

Texts Reveal Hollywood Warner CEO Promoted Actress Amid Apparent Sexual Relationship

by Tatiana Siegel, Kim Masters

Hundreds of leaked text messages between Kevin Tsujihara, actress Charlotte Kirk and partners Brett Ratner and James Packer show the powerful executive, under pressure, said repeatedly he would push for auditions as accusations of "extortion" and a proposed settlement agreement followed. WarnerMedia says it will investigate.

At 12:10 a.m. on Sept. 27, 2013, Australian billionaire James Packer texted a 21-year-old British actress named Charlotte Kirk.

Kirk had been laboring to establish herself in Hollywood with limited success, but now Packer, who was a partner with director Brett Ratner in the film production/finance company RatPac Entertainment, was saying she was about to catch a major break.

"I have the opportunity of a lifetime for u," Packer wrote in a text message reviewed by *The Hollywood Reporter*. "Come to [the Hotel] Bel air now. U will never be able to pay me." He promised an introduction to "the most important man u can meet." Kirk quickly agreed to the rendezvous.

Packer did not identify the man by name, but based on hundreds of texts, emails and a draft settlement agreement obtained and reviewed by *THR*, the late-night introduction was to Warner Bros. chairman and CEO Kevin Tsujihara. That communication and subsequent encounters between Kirk and Tsujihara drew the powerful studio chief into what Kirk repeatedly referred to as a

sexual relationship. And from there the relationship devolved into a protracted and increasingly desperate struggle among Tsujihara, Ratner and Packer to manage Kirk's urgent demands to be cast in movies and TV series. At one point, Ratner accused Kirk of attempted "extortion."

According to the text messages, Tsujihara said he would arrange for Kirk to meet with studio executives on Warner Bros. film and TV projects, a highly unorthodox effort for the chairman of a studio. On March 3, 2015, a frustrated Kirk texted him to say, "You're very busy I know but when we were in that motel having sex u said u would help me and when u just ignore me like you're doing now it makes me feel used. Are u going to help me like u said u would?" Tsujihara responded: "Sorry you feel that way. Richard will be reaching out to u tonight." Other texts make clear that the reference was to Richard Brener, then president of production at Warners' New Line label. (There was no indication that Brener was aware of any relationship between Kirk and Tsujihara. Brener, through a WarnerMedia rep, declined to comment.)

Kirk ultimately was cast in small roles in two Warners films: 2016's *How to Be Single* and 2018's *Ocean's 8*, and according to documents reviewed by *THR* as well as accounts from sources, she scored auditions for several other projects at Warners and at Avi Lerner's Millennium Films. The texts show that over time, Kirk became increasingly agitated because she was not getting as many roles as anticipated. Eventually, Ratner seemed to take the lead in attempting to manage the situation and, via attorney Marty Singer, brokered a proposed settlement agreement that would have assured her auditions as well as an appearance in a Ratner-directed movie. The proposed deal was never signed,

according to Singer. Ratner maintains that Kirk was a friend and he was simply helping her secure auditions.

The three-year entanglement, revealed here for the first time, offers a window into a dark aspect of the entertainment industry, which regularly brings together attractive young women, eager if not desperate for a shot at stardom, and successful men who at times see these women as a perk of their wealth and power. The Kirk revelations also come as Tsujihara, 54, is poised to take on a larger role at WarnerMedia, the content division of publicly traded AT&T. In a [reorganization](#) unveiled March 4, Tsujihara will gain control of Cartoon Network and an animation division as well as the iconic Warner Bros. studio, making him one of the town's most powerful executives. As a measure of his stature, he sat next to WarnerMedia CEO John Stankey in a plum position at the Oscars in late February.

The texts appear to corroborate accounts from other sources who spoke to *THR*, prompting queries in November 2017 about Tsujihara's relationship with Kirk. Asked about Kirk then, Tsujihara engaged legal counsel, denied any relationship with her and threatened a lawsuit.

The issue arose again in September 2018. An anonymous letter sent to WarnerMedia's Stankey raised a series of explosive questions about whether a top Warner Bros. executive had promised speaking roles to an actress, identified only as "CK," in exchange for her silence. *THR* reported then that WarnerMedia had retained the law firm Munger Tolles & Olson to investigate, but the company said the probe uncovered no evidence of misconduct.

Now these texts reveal that Tsujihara apparently did have a relationship with Kirk and promised to make efforts to help her get Warners television and film roles.

"Through her spokesperson, the actress has publicly denied any impropriety in her casting, and our prior investigation did not find otherwise," a WarnerMedia rep says in a statement.

"Whenever we receive new allegations, it is our standard practice to conduct an appropriate investigation. And that is what we will do here." The Warner Bros. CEO's personal attorney states, "Mr. Tsujihara had no direct role in the hiring of this actress."

In a statement, Ratner attorney Singer says, "Brett Ratner did nothing wrong and had the best intentions. While he offered to help get Ms. Kirk a limited number of auditions, he consistently told her that she would have to earn any job herself."

Kirk, meanwhile, states to *THR*, "I emphatically deny any inappropriate behaviour on the part of Brett Ratner, James Packer, and Kevin Tsujihara, and I have no claims against any of them. I confirm that I was in a romantic relationship with James Packer in the summer of 2013 and that I was treated with respect by Mr. Packer, and I have no issues with him or claims against him. I further confirm that when the relationship ended I sought the advice of Mr. Tsujihara whom I had been introduced to by Mr. Packer. Mr. Tsujihara never promised me anything. I also confirm that Brett Ratner helped me out of friendship to assist me in getting auditions and trying to help me find an agent, and I have no issues with him or claims against him. I deny that there was any legal settlement or agreement entered into between myself and Brett Ratner in 2016."

A Secret Introduction



Dimitrios Kambouris/WireImage

Charlotte Kirk at the *Ocean's 8* world premiere at Alice Tully Hall on June 5, 2018 in New York.

According to the text exchanges, Kirk met Packer through Ratner in November 2012 when she was 20 and Packer was 45, and the two embarked on a relationship. After Kirk was introduced to Tsujihara, however, her focus seemed to shift to the Warners chief.

In the early morning hours of Sept. 27, 2013, Kirk went to the Hotel Bel-Air for her first meeting with Tsujihara. Later that morning, she texted Packer: "His [*sic*] not very nice! Very pushy!! He just wants to fuck nothing else does not even want To say anything!" Packer responded, "U OK?" and told her to "Be cool."

By February 2014, Kirk had enlisted Tsujihara to aid her acting efforts. She continued to text Packer over the ensuing months and was mostly ignored. But she got his attention on Oct. 14 when she texted him that Tsujihara was "very kindly looking at what he can do to help me now that my career is starting to take off." (She had scored a role in Lionsgate's Bruce Willis sci-fi thriller *Vice*.) She asked Packer to watch a video she made, noting, "Kevin loved it." He replied, "I'm really happy for you. Just don't want to overpromise. Sending you good energy."

Kirk answered Packer on Oct. 18 that "putting me in one of your many movies shouldn't be a big deal," adding, "I did help u out with Kevin which was hard for me but I did it for you." At the time Packer set up Kirk's 2013 encounter with Tsujihara, he and Ratner were sealing a \$450 million deal with Warners. RatPac-Dune Entertainment was a financing entity formed between

RatPac Entertainment and Steven Mnuchin's Dune Entertainment. (None of the materials reviewed by *THR* reference Mnuchin, who is now President Trump's Secretary of the Treasury.) Kirk would later text Ratner complaining that she felt that she had been "used as the icing on the cake for your finance deal with Warner Bros," adding, "It's gross what you all did to me!!!" Ratner responded angrily that the deal had nothing to do with her. (In Kirk's statement to *THR*, she adds, "I also deny that I had any connection to the Warners Bros/Rat-Pac slate-financing deal. I had nothing to do whatsoever with closing the transaction, directly or indirectly.")

In another Oct. 18 exchange, Packer showed his displeasure at the mere mention of Tsujihara's name and texted, "Hey that's not being cool." Still, Kirk persisted: "I didn't expect to be part of a business deal so all I'm asking is u just help me with a couple of roles it's not big deal and then we'll just put this all behind us." Packer protested that they had discussed all this before. "Yes we did speak before and I was cool before and nothing happened," she answered. Kirk texted that Packer promised "this man would change my world." Packer denied making any promises or forcing her do anything, adding that he felt "like ur trying to blackmail me over a lie." The two agreed to discuss things in person when Packer was next in Los Angeles.

Three days later, Kirk asked to meet with Packer just as he was about to arrive in L.A. "Dont push me. U'll regret it," he wrote. She responded: "James if you're trying to make me worry about my safety you'll be forcing me to give this to my attorneys." Packer answered: "Can't wait tough girl... Get back in your box or let's fight. Lying and blackmail are a bad start... tough lying girl." Kirk replied that the only reason she had raised the possibility of

involving her lawyers was because she thought his warning that she would regret pushing him “sounded like a threat on my life.” She continued: “This is all getting out of hand. I’m just asking you to do the right thing and help me. Let’s just meet and resolve this amicably, ok?” He replied: “I’ll meet you but get back in your box.”

After the two apparently met, Kirk noted with disappointment that this time, Packer brought an associate to listen in on their conversation. For months after, Kirk intermittently texted Packer with a conciliatory tone but apparently got no response. At some point Ratner seems to have taken the lead in dealing with her. Packer, who is believed to have sustained losses on his movie investments that mostly included the Warners slate, sold his interest in RatPac-Dune to Ukrainian billionaire Len Blavatnik in April 2017.

The Relationship: "I Just Need to Be Careful"



A text message exchange between Charlotte Kirk and Kevin Tsujihara in February 2014.

After Kirk and Tsujihara met for the first time, they exchanged several texts, arranging a Feb. 24, 2014, meet-up at the bar at Palihouse, a boutique hotel in West Hollywood. Still en route, Tsujihara instructed her to order him a Grey Goose martini with olives. In late February, she texted asking how a screening had gone. “It was good, but I would rather have watched ur music video on loop for a night...” he answered, referring to [the video](#) that she had made of herself.

The actress replied, “u make me blush,” and then she asked Tsujihara if he had talked to his “guys” about a television show she had read for. “Yes, I spoke to our guys—i caused a bit of a stir...” he answered. “I don’t usually call about casting about these types of roles. It’s fine, I just need to be careful.” Kirk responded: “I know we can be carful [sic] and make this work,” to which Tsujihara answered, “Doesn’t look great--let’s look for a movie role.”

In an early March 2014 exchange, Tsujihara seemed to be looking to meet up with Kirk but laid out hectic travel plans, saying: “My life is a mess.” Soon after, the actress asked him to “back me” after she read for the role of Becky in *The Intern*, a Robert De Niro-Anne Hathaway movie that Nancy Meyers was to direct. “Sure. I need to find out where they r on casting,” he answered.

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He told her to send her audition clip to his AOL email account but then said the studio had someone else in mind for the role. She replied that her manager thought she would be perfect to play *Supergirl* for Warners. "Do u want to do a read for me??" he replied. When she responded with enthusiasm, he said, "I'm joking.... U can read anything for me!!!!!"

At one point, Tsujihara texted, "Wish I was doing something else." She answered, "Mmmm such as? I remember how good you were at Mmmm. Your a giver ;)" In her next text, she asked about possible auditions. "Need to ask greg tomorrow...," he said, apparently referring to former Warners film studio president Greg Silverman. "I've got a dinner in santa monica next Thursday night -u want to meet up after?? We're also beginning to cast some cable tv pilots that I'll look into as well." Mentioning that *King Arthur: Legend of the Sword* was casting, he promised to set up a meeting for Kirk with Silverman or New Line's Brener. On Aug. 28, 2014, he gave her Brener's number and said the New Line exec was expecting her call. Tsujihara told her to tell Brener they met at a party.

By early September, Tsujihara was becoming evasive. The day after a Sept. 4 meeting between the two, she texted, "It was nice seeing you last night... So your going to speak with Richard [about] what he has Specifically?" Tsujihara responded, "Yes." For much of the fall of that year, she peppered Tsujihara with questions about the status of Brener's efforts to get her work. Tsujihara told her, "I'll follow up... [He's] trying his best." But by

spring 2015, communication between the two had become strained.

On March 25, Kirk texted that she received “a very strange call from Brett.” Kirk was becoming increasingly frantic, saying that Brener was now ignoring calls. She wrote, “Please make sure that Richard accepts or returns my agent’s calls – as he requested – so that I can get the help you promised me before luring me to that motel to have sex with you.” She referenced a role she had just landed — presumably *How to Be Single*, which was just about to begin filming — with disgust. “Kevin? A two liner?? U have got to be kidding me!!” After that it is unclear whether he responded to any further texts.

A knowledgeable source says the decision to cast the actress was “back-channeled” by producer John Rickard, who has a long history with Ratner, having formerly served as his assistant. Given the expense of travel, most of the small speaking roles were cast with New York-based talent. L.A.-based Kirk was an exception. Asked by *THR* if there were unusual circumstances regarding Kirk’s casting, Rickard responded, “Not that I’m aware of.”

The Breakdown: "Entitled and Despicable"



Michael Kovac/WireImage
RatPac Entertainment's James Packer and Brett Ratner and Warner Bros.' Kevin Tsujihara at an Anti-Defamation League event at The Beverly Hilton Hotel in 2015.

In July 2015, just after *How to Be Single* wrapped, Kirk texted Ratner: “You know what u need to do. U haven’t even come close

to doing it. If you thought I would be so easily manipulated you're wrong." Ratner replied, "What are u talking about? I told u i would get Richard to talk to u.... And he did. He is the key to getting work.... I don't work for u. Why are u so unappreciative?"

Then Ratner asked where to send "the contract," an apparent reference to a draft settlement agreement. Four days later, he reversed course, saying, "I'm not sending u the contract. I trust you.. I will just get you a bunch of auditions.. I have 2 auditions coming up... One from New Line for a Will Farrel [sic] movie.. Let me know if you want my help or not? I will have Richard arrange it." He again complained that Kirk didn't appreciate what he did for her and said that once she got the auditions, he had done what he could.

Kirk shot back, "You're the one who wanted me to sign an agreement. Sending me on auditions is a step in the right direction but until it translates into what Kevin promised me then the issues remain unresolved." To that, Ratner replied, "Well i don't know what he promised u i wasn't there."

A few days later, Kirk said she wanted to tape an audition for *Wonder Woman*. Ratner responded that the film's casting director, Lucinda Syson, would call Kirk's agent to request the tape. Kirk told Ratner on July 16 that she was on the Warners lot auditioning; then she asked to read with Ben Affleck on another movie Syson was casting. "You are giving me too much work," Ratner complained. When she answered that Ratner sounded like he was going back on his word "yet again," Ratner called her "entitled and despicable." To that, she said, "Acting entitled is exactly how Kevin behaved with me, so let's not go there."

Kirk reminded Ratner, "you came to me Brett after Kevin told you to because you're the one who set me up with James." She accused Ratner of using her as a gesture to commemorate the RacPac-Dune deal with Warners, adding, "You just keep lying to me about getting me jobs and you're not doing what Kevin told you to do." As she threatened that she would have her lawyer call Tsujihara, Ratner responded: "I only promised u auditions not jobs. After Kirk persisted, Ratner texted, "Jesus.. Stop acting desperate.." ([THR reported](#) on Sept. 30, 2013 — three days after the texts show Packer arranged the first meeting between Kirk and Tsujihara — that the RatPac-Dune deal had just closed.)

In early August, Kirk — who had threatened to involve her attorney in the situation — told Ratner she would ask her lawyer to hold off for a month to give him another chance. "Ok. I will do my best to make you a happy girl," he replied. A couple of weeks later she told him she'd sent in a tape for the role of Marian in Lionsgate's *Robin Hood*. Ratner promised to call "my friend who runs lionsgate!!". (She does not appear in the film.)

By the end of August 2015, Ratner was exasperated. He bristled at the suggestion that he was doing Tsujihara's bidding, saying the studio chief was merely an "employee" while he was head of his own company. "Stop writing Kevin and saying what he told me to do?? I don't work for him.. That's insulting to me," he wrote. "I am helping you but your attitude sucks.. As I said, I don't owe you anything. If anything u owe me for all the money James paid you. A thank you would be nice." In a subsequent exchange, he accused her of trying to hurt Tsujihara: "He is a married man what are u thinking?"

Kirk denied angrily that she had been paid for sex, saying Packer had showered her with gifts, claiming to be in love with her. If Ratner did not apologize, she warned, “the shit if [sic] going to hit the fan!!!!!!” Ratner backpedaled, saying he didn’t think she had been paid for sex, but added: “Regardless what you are doing is extortion [and] is very illegal in this country.” He continued, “You can’t take back the extortion u have committed because u have sent text and emails asking for these auditions and jobs.” He pointed out that she had appeared in *How to Be Single*, which was her objective. Still, he said he would do his best to get her roles “but only because I’m your friend.” Kirk responded, “Brett you’re an idiot I’m not extorting anyone.”

In September 2015, Ratner connected Kirk with producer Christa Campbell, who has produced a number of films for Lerner’s Millennium including *The Hitman’s Bodyguard*. A month later, he gave her the phone number of producer Beau Flynn, who was in the midst of casting Paramount’s *Baywatch*. But Ratner soon became frustrated again. “You told my friend that newline gave u a part because of kevin. U have the big mouth..” he wrote. He later said, “Call Kevin. I’m not doing anything for u. U are ungrateful and unappreciative. You said u wanted to speak to the producer of *Baywatch* so I made that happen. You didn’t even thank me for the introduction.”

In September 2015, Ratner sent off a flurry of texts to Kirk, imploring her to stop bothering Tsujihara. “KT cannot get you jobs or auditions I told u this many times. Stop asking..its up to the directors and producers.. If you are going to be fucking someone for a part it should be a director or producer.”

A Draft Settlement



A text message exchange between Charlotte Kirk and Kevin Tsujihara in March 2015.

By May 3, 2016, a proposed settlement seemed to be underway. With the exception of *Ocean's 8*, which Kirk would shoot later that year, Warners movies no longer seemed to be under discussion. Instead Kirk emailed her lawyer, Raymond Markovich, with an eye to appearing in movies from Lerner's Millennium. "Ray I had a think let's not reply to Marty until I meet and speak with Avi next week and lock down these roles," she wrote, apparently referencing attorney Marty Singer. "There is no moving forward on the Brett agreement until it is clear I have the roles." It is unclear what roles she meant but sources say Lerner attempted — unsuccessfully — to get her a part in the new *Hellboy* reboot and also hoped to cast her in *The Expendables*, a female-centric version of *The Expendables* that stalled. (Lerner declined to comment.)

On Aug. 21, 2016 — just before AT&T started the process to buy Warner Bros. parent Time Warner in a \$85 billion deal — Markovich emailed Kirk asking her to approve an agreement he had drafted. He wrote that in his email to Singer, he would reference a project called "From Autism to A-List," which a source says was represented as Kirk's memoir. That would offer a way to explain any monetary payment made to the actress in the settlement.

In addition to a stipulation that Kirk would get six auditions in the following calendar year, the proposed settlement called for Ratner — in exchange for Kirk's silence — to "arrange for [the actress] to obtain one (1) acting role compensated in accordance

with SAG scale in the next theatrical motion picture directed by Ratner ... In the event that, prior to the next theatrical motion picture Ratner directs, Ratner is able to obtain an Acting Role for Kirk in a motion picture he produces but does not direct, that Acting Role shall satisfy Ratner's obligations pursuant to this provision. Kirk acknowledges and understands that there is no guarantee as to the size of the Acting Role and no guarantee with respect to credits for such Acting Role." The agreement was apparently never signed.

But Ratner hasn't directed a film since the agreement was drafted. Given the misconduct allegations against him (Ratner was accused by multiple women of sexual assault in fall 2017, charges he denies), it is unclear when he will work behind the camera again.

So far, Kirk has not appeared in a Millennium film. She has, however, starred as Nicole Brown Simpson in an as-yet-released film titled *Nicole & OJ*, which shot in Sofia, Bulgaria, where Lerner owns a studio, with many crewmembers who are regulars on Millennium movies. But a company spokesperson says *Nicole & OJ* is not a Millennium project. It is not clear who provided the financing (one press report said the film's budget was \$65 million), nor is it known whether the movie has a distributor to take it into the marketplace.

The film was directed by Joshua Newton, who is said to have a personal relationship with Kirk, and has few listed previous credits. It is Kirk's biggest role to date and Newton, responding to queries from *THR* several months ago, said it postulates that the football star (played by Boris Kodjoe) was framed in the infamous double murder. Newton promised that the movie

would be a revelation. Kirk is “a dedicated actress who takes her craft really, really seriously,” he said, adding that when his film is released, “She will be one of the most sought-after actresses on the planet.”