

NEWS

This millionaire faked his own kidnapping and death — with the FBI's help

By Michael Kaplan

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Ninus Malan had to fake his own murder and kidnapping in order to keep himself from getting kidnapped and murdered for real.

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Ninus Malan knows what it's like to be dead — thanks to the FBI.

In 2018, the bureau arranged for the San Diego businessman's faked kidnapping and murder so that they could catch the people who wanted him actually dead.

"Though it was fake, it seemed real," the millionaire said of the staged scene. "I'm still having nightmares."

It all started on November 14, 2018, when Malan and his girlfriend were roused from slumber by a ringing doorbell at 6 a.m. Seven FBI agents were outside his door.

"I was completely scared," Malan, a divorced father of four, told The Post. "I had never met an FBI agent in my life. I asked what was going on. One told me, 'Your life is in danger. You'll need to come with us.'"

The feds asked Malan, now 41, who would possibly want to harm him.

His first thought: his former business partner of some 10 years, Salam Razuki, with whom he was in a heated legal dispute over ownership of real estate that included marijuana dispensaries, shopping malls and gas stations. Some \$45 million was in contention.



Malan worked with the FBI to stage his own “death” after his former business partner and associates tried to hire a hitman to kidnap and possibly kill him.

Courtesy of Ninus Malan

The feds heard the name and told Malan that he would need to pose for photos to save his life. But they needed to move fast and couldn't give more information than that, he claimed.

“After about three minutes of consideration, I agreed,” he said. Then they created a murder scene in my house.”

First, Malan was duct-taped to a kitchen chair. “They gagged me and put makeup on my face so that I would appear to have been beaten to a bloody pulp,” he said, recalling the gruesome 90-minute photo shoot. “One request [from the people who wanted to harm him] was that I get shot in the face. So they poured fake blood all over my face. They ripped my shirt and overturned the chair [with him taped to it].”

After surrendering their electronic devices and being told to not call their relatives or attorneys, Malan and his girlfriend were put in a Suburban and sped to a San Diego hotel room. There, the couple were locked in and a guard stood watch for what promised to be an indeterminate period. The TV, as well as the hotel phone, was removed from the room.



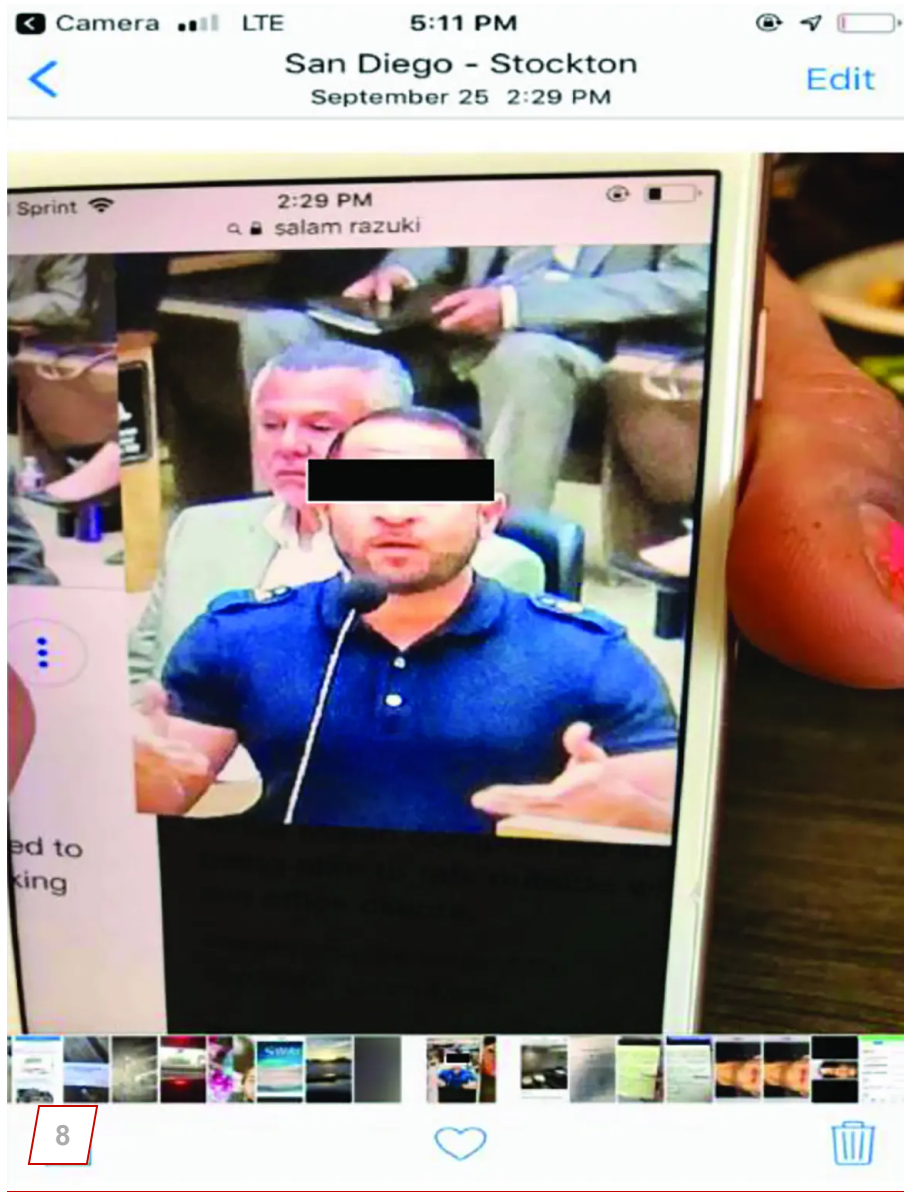
Salam Razuki, Malan's former business partner, was among three people sentenced for the would-be kidnapping and murder of Malan.

ABC 10 News San Diego

"We played Monopoly," Malan said. "Food came to the room. My anxiety was high. My girlfriend was in disbelief. I had trouble breathing. It felt like a nightmare. The FBI would not tell me what was going on."

What was going on, as he found out days later, was the culmination of a month-long investigation in which Razuki and two employees, Sylvia Gonzalez and Elizabeth Juarez, allegedly arranged to have Malan kidnapped and killed in Mexico, according to the complaint.

Malan still isn't really sure why the women were involved,. "Sylvia Gonzalez and Elizabeth Juarez were working for Razuki," he said. "Maybe they were trying to impress their boss."



This photo of Malan was sent to a would-be hitman — actually a government informant — for identification in planning the job.

U.S. District Court

As for Razuki, Malan claimed, “Salam was upset that I filed a cross complaint against him. He was spending a lot on attorney fees and thought it was a smarter business decision to hire someone to kidnap me, take me to Mexico and have me killed, than to continue litigating.”

According to court papers, Razuki and his alleged co-conspirators unwittingly found a would-be hitman who was actually an FBI informant.

During a meeting at the Great Maple restaurant in San Diego, according to a federal complaint, Gonzalez told the would-be hitman, “I would love for [Malan] to go to [Tijuana] and get lost. Just leave him over there ... He’s costing me too much money.”

Malan said, “I have no idea why she would say that. The women were never business partners of mine.”



The kidnapping and murder plan was plotted at The Great Maple restaurant in San Diego.

Google Maps

While, according to the complaint, Gonzalez said “You don’t have to kill him, you don’t have to put him off the face of this earth,” she also made “a slashing movement across her neck, indicating she wanted [Malan] to be killed.”

Additionally, the complaint states, Razuki and Gonzales told the would-be hitman that they wanted him to “shoot [Malan] in the face” — which later influenced the FBI’s staged photos.

Gonzalez and Juarez also expressed a desire to “put the turkey” — meaning Malan — “up to roast before Thanksgiving,” according to the sentencing memo.



Elizabeth Juarez (left) and Sylvia Gonzalez arranged to have Malan kidnapped and killed in Mexico.

U.S. District Court

Then it got worse.

At a later meeting, at Banbu Sushi Bar and Grill in San Diego, “Gonzalez said she wanted to watch and wanted [Malan] to know it came from [her and Razuki],” the complaint states. However, co-conspirator Juarez cautioned against witnessing the act because, according to the complaint, “it would be gruesome and haunt [Gonzalez].”

Juarez allegedly stated that it “wasn’t her first rodeo.” She referenced a previous incident involving “a female from Vista, California, who was drugged and kidnapped.”

After dinner, the complaint states, Juarez asked the would-be hitman to photograph her with Gonzalez, saying, “You can take a picture of us when we were going to get rid of the midget [Malan].”



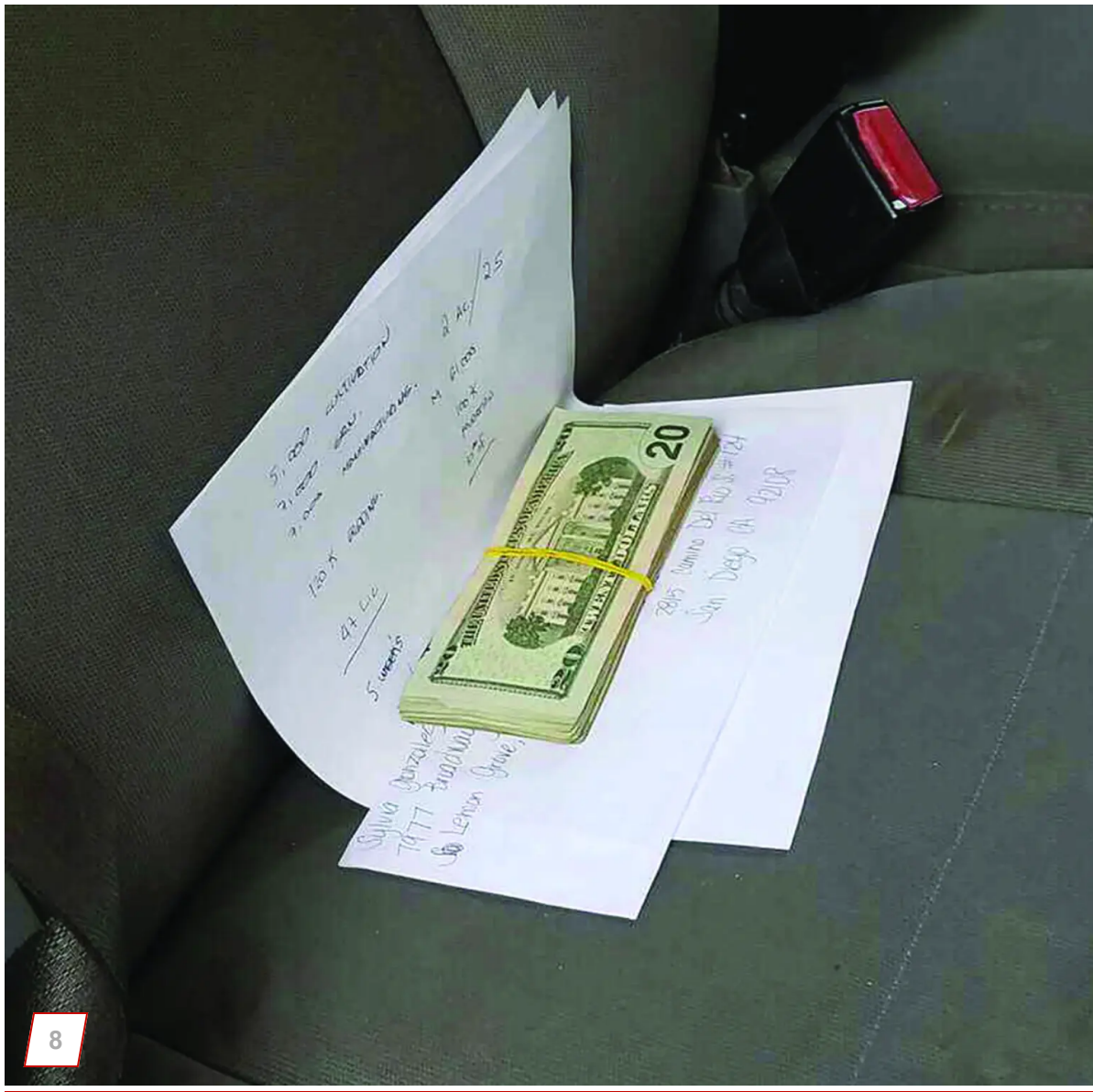
Goldn Bloom dispensary in San Diego was one of the real-estate properties in Malan's dispute with Razuki.

Google Maps

Later that night, the would-be hitman confirmed with Gonzalez that he could kidnap and murder Malan, agreeing on \$2,000 for the job and \$1,000 upfront as a downpayment. According to the complaint, Gonzalez walked into the Goldn Bloom cannabis dispensary, one of the businesses from the lawsuit dispute between Malan and Razuki, and "returned with \$1,000 cash."

By the morning of November 15, 2018, one day after he and his girlfriend had been taken to the hotel, Malan's family was panicked because he was not responding to calls and texts.

"I got a call from my uncle's ex wife; she said he was missing," Malan's nephew Ephrem "Junior" Malan told The Post. "We thought he was dead. Everyone was crying. My uncle was always on his phone, always responding, and he rarely left San Diego."



8

This is the \$1,000 that Gonzalez gave the would-be hitman as a down payment.

U.S. District Court

Meanwhile, according to the complaint, FBI agents were closing the loop in capturing Razuki, Juarez and Gonzalez. Later that day, the would-be hitman met with Razuki to present the evidence of Malan's "death."

Told that the deed was taken care of, Razuki replied: "I'm okay with it. I don't want to see it." Then he instructed the would-be hitman to collect his second payment from Gonzalez.

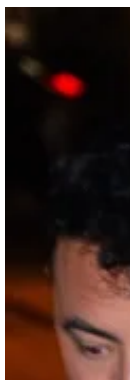
Later that day, Gonzalez was arrested and denied involvement in any conspiracy to kidnap and kill Malan. Juarez was arrested on November 16 and said she did not think the group would go through with it. Razuki was arrested the same day and claimed that he thought it was a joke.

Finally, Malan recalled, "[The FBI] told me that they had three people in custody. They said, 'You are welcome to go home.'"

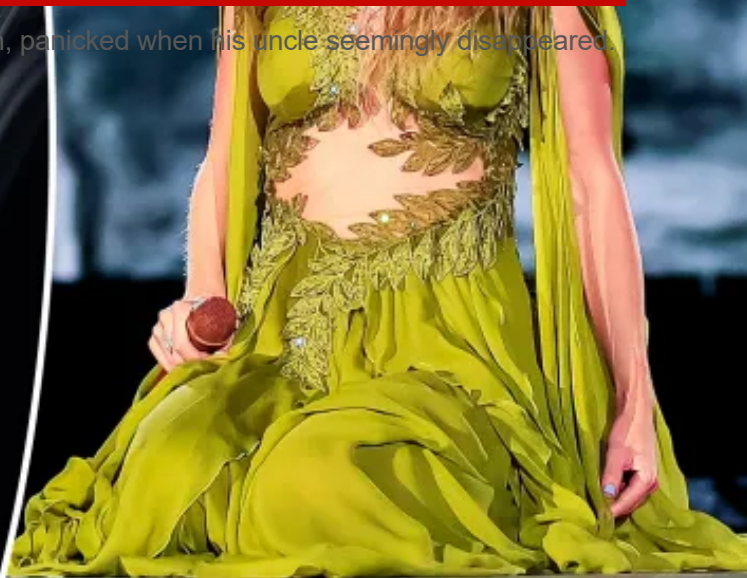
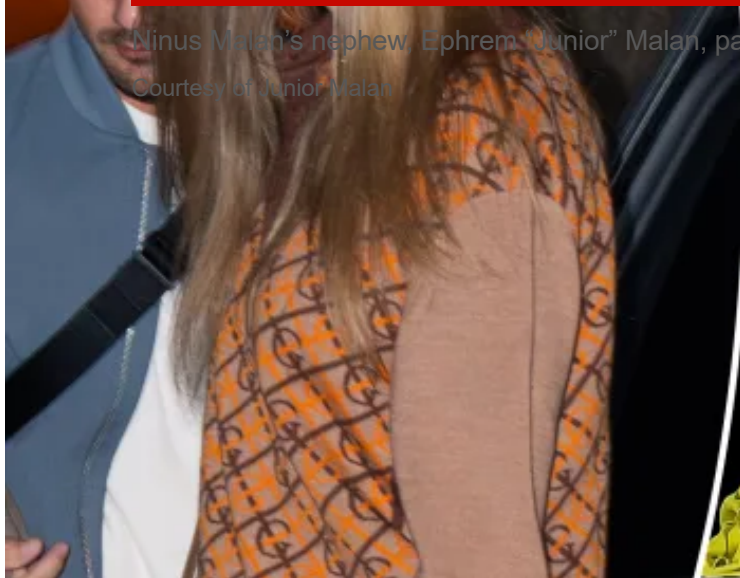


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PAGE 5



Ninus Malan's nephew, Ephrem "Junior" Malan, panicked when his uncle seemingly disappeared.
 Courtesy of Junior Malan

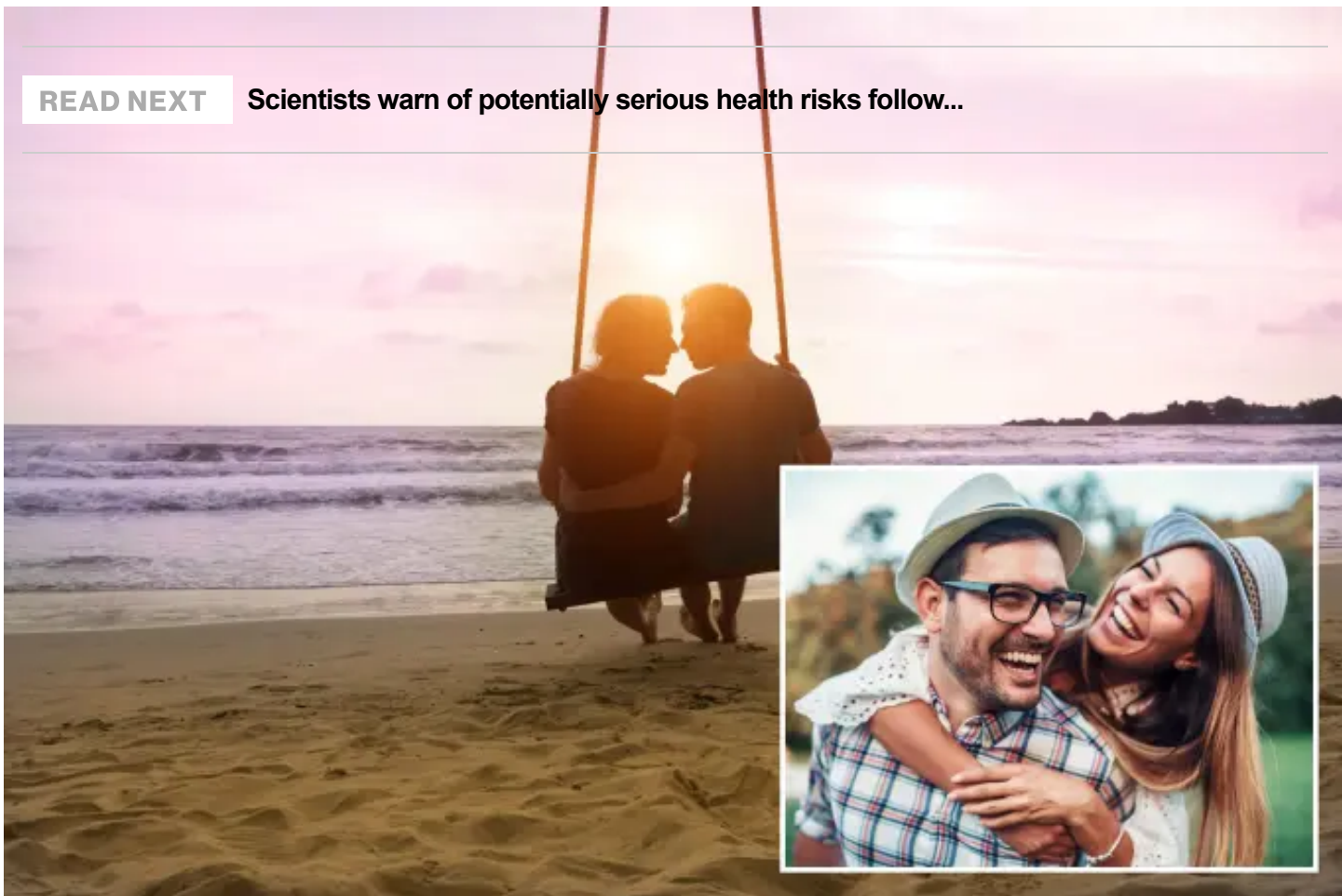


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