

Private equity tycoon's son involved in sexual assault lawsuit

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By Thornton McEnery

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The son of a Wall Street tycoon allegedly violently raped and sodomized one of his dad's employees — and the father turned against the victim when she spoke out, according to her claims in an explosive lawsuit.

Taylor Lawrence, a former head of investor relations at \$2 billion private equity fund Wellspring Capital Management, accused Christopher Dawson of drugging her and raping her at his parents' swanky Lenox Hill apartment on the evening of Dec. 29, 2014, according to a complaint filed Thursday in New York state court.

Lawrence likewise claims that when she reported the grisly incident to her boss, Wellspring Chief Executive Bill Dawson, the elder Dawson responded with threats, telling her "I will destroy you. I will ruin you."

According to the suit, Lawrence sought out Bill Dawson at his East 72nd Street co-op after he missed an appointment earlier in the evening, texting her that he had been out drinking with his sons.

Lawrence alleges she was greeted at the front door by Christopher Dawson, who informed her that his father was asleep and then offered to make her a drink. After accepting the offer, Lawrence claims Christopher Dawson became sexually aggressive, turning on pornography and then exposing himself to her.

At that point, Lawrence claims she realized that Christopher Dawson had drugged her drink, leaving her incapable of fighting him off and that he proceeded to repeatedly rape and sodomize her.

Lawrence was awakened by Bill Dawson's other son, William Dawson III, the suit alleges, and was covered in bruises and wearing only her top.

"What are you doing here? You can't be here! You have to leave," Dawson's son said, forcing Lawrence to leave without her purse, according to the suit.

When Lawrence spoke out at Wellspring, telling Dawson and another senior exec, she asserts that Dawson callously mocked her claims of being anally raped by his son, telling her that Christopher had bragged that "he plugged you in the ass."

When Lawrence spoke up about her rape in front of a Wellspring managing partner, she alleges that the elder Dawson was enraged, lashing out with his threats to "destroy" and "ruin" her.

According to his LinkedIn page, Christopher Dawson is now a director at New York-based commercial real estate startup Squarefoot. Based on the dates provided on his bio, Dawson would have been a freshman at Kenyon College when the alleged rape occurred.

Lawrence is suing Christopher Dawson, the sole defendant in the complaint, under New York's Gender-Motivated Violence Act, which allows sexual assault victims to sue their assailants after the criminal statute of limitations expires.

"Christopher Dawson appears to believe that his privilege and wealth allow him to behave with impunity," said Lawrence's attorneys, Douglas Wigdor and David Gottlieb of law firm Wigdor.

Christopher Dawson's employer, Squarefoot, did not respond to a request for comment. Wellspring also didn't respond to requests for comment. Christopher Dawson didn't respond to a LinkedIn message seeking comment.