police records, Rustam had gone to the police with numerous claims that Raza was sending her threats through his Instagram account, "spoofed" phone numbers, and notes that she claimed she had discovered in her backpack while at school, including one that read: "I can get to you anywhere." After his arrest, she continued to go to the police with more alleged threats from Raza, though she took her ruse to another level on June 8 — when she went to the police station with a screenshot of an email indicating that Raza was planning to shoot up his high school graduation ceremony, and allegedly stated in the email that it is "all ur fault."

Rustam also went so far as to send a threatening message to herself, pretending it was from Raza's mother's Instagram account, because — as she told police — "she was mad at Raza's mom and wanted to get her into trouble."

Syeda, meanwhile, has little to no mercy for Rustam, and wants her to pay for what she put her family through — especially her son.

"We want her to go to prison," Syeda said. "She absolutely needs to go to prison to learn her lesson. That's what justice looks like to us."

Raza and his family, meanwhile, don't view themselves as the only victims here, stressing it's false accusations like these that hurt the real victims of sexual violence, threats and harassment, who may not be believed in the wake of cases like his.

"She abused the MeToo movement, and this hurts the real victims," Syeda said.

False reporting of such violence, however, is rare.

According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, the prevalence of

false reporting for sexual assault crimes is low – between 2% and 10%.

Family's lawyer: 'The police were manipulated so badly here'

Raza was jailed twice since getting pulled out of class in April, and then hauled to the police station in handcuffs. He recalled the humiliation of being driven away in a patrol car while kids at school looked on, and the jolt of pain he felt when a police officer told him: "I have a warrant for your arrest."

"I started bawling," recalled Raza, who was shocked and confused, unable to process what was happening.

In the following days, thoughts of suicide crept in. He began to feel depressed, hopeless, powerless. Many in his close-knit Pakistani community had begun to shun his family, as the rumor mill went into overdrive. And a judge scoffed at Raza when he was arrested a second time over more alleged threats. Raza's lawyer was arguing for a \$10,000 bond, telling the judge there was no evidence his client had sent any of the alleged messages, and that they believed the girl was sending the messages, and were working on proving that.

But the judge set his bond at \$100,000 anyway. Raza and his lawyer were frustrated, especially after the judge told them that he considered the police to be "very thorough."

"I didn't find him guilty of anything. It was just an arraignment," 35th District Judge James Plakas told the Free Press in a recent interview, in which he explained his reasoning for sticking to a \$100,000 bond.

At that arraignment, a police officer had encouraged the judge to keep a tether on Raza and not lower his bond. According to a transcript of that hearing, the officer stated: "There's an overwhelming amount of evidence and data that we've gone through and evidence that supports our claims."

Plakas said that given what he knew at the time, he considered the allegations to

be "very concerning," and so set a bond that would ensure Raza returned to court, and kept the community and alleged victim safe.

"Just because someone says in a 9-minute conversation, 'This may be a hoax and something smells funny,' am I supposed to say no tether at all and roll the dice ... and see what happens and hope that nothing bad happens to the girl. It's not an easy thing to be a judge, especially during an arraignment. I didn't say I didn't believe the kid."

Despite what's happened since that arraignment — the girl being charged — Plakas said he doesn't regret his bond decision. And he's not surprised by the turn of events.

"It's amazing how easy it is for people to ruin other people's lives just by lying and making allegations. And it happens to everybody all day long ... especially with this social media world we live in," Plakas said, adding: "I didn't think it was bad police work. When it comes down to it — people lie all day long and try to bring people down."

Meanwhile, Raza's lawyer believes the police failed his client and tormented his family.

"These people have been through hell," said Raza's lawyer, Michael Bullotta, a former federal prosecutor with extensive experience in computer fraud crimes and corruption.

"The police were manipulated so badly here," Bullotta said. "My beef is that the police didn't just use common sense."

She went to police repeatedly

According to police records obtained by the Free Press, including Rustam's initial police statement and subsequent confession, here are the events that led police to arrest Raza in the final months of his senior year in high school, and the

accusations that triggered criminal charges:

- February 2025: Rustam went to the Plymouth Township Police lobby to file a harassment complaint, alleging an unknown individual kept sending her messages through "spoofed" phone numbers. "(She) suspected it was an ex-boyfriend, Raza, and associates, and only wanted the incident documented at the time," the police report states.
- March 11, 2025: Rustam and her mother went to the police station, alleging that someone had placed threatening notes in her backpack at school. One note stated: "I can get you anywhere." She told police that she believed Raza had authored the note, and that she "decided to seek prosecution."
- March 20, 2025: Rustam reports getting more threatening notes in her backpack, including one that stated: "I am not writing this but it's from me. Pls don't get me in trouble. Please don't show anyone the Insta (Instagram screenshot.)" For the rest of the month, she continued to accuse Raza and his best friend of threatening her through Instagram, and provided police with screenshots at each visit.
- April 4, 2025: Rustam reports receiving a threatening message from Raza's Instagram account, telling her he was going to "burn down" her house with her in it, then tie her up and rape her and shoot her in the face. Raza gets pulled out of class that day and is arrested. His friend, Haq, gets arrested at his home, where police showed up at 1:30 a.m. with flashlights.

High school boys get charged, but the accusations continue

Following their arrests, the two friends were both charged with aggravated stalking and using a computer to commit a crime. If convicted, they would have each faced up to seven years in prison and/or \$10,000 in fines.

Meanwhile, the accusations continued.

On May 20, Rustam alleged that she found a note in her home mailbox, telling her that things had "gone too far" and that she needed to "stop" so everything can "go back to normal. ... Show this to anyone and ur dead."

On May 25, she alleged receiving an email from a Gmail account, telling her: "It's so easy to frame you" and "u will never win b----. ... I'll make you regret everything ... when I get out of this ur my first target."

On June 8 came the graduation shooting threat.

That allegation triggered a massive police response to USA Hockey Arena in Plymouth — where Plymouth High School was holding its commencement ceremony — out of fear of a credible shooting threat. It also led to a raid of Raza's home in Canton. It was during that search that Thompson — the forensic expert who was hired by Raza's lawyer — got on a Zoom call with two officers, and told them he had evidence that Raza was being set up.

The next day, during a re-evaluation of data recovered from Rustam's iPad and two iPhones, police would discover the alleged ruse.

Forensic expert: 'Within an hour, I saw her as a suspect, not a victim'

Thompson, the forensic expert who helped crack the case, is a former police officer who spent 20 years in law enforcement in Alaska. He now works with Denali Defense Solutions, an Alaska-based private investigative and consulting firm that — among other things — helps criminal defense lawyers with their cases. He explained how he uncovered the alleged setup:

On June 6, two days before Raza's graduation, Thompson said he obtained — through a process known as discovery — a forensic copy of all the information on the girl's two iPhones. He said police had her iPhones for about two months and had inspected them, but never found the incriminating evidence.

Thompson said it took him about an hour to figure out that Raza was being framed. He did this by analyzing the contents of the boy's cellphone, which he said showed a lack of evidence. But when he isolated the data on the girl's cellphone, he said, there was "a ton of evidence."

"Within an hour, I saw her as a suspect, not a victim," Thompson said, noting he quickly discovered the fake accounts she had created, and was stunned at the level of sophistication of her scheme — like buying a VPN to throw off Instagram from tracking her location.

"What stood out to me was the depth that she went to. This kid got arrested and put in jail, yet she still continued," Thompson said.

Thompson maintains the police focused more on proving the girl's claims than digging deeper into her cellphone to verify them. He said that while he does not fault the police for initially arresting Raza, he would not have pursued charging the boy until the girl's phone was carefully analyzed.

"I don't believe they were on the right path," Thompson said of the Plymouth Township police, maintaining the charges "would have absolutely stuck" against Raza had he not discovered the alleged ruse.

"While police may a lot of times do the right thing, they may not have the resources to do so," said Thompson, noting he understands first-hand the difficulties police face in solving crimes, especially with limited resources. Still, he said, the Raza case left him with an unsettling feeling: "Oh my gosh, how often does this happen?"

Police obtain confession: 'I know my life is over'

On June 12, four days after Thompson alerted the police about his hoax discovery, detectives presented Rustam with evidence from her phone.

"(She) confessed that she had been providing false information to law

enforcement since the very first report in February 2024," a police report states, noting she admitted to creating all the harassing messages herself.

The handwritten notes in her backpack. The threatening note in her mailbox. The fake screenshots of Raza allegedly threatening her and planning to shoot up his graduation, fake messages of other students allegedly conspiring against her, and fake threats from Raza's friend, Haq.

"She said she reported these messages to law enforcement to get Haq and Raz into trouble," a police report states, noting Rustam told police "she was mad at them."

"She said she never intended for things to go 'this far' and did not specifically intend for them to get arrested," the report states. "She said she 'felt bad' each time they got in trouble but was unable to stop herself."

According to the police report, Rustam "declined to put her confession in writing."

"She acknowledged the severity of her actions and stated, 'I know my life is over,'" the police report states. "(She) appeared stoic during her confession with little signs of remorse."

Rustam was arrested that day and jailed. On June 13, she was charged with four counts of making a false report of a felony; six counts of using a computer to commit a crime; four counts of lying to a police officer; and two counts of stalking. If convicted, punishments for the crimes range from one to five years in prison.

Second victim recounts nightmare: My mom fainted when police showed up

The same day Rustam was charged, the criminal charges were dropped against Raza and his best friend, Haq, who was also traumatized by her accusations.

Haq was arrested at 1:30 a.m. at his home. When police showed up at the door with flashlights, his mom fainted. Paramedics were called. Haq didn't want his mom to witness him in handcuffs, so he asked his dad for a favor.

"I had to ask permission from my dad to get arrested in the garage since they were so persistent," Haq said in a recent statement to the Free Press, noting he also pleaded with police to arrest him in the garage rather than in front of his panic-stricken mother. "The only thing I could think about when I was in 'juvey' was how my mom was doing because the last time I saw her, she was laying on the floor having a panic attack."

Haq said he suffered for weeks after his arrest, but is doing better now.

"My whole family was emotionally distraught and it was a really bad time for everyone," Haq said. "It took more than two months of stress and emotional pressure to be finally found innocent."

In a July 23 statement to the Free Press, the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office did not explain its decision to charge Raza, saying only that as soon as it "was advised that the evidence did not support charges against (Raza), the case was immediately dismissed with prejudice."

That means Raza's case cannot be prosecuted again. The same for Haq.

As for the pending case against the girl, the prosecutor's office would only say that "the facts and evidence supported charging her."

'I hope you get the help you need'

With the worst behind him, Raza is now looking forward to his future as he prepares to start college at the University of Pennsylvania in the fall.

"Finally, I'm done being tortured," he said one recent afternoon, smiling as he sat on the sofa across from his mom.

Raza, a devout Muslim, says he's not bitter or angry and that his ordeal actually strengthened his faith. He prayed constantly, he said, never losing sight that God was always with him.

As for the girl who upended his life, he said he feels badly for her. According to Raza, the two had met in the fall of 2023 at a homeless shelter, where they were tutoring children. The girl expressed an interest in Raza's nonprofit, Students Empowering Students, and later joined the group. She would run the Troy chapter.

Eventually, Raza said, the two became friends, and she would confide in him about various personal struggles. But as time passed, he said, she wanted more than just a friendship, and it made him uncomfortable, especially, he said, after she asked him to read her college essay. It was about him, he said. She had written that he had changed her life.

"I just helped her get into a club," said Raza, noting that the girl also confided in him with many personal issues, and that he often felt bad for her. But they were just platonic friends, he said.

"I'm just disappointed," Raza said of the fallout. "She just ruined her life over nothing."

And she almost ruined his life, he noted, stressing there's a need for justice in this case, and more importantly, for the girl to learn that what she did was wrong.

Raza said he forgives the girl and doesn't hate her, but wants her to know that she "really needs help."

"I hope you get the help you need," Raza said, "so that you don't do this to anyone else."

Editor's note: This story was updated to include additional information.

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