

Min

Age: 18

Grade: 12 (repeat year)

Pronouns: She/Her

Min was raised in South Korea with her parents and younger brother, in a close-knit family with strong values. Her parents worked outside the home.

When she was 17, Min found an online ad offering Asian students a free flight to Canada with room and board in exchange for some part-time work after school. Min jumped at the opportunity with the hopes of having a brighter future for herself and her family. Although concerned, Min's family was proud of her and agreed to let her go.

She flew out to her new life and received a warm welcome from her host family, who immediately offered to keep her identification papers "tucked away" in a safe. She was enrolled as an international student in a school nearby where she achieved high grades. She made a few friends and enjoyed her new setting.

As soon as she turned 18, the host family picked her up from school, told Min she would have to start working after school and brought her to her new workplace, an adult entertainment club. She had to dance and "entertain" the audience, who were mostly men.

Being from a strict Christian background, she felt uneasy, but understood what the host family expected of her. She was paid well but had to give 70 per cent of her earnings to the host family to pay for her food and housing expenses. The remaining 30 per cent was sent to her parents back home.

Min had one close school friend named Lee. They shared a few classes, always had lunch together and spent some time doing homework in the library. Min told Lee that her host family got her a job that paid well and allowed her to send money back to her family. At first, Min did not disclose any details about her job, but eventually told Lee that she was a dancer in a club. Her relationship with Lee slowly changed.

After a few months, there was a noticeable change in Min's appearance and demeanor. Both were declining, as were her grades, although she never missed a day of school. As the months went by, Min became slimmer, looking very tired, and changed her hair colour to platinum blonde. She also began wearing blue contact lenses. Lee told her mother about her friend's changes. Lee's mother called the school and spoke to the vice-principal about concerns for Min.

When the vice-principal called Min to the office and asked if everything was all right, Min answered that she was working extra shifts to send more money back home. When asked where she was working, Min hesitated then broke down and replied, "The Kitty Cat Club. I used to be a dancer, but now I must do other things, and do not like it." She shared that she thought that her host family was part of a large, organized crime ring of human traffickers who smuggle young women and girls from Asian countries and traffick them for sexual and labour purposes. She said that she wanted out, but her passport and documents were locked in a safe. The vice-principal realized that Min did not know that this is a crime in Canada and that there is help for her to get out.



What are the immediate concerns?

What are your long-term concerns?

In your role as school administrator, what future staff development arises as a result of this case study?

Ask yourself

- Is there a duty to report anything at this point? To whom?
- Could there be other students or schools involved?
- What, if any, implications are there for deportation?

What would it look like if...?

- Min was 16 years old?
- Min's parents contacted the school with concerns about their daughter.

Min's parents were not fluent in English?