



## Reporting Rape: Never Again

There seems to be this myth roaming around that we are readily believed when we tell someone we're raped. I'm called a liar, I'm heavily questioned, I'm asked what I did wrong, and I'm shamed. Someone invades my body again, and again, and again, and all I can think of are the responses from my family, from friends, from the police.

When I tell my story, after the shock of "fuck, she's been through a lot," there are a few questions and/or that comes up that I absolutely loathe.

"Why didn't you leave? How could you have not known it was rape? Why didn't you report? You could stop him from hurting others by just coming forward. It's your fault if he rapes again!"

Living through rape is traumatizing enough. I'm still in therapy. I have near daily flashbacks and daily intrusive thoughts. I cringe and recoil at sudden movements, and if someone raises their voice at me, I will flinch and think if I say anything, they'll hit me. I will run through bouts of crippling depression, and I don't feel comfortable naked. There will be times I'm sitting, doing homework or reading a book, and suddenly it feels like it's happening again, that my vagina is being torn into and I can't make it stop. I'll occasionally catch a whiff of their cologne, and I'll shake for hours after. I triple check the doors and windows before leaving the house, and I have to coax myself into leaving at all. Still.

I couldn't have been warned or even told how I would feel once I was raped. Or when it happened again. Or when it happened for the tenth time, the twenty-fifth, fiftieth, by four and then five people where the count seemed pointless. I couldn't have even dreamed of what I would even begin to deal with after every rape, that isolation, the absolute terror and fear for my life. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder has a hold on my life, and I'm struggling to ease its impact.

Despite these daily struggles, there are several reasons why I didn't leave, and myriads more on why I didn't report the others.

For months, I struggled with the question, "am I being raped?" My boyfriend P and his friend S had their claws in my brain twisting the events so I thought everything was my fault, that I'd somehow sparked something that made them hit, bully, and rape me. They said no one would believe me, that I was just a slut and some whore, and they'd blame my clothing, my "smirk," they'd blame my attitude needed adjusting. I somehow deserved all they did to me, and there was no escape. They said they'd certainly kill me if I told anyone. It wasn't rape, it was just normal, how sex was supposed to be. It was at their will, never mine, and I had no say. That was my normal.

When The Incident happened, I struggled with the desire of suicide before even thinking of calling police. It was finally then that I knew what "rape" was, and ending my life seemed the only logical option.



I'd made a round of "just wanted to say I loved you" phone calls before I happened upon someone who got me to tell them what was wrong, and what happened. Once taken to the hospital, I couldn't have been warned about the insensitivity of the "justice" system, of the police, the district attorney, victims advocate, nor begin to have been warned about the reactions of friends.

My first fear was that this would hit the media.

I talked with my SANE nurse while fighting back tears as she poked and prodded and plucked and scraped, opened and pulled and adjusted and photographed my vagina and cervix for evidence. She talked about how often she performs these examinations, and how they wouldn't reach media, and I had no reason to worry about that, but she was concerned about bruising of my cervix, and she needed better pictures. With a painful twisting readjustment of the speculum, she got the photo.

I was humiliated and embarrassed to think my pubic scrapings and photos would be laid upon the desks of strangers to analyse and scrutinize to decide whether or not I was raped. I didn't uncross my legs for weeks. There was a gaping hole where my vagina had been, and felt violated all over again. The exam is important, necessary, but absolutely horrible. I didn't want anything touching me there. I still have trigger issues with speculums.

In talking with police, I was asked if I had said, "no," and that if I hadn't said, "no," then it was a, "yes," and there was nothing they could do, because that was consent as far as they were concerned. When I said I'd told him to stop, that I told him "don't, please, don't, stop," they said, "but you didn't say no?"

They scoured me for bruises and took any pictures they could. When I said I was drugged and couldn't fight back, and there was no reason for extreme force to restrain me, they responded with, "yeah, but we need bruises for it to be rape."

They also said that because a day had passed before going in, I wouldn't be tested for rohypnol or other date-rape drugs because they "would have been out of my system anyway."

The first questions were, "how much had you had to drink?" and "what were you wearing?" It was also incredibly important to know how long I had been sexually active, and with how many people.

I had to recount the incident over and over and over and over again to what seemed like a countless number of people. I relived the incident in incredible detail every day, and I was asked specific points about specific details for specific somethings from specific people on this specific aspect of the case. I couldn't even begin to name off all of the people I talked to and was questioned by. I have no idea what their titles were, nor why I was shuffled into a small, windowless room to recount it for the thirtieth time. I couldn't move on from The Incident. I wasn't allowed to, because someone new had to hear every last drop of what happened.

I hid certain things from police because I worried about the validity of my case with the barriers



I'd already faced. "If I tell them I was worried about Sawyer attacking me, there will be no fault on him because I should have somehow avoided it... So I shouldn't tell them I was scared of him because that will come back to hurt me." Just a general note, and a kick to my past self: Don't hide that, that would have been important for police to know. (I made sure in later testimony to say as much.)

In telling a police officer that Sawyer had manipulated, physically forced, coerced, threatened, and used means of getting me drunk to force sex in the past, she responded with, "those are all consensual. Call if you need anything else."

In trying to tell my district attorney about these same incidences, he said, "well, we're just going to focus on this one. Don't mention the others in court."

And my district attorney, the man on *my* side, said, "we don't want to ruin his life with this."

I told the district attorney about Sawyer beating me regularly, and he asked if I had photos. When I said I didn't, because I was scared of what would have happened if an archive of bruise pictures had been found, I was dismissed and told not to mention anything.

\*I also had received a call from the defense attorney. I thought I had to talk to them, and wasn't aware that I could have refused to speak with them. She asked a myriad of the same questions, wanted the same details, and by the end of the conversation I was sobbing. I asked her before she hung up what was going to happen to him, because he had been my best friend and a part of me still cared (here's where all of that manipulation comes in to play. A book that illustrates this beautifully is *Dreamland* by Sarah Dessen). She sighed and said that he would probably go to jail, that his life would be ruined, and it was all my fault. His life was destroyed because of me.

I didn't leave my bed for the week following that phone call.\*

I never felt supported by those I was supposed to find justice through. The judge charged him with 5th degree felony in attempted sexual assault, despite profound evidence of completed sexual assault, including a written statement in his writing and words saying, "I raped her." (Not to mention, fingering and/or performing any other sexual acts on another person is sexual assault. Period.)

But the lack of support and humiliation wasn't left in the court room nor hospital.

I had a professor look at me after I returned to university three weeks after The Incident, and say "Wow, I'm sorry that happened... That, or you're the best actress I've ever seen." I left her office in tears, and dropped the term.

When I went to my University to get an official medical withdrawal for the term, I was told I had to submit the police report along with my letters from my therapist, victims advocate, and district attorney (those apparently weren't sufficient). Because the case was still open and I couldn't obtain the police report, the office told me they couldn't accept my appeal, and that term affects



my GPA still.

In the months after The Incident, I scrambled to find friends who would listen. It was incredibly confusing to try and piece everything together in the fog that was my brain, and I couldn't answer all of the questions they had. I'd try to meet up with friends who had fallen out of touch, friends I thought I could count on, friends I held incredibly dear to me. After hearing what happened, they needed to leave suddenly, and they'd fail to respond to any of my attempts to say, "hello." They wouldn't return my phone calls, texts, Facebook messages, nor e-mails.

I was called a liar and a whore, and I lost all of my [friends](#) because "Sawyer would *never* do something like that!" We'd had the same circle of friends, and not one stood by me.

I confided in a friend about [Halloween](#), and she then told anyone who would listen that I was some sick, sorry, vapid whore who couldn't keep her legs closed. After The Incident, she feigned interest in supporting me, and then the next time I saw her, she was sitting on Sawyer's side of the court room. She stood with his family outside, along with Parker, and they hugged and talked, and I felt miserably alone.

She, and other friends, even scorned me to absolute strangers, and I've had the displeasure of meeting someone who, after hearing my name, would say, "oh, so *you're* the bitch who hurt Sawyer!"

Parker had convinced me he was on my side, and then would report back to Sawyer on my day-to-day. Parker would assault me, then say "you see what you made me do?" He made sure I felt worthless, made sure I felt horrible about having gone to police, and his subtle threats of taking my life have never been forgotten.

It's hard to forget and move on when Sawyer still manages to find me, no matter how hard I try to hide.

And that's only a fraction of the hardship I faced in reporting and surviving.

Now, why didn't I report all the others? The ones that happened before and after Sawyer?

When I was assaulted by Parker, his mind games were too good for me to unravel until well after I told him to never contact me again. Even when he bound me to a bed and anally raped me, then told me to clean myself up because I was disgusting, I questioned my consent, because, well, I didn't say, "no," I said, "stop," and cried for him to stop, but that wasn't "no," so the police wouldn't believe me. Because he was my boyfriend, they would say I regretted it, or that because of our history, it couldn't possibly be rape. The other assaults I was too scared to say something. If I didn't acquiesce and stay quiet, there would be incredible pain, but it had also been so normalized. What would the police have on that?

The police wouldn't believe [Ice Cubes](#), they wouldn't believe that I'd been beaten on a daily basis and would cover bruises, they wouldn't believe that I was in fear for my life and told I'd be murdered if I were to tell anyone or get pregnant, they wouldn't believe the gang-rapes, they



wouldn't believe, they wouldn't believe, they wouldn't believe. I was crippled by self doubt because of the mind games played, the constant, "who would believe a slut like you?" and because of the affirmation that the police gave me later, no, really, who would believe me?

So when Dick assaulted me, I was too flabbergasted to want to admit it was happening *yet again*. I'd wake up to it and he'd hold me down, he'd scold and threaten me, he'd just make it happen if I wanted it or not. I sat and evaluated everything bit by bit over time, and once I'd admitted it to myself that there was sexual assault happening, I still didn't want to press charges. With the case against Sawyer still open, I didn't want anything to bleed over and question my validity with Sawyers case. After I'd found solace in the internet, a group of people I came to love and become incredible friends with, I found some form of strength. I consulted his mother on the matter to inform her of what I would do if I had to take him to court, and what evidence I could provide, aside from sexual violence, that would lock him away. The lack of bruises were also damning, in my mind, to any case I'd ever try to present. Luckily, he's stayed away for the most part.

I got a letter saying Sawyer had severely violated his probation, and we were going to court. Again. After a year of court and not even two years away from it, I was sitting in the room while the 8 incredibly serious counts were listed off. Testimony had been given by both his counselor and the director of the sexual offender classes stating he was a violent man not to be trusted, and they had incredibly startling and scary admissions from Sawyer on his violent behaviour, sexually violent tendencies, and complete lack of regard for his probation requirements. After deliberation, the judge slapped the gavel with his penalty. It included a slap on the wrist, and she stated she was giving him "one more chance." Her ending statement, though, grates on me. "...And the victim doesn't seem bothered by this." She had my victims impact statement and testimony on my behalf from my victims advocate to take into account when she said this. Again, I was discredited, cast aside, and I was deemed worthless. I wasn't protected, nor was I taken into consideration.

About a year later, I was on vacation with Mark. We were in a country I'd wanted to visit since I was small, and he took the magic away by stripping himself and chasing after me for 3 pathetic seconds of rape. It rattled in my mind and stirred in my thoughts, and I sorted it out quietly. My emotions for him snapped and shriveled the moment he ignored my shouted, "no," but for several months, I played house. I felt like I owed him something for the vacation and all he did for me (with no lack of his reminding me of his finances). In staying, I drove myself to suicide again because it was absolutely destroying me. When he assaulted me (again) in my sleep, I didn't want to think about it. I didn't want to deal with it, I didn't want to. Nope, no, fuck that, no. I pretended to be happy, I pretended I was okay, I pretended we broke up because of differences in beliefs, and tried to move on. I knew I wouldn't be believed, because I was sleeping, had frozen and then blacked out, the lack of bruises would call my word into question, that it would be cast as here-say, and I would be "wasting everyone's time." I didn't want to go through it all again, even though today I can't seem to settle down completely whilst sleeping next to someone.

Then, a year later, I was at a convention with the friends who had supported me unknowingly through Dick. My guildies were my everything, and Nigel was my best friend and budding



romance. When Nigel carried me to a hotel room and raped me vaginally and anally with, "God, I hope you're not too drunk for this," being his charming remark of the event, I was terrified. I was in a foreign city, and I didn't know if reporting would mean I'd have to fly back and forth for court, and what that would mean for me financially, what that would mean for both of us and jurisdictional issues since neither of us resided there... There were so many questions, and I had no one to turn to to ask them. There had been alcohol involved, so right then, I knew what the line of questions would be. I wanted to talk to a friend, but I certainly knew because I was newer to our circle of mutual guildies that I would, yet again, like so many times before, be left by myself sans support. I tried to confront him about what happened, and was left scorned. He turned to our friends, and indeed, they left me to rush to his aid. I'm the bitch who treated him like crap.

Because of what I went through in reporting, what happened in court, the endless recounting of my story, being case aside as scarcely a second thought, having my emotions and my testimonies waved off and ignored, my safety shrugged off, I knew I would never receive justice had I tried reporting the others.

If I had written word from Sawyer, forensic evidence, testimony, and still the court flies in his favour, what in the hell would my chances be in receiving any sort of justice for when I freeze, for when I acquiesced to force or coercion in order to survive?

Why would I have any reason to think I would receive justice when there had been so much evidence before, and his sentence was *attempted* sexual assault, and he was given a "get out of jail free" card?

Why would I have any desire to try and seek justice when I've been so terribly wronged by my judicial system?

Why would I feel like I would be believed when I can't get my friends to believe me?

Why would I feel like I could receive justice when such clear evidence and testimony several times couldn't get me the slightest bit of safety?

Why would I feel as though I would be believed or treated well when women who have come forward, such as Daisy Coleman, Dylan Farrow, and Jane Doe from Steubenville to name a few, have been met with absolutely revolting responses? Rape survivors all over the world are ridiculed, harassed, questioned, and told we're being bitchy, or that we're weak, stupid, untrustworthy, and that it's our fault. We're discredited, we're questioned, we're hounded and harassed and bullied and stalked, yet we're the bad guys for trying to speak out against the horrors upon us that will writhe in the back of our minds until we cease to exist.

The assaults, every last one of them, haunt my every day. They haunt my dreams, my every action, my every thought. Years, years, years have passed, and there are days I wake up and sob because I'm scared for my life. I'm absolutely terrified. I'm absolutely terrified to leave my house most days. It's happened so many times before, and it won't stop happening, and I feel as though the people who are supposed to help me will side with them as they have before.



With all of these claims of "false accusations" (which are few and far between, by the way. Read [this by Charles Clymer](#) to find out more) I won't receive the help I need.

In my personal experience, if I'm not dead, near death, beaten and/or bloodied, I won't be believed or taken seriously.

And that's why I haven't sought legal action on the others.

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