



Written by [Lenore Skenazy](#) on May 5, 2023

No, Her Kids Were NOT Almost Kidnapped

“My children were the targets of attempted kidnap,” Katie Sorensen, 31, announced in a viral two-part video on Instagram two years ago.

Last week, the “mom influencer” was found guilty of falsely accusing a couple of trying to abduct her kids. She faces a fine and up to six months in jail.

What happened?

In December of 2020 Sorensen was at a Michaels craft store in Petaluma, California, when she began to suspect that the couple in line behind her were preparing to snatch her children, ages 1 and 4.



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When she told the police she felt she’d been the victim of a near-kidnapping, they investigated and found nothing.

So, Sorensen took to social media to say how close a call she’d just endured. After her breathless video was viewed more than 4 million times, Sorensen did an interview on the local TV station. In these two appearances, Sorensen elaborated on the incident and said the couple had followed her to her car, tried to grab her stroller and were working with an accomplice — whereupon the police felt compelled to reopen the case.

They showed Sorensen the store’s security camera footage, and she identified a Hispanic couple as the perps. The cops put their photo out on social media. It spread quickly and soon one of the couple’s own children saw it and said, “Is this you?”

The couple turned themselves in, the police questioned them, and closed the case yet again. Then came three false accusation charges for Sorensen. The jury deliberated for almost a day and found her guilty of one of them.

Seeing Sorensen pay the price for her falsehoods does not fill me with glee. I wish she’d simply paused before spreading them. I have no idea if she believed them or was looking for a little “Mama Bear” glory. But either way, if she only knew how trite her story was — it’s actually an [urban myth](#) — maybe she’d have seen how unlikely the danger was, too.

Strangely, I keep a file of Facebook posts by moms claiming their kids were nearly kidnapped and sex-trafficked from the store. They almost always go something like this:

- 1) The mom had a spidey sense someone was watching her kids from down the aisle at (name of store).
- 2) Usually that someone just somehow seemed suspicious (i.e., another ethnicity).
- 3) Darned if that suspicious person didn’t show up in a DIFFERENT aisle where the mom was, *just a few minutes later!*
- 4) THEN the suspicious person stood behind the mom in line, buying only one or two things — clearly



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just a pretense to look like a “shopper.”

5) Meanwhile: There’s a van outside.

6) *It has a door open.*

7) It was only the mom’s amazing instincts that saved the day! She called the manager, or ran to her car, or refused to leave the store until the “perps” drove away.

8) And did you know that HER TOWN IS THE NO. 2 SEX TRAFFICKING HOTSPOT in the ENTIRE UNITED STATES! (It does not matter what town the mom is writing from. It’s always the second most dangerous one.)

And then a zillion commenters congratulate the mom for being so brave, and thank God she kept those babies safe!

With so many stories like that circulating, moms understandably worry that public kidnappings are rampant.

But they may also, even subconsciously, realize those stories are also a way to gain sympathy and “likes.” Nothing sells like an almost sex-trafficked kid.

So, I asked David Finkelhor, head of the Crimes Against Children Research Center: How many children ARE snatched by strangers in scenarios like that?

“Nobody’s abducting 1- and 4-year-old kids into sex trafficking,” he replied.

That’s good information to have next time somebody happens to look at your kid at the store.

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