



Survivor of human trafficking and sex slavery on set for film shooting in Kirkland

By Carrie Wood, KIRKLAND REPORTER
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A Russian mob had taken her identity long ago inside a dark warehouse.



But now, on a sunny afternoon, the Korean-American walked past the long white trailers that lined Seventh Street in the Norkirk neighborhood, stopping at her

dressing room marked with her name - [Chong Kim](#).

A film crew assistant invited Kim to the set - the inside of a [Kirkland house](#) - and asked her if she needed a chair. Another worker brought her a coke. Cast members, hair dressers and makeup artists introduced themselves.

Kim felt like a celebrity.

But amidst the glitz and glam of filmmaking, Kim was confronted with a stark past.

The movie, "[Eden](#)," that was partially being filmed in Kirkland Thursday was inspired by her true story as a survivor of domestic human trafficking and sexual slavery. The film stars actress [Jamie Chung](#) and actor [Beau Bridges](#).

Eden Productions was on its 13th day of shooting the feature film, which is being shot entirely in Washington State.

Kim came to Kirkland from Texas to meet the producers for the first time on Thursday.

"It's just so unreal," she said as she watched actors clad in shiny black pants and netted shirts disappear inside the house to play their parts.

"Rolling!" A crew member called.

Kim was 19 when she was trafficked and forced into sexual slavery in 1995. She was studying law enforcement at a technical college in Dallas when she met a soldier at a bar.

"He pretended to be my boyfriend," she recalled.

The man kidnapped Kim, chained her up in the basement of an abandoned house in Oklahoma and destroyed all of her documents. He threatened her and said if she left she would lose her rights and be treated like an illegal alien.

After escaping, a woman from an escort service offered to help. She told Kim she would get paid to go on dates with men. Once she accepted the job, she was raped and sold to who she refers to as her "master" in Las Vegas.

"My traffickers were organized criminals," she explained. "I lived in a distribution warehouse - it



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wasn't like a brothel or a massage parlor."

In the warehouse, woman and young girls slept on old mats.

"It was kind of like a human market," Kim said, noting women were forced to service up to 35 men per day. "The girls were tapped on the shoulder to be marketed out. Sometimes the girls came back - sometimes they didn't."

During her two-plus years of sexual exploitation, she was transported with about 50 other girls from warehouse to warehouse throughout the country.

Time did not exist.

"When you are being held, there is no clock, no light," she said. "There were times when it would feel like it was forever."

She eventually became a madam and escaped in 1997. "I had to rank up in order to get out," she said, noting her frustration with people asking her why she didn't escape sooner. "It's not like I wanted to be a madam - I did it with the intent to get out."

It took several years for Kim to realize what happened to her. She was interning as a legal advocate for a law firm in 2003 when she heard a Russian woman talk about her human trafficking experience.

"I didn't think of it as human trafficking. In the 90s, we didn't hear of trafficking," said Kim. When she heard the woman's story "I said, 'oh my gosh - she's telling my story.'"

Kim started to speak out about her experience. That is when Seattle native Rick Philips saw a newspaper article and contacted her in 2005. With Kim's help via email, Philips wrote and completed the script four years later.

Colin Plank, who is co-producing the movie with [Jacob Mosler](#) - both Seattle natives - said most of the film crew are local. Director [Megan Griffith](#) is also from Seattle.

He noted the film is funded in part by a non-profit organization, [Washington Filmworks](#), which supports the state's film industry. Eden Productions is shooting the film in-state for 25 days. Earlier in the week, the company filmed outside footage in [Ellensburg](#) and on Friday they moved to Lynwood to shoot a scene at a warehouse.

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