

MUCH LOVED
Kimber, right, with her friend Melissa, just four months before Kimber died.



a game that turned deadly

Kimber, 15, loved the "pass-out game." But then one day she played it—and never woke up. *by ginger rue*

During the summer of 2003, Kimber Wilson, then 13, was hanging out at her friend Kayla's house in Olathe, Kansas. The girls were sitting on Kayla's bed talking when Kayla offered to show Kimber a game. She then put her hand lightly on the back of Kimber's neck and explained that if you push in harder, you'll pass out—and then wake up. It'll feel like you're falling, Kayla had said.

"No way—really?!" Kimber asked. The game sounded like just her thing: Although Kimber was a devout Christian who didn't drink or party, she loved to take risks that gave her an

adrenaline rush, like riding roller coasters and jumping out of tall trees. "Try it on me!" Kimber begged. Kayla pushed against Kimber's neck, and she immediately felt woozy. The next thing Kimber knew, she was waking up on the bed, and Kayla was telling her she'd passed out. "Really? It felt like going down a hill on a roller coaster," Kimber replied. "Let's do it again!" So she and Kayla spent the next few hours making each other pass out, over and over.

A few days later, Kimber and her best friend Melissa were watching TV at Kimber's house. "Kayla taught me this cool game the other day," Kimber said. As Melissa listened

to Kimber explain how the pass-out game worked, she kept wondering to herself, But what if you don't wake up? So when Kimber asked if she wanted to play, Melissa said, "No—it seems dangerous." Kimber was disappointed that Melissa didn't want to try it, but they just went back to watching TV, and Kimber never mentioned the game to Melissa again.

ODD OBSESSION
In September 2004, Kimber, her sister, Susan, 12, and their close family friend Lauren, 12, were hanging out when Kimber started telling them about the pass-out game. "I've been playing it with Kayla," she told them.

ALL PHOTOS: COURTESY OF KIMBER'S FAMILY



SPECIAL GIRL.
Left: Kimber at a school-athletics awards event. Right: A Father's Day card she made the year she died.



17 exposed

"But isn't it scary to pass out?" Lauren asked. "Oh, it's no big deal," Kimber assured them. "Let's try it on you guys." Susan said okay, so Kimber put her hand on the back of her sister's neck and pressed. Right away Susan's head started to ache and she felt dizzy. "Stop!" she told Kimber. "That hurts." So Kimber stopped and said, "Try to do it to me, then." Susan pushed on Kimber's neck, but nothing happened. "Let's just forget it," Kimber said. "You're doing it wrong."

Melissa was hanging out at Kimber's house on a Saturday morning two months later, helping her friend do chores. As Melissa pulled the sheets off Kimber's bed to put them in the laundry, she saw something red and plastic tangled in them. She looked closer. "Is that a bike chain?" she asked. "Why is it in your bed?" Kimber picked it up and tossed it on the floor. "Oh, it's nothing," she said, not looking Melissa in the eye. That didn't make sense to Melissa, so she asked again, "Why is there a chain in your bed?" Kimber snapped, "I said it's nothing!" Kimber didn't usually speak harshly to her friends, and Melissa didn't want to fight, so she just changed the subject.

TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES
Nine months later, at 11 A.M. on August 9, 2005, Carol Wilson, Kimber's mom, went to wake up Kimber. She

opened Kimber's door, expecting to see her asleep in her bed—but she wasn't there. Mrs. Wilson quickly scanned the room—and saw Kimber slumped against her dresser. It looked like she was sitting down, but her bottom wasn't touching the floor. Confused, Mrs. Wilson started to walk over—and that was when she noticed the red bike chain wrapped around Kimber's neck—and attached to a belt tied to her dresser. "Kimber!" Mrs. Wilson screamed, rushing to her daughter.

“ Her tongue and hands were purple—and her body was stiff.”

Kimber's eyes were wide open, but her tongue and hands were purple—and her body was stiff. Oh my God, she's dead! Mrs. Wilson realized in shock. Kimber, what were you doing?! she thought. "Susan!" she screamed. "Call 911!"

Susan, who was in the kitchen, rushed to grab the cordless phone and ran into Kimber's room to see what was wrong. When she saw her mother crouched over her sister, she immediately burst into tears. After a few seconds, the 911 operator picked up, and Susan wailed into the phone, "My sister is dead!"

SECRETS REVEALED
Mrs. Wilson frantically detached the belt and then laid Kimber's body on the floor. Minutes later the paramedics and police arrived. "I don't think there's anything you can do!" Mrs. Wilson cried.

As a formality, the police had to investigate the death as a homicide, so they took Mrs. Wilson and Susan to the station and interviewed them one at a time. The next day an officer called Mrs. Wilson. "Susan told us that Kimber played the pass-out game," he said. "Have you heard of it?" She hadn't. The officer explained that Kimber had choked herself with the belt to re-create the sensation she felt when she first passed out with Kayla, and Mrs. Wilson began to cry. "It was a game?" she asked in shock.

Kimber's friend Lauren now deeply regrets she didn't tell Mrs. Wilson about the game. "If I had, she could have warned Kimber," she explains. Mrs. Wilson believes Kimber didn't know the game was dangerous. "But it is," she says. "And now she's gone—and there's a big hole in me." 17

This is not a game you want to play.

THE PASS-OUT GAME

what is it? Cutting off oxygen to the brain makes you start to lose consciousness and feel a rush. But if you deprive your body of oxygen for too long, you will die.

other recent pass-out game deaths

- april 2005: Chelsea Dunn, 13; Nampa, ID
- may 2005: Gabriel Mordecia, 13; Paradise, CA
- july 2005: Dalton Eby, 10; Island Park, ID
- september 2005: Bryson Hamilton, 12; Johnston County, NC