

# Stalked by her Lyft driver

*He came to her work and her home. He's been mailing her letters. But Multnomah County denied her request for a stalking order.*



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

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It was 9:47 p.m. on a Friday night, and Rachel Montana was headed to Old Town to bartend the closing shift at the Dixie Tavern.

She ordered a Lyft and hopped in the nondescript sedan that showed up at her home to deliver the ride.

As she sat in the back seat, she opened her phone to create a promotional post on her public Facebook page. It was May 5 and she had to let her nearly 5,000 followers know they should come down to Dixie for “Cinco De Drinko,” where she’d be serving up tequila that holiday weekend.

Montana, a petite 26-year-old with ever-changing hair color and a spattering of tattoos, said the Dixie requires that its bartenders promote themselves on social media before each of their shifts.

She goes by “Rachel Montana” on her profile and when she’s working. It’s not her real name, and for her safety, it’s the only name we’re using in this story.

As she stared down at her phone, the Lyft driver asked her, “What are you watching?”

Montana immediately felt uneasy. She takes Lyft rides almost daily, and said she’s never had a driver make her feel that way before.

It became clear he wanted to talk. As a bartender, she was used to making polite conversation, she said, so she chatted with him until she arrived at work at 9:57 p.m.

The ride lasted 10 minutes, and she doesn’t remember details of the conversation.

She got out, thanked him and gave him a five-star rating and a 20 percent tip. “Like I always do with every driver,” she said.

Three weeks later, while she was working a busy Saturday shift, two men approached her bar and ordered Grey Goose and orange juice around 1 a.m. She poured the drinks, ran the credit card and set down the receipt.

“Your name’s Rachel, right? I was your Lyft

driver,” said one of the men.

“As soon as he said that, even though I’ve taken so many Lyfts in the last three weeks, I instantly recognized him as the guy who made me feel weird,” she said.

He complimented her appearance and began to ask her personal questions. She said being friendly is a job requirement, so she reluctantly obliged.

He asked if she was still taking a trip to Costa Rica. She must have mentioned this during the Lyft ride but was alarmed he remembered a detail like that three weeks later when he must have given hundreds of rides since then.

His questions continued, and in a matter of a few minutes, he knew where she was attending college, he confirmed that the house where he picked her up three weeks earlier was her home, and he knew how many roommates she had.

“I was trying to be as vague as possible,” she said, “but he kept pushing for more details.”

He ordered another round of drinks and left his card open.

At that point, Montana took his card out front to show the lead security guard his name. She pointed him out and told security that once he left, he was never to be allowed back.

The name on the card was Michael Chi.

Chi is a 37-year-old from San Jose, Calif., whose address was last listed as an Extended Stay America hotel in Beaverton. He does not have a criminal record.

Chi approached Montana for a third round of screwdrivers and then asked her what she was doing after work. At this point she’d had enough. She told him that his line of questioning was making her uncomfortable and that she was done serving him drinks.

He apologized and left without incident.

For the next three weeks, Montana kept to her routine: school during the day, bartending weekends and otherwise at home.

On Thursday, June 14, she left town to bartend at What the Festival, a weekend music and art

festival 90 miles east of Portland.

That Saturday, Chi went to the Dixie Tavern to ask her co-workers if they knew where she had gone.

Montana wonders if Chi had noticed her break routine.

On Monday, Montana returned home about 7 p.m. from the festival. She walked in the front door of her house, unloaded her camping gear in the kitchen and headed upstairs to tell her roommate about her weekend.

She’d been home only about five minutes when there was a knock on the front door. She walked downstairs and answered it. There stood Chi.

“Rachel ...” he said.

“No,” she replied.

“No?”

“No.” She closed the door and locked it.

Did he know she had just arrived home? Had he been watching her house?

She told her roommates that the man who gave her a Lyft ride six weeks ago had just come to their home. Concerned, three of them ran outside looking for him, but he was gone.

Montana got on the phone with Lyft to lodge a complaint and was told that without a police report, there was nothing they could do.

She hung up and immediately phoned the Portland police non-emergency number, and then she jumped in the shower to wash off five days of camping and bartending before the officer arrived to take a report.

Her roommate burst into the bathroom a few minutes later to tell her that Chi had come back to the house and left a note in the mailbox attached to their front door.

When North Precinct Officer Tom Snitily showed up, Montana gave him the note and explained what had happened.

Chi’s note said he wanted to open a travel business with Montana and pay for her to travel

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