

A girl's worst nightmare

Finding courage and goals for the future, victim takes back her life after tragic event

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No. The word 14 year old Abby* said repeatedly before it happened.

Raped.

In the back of an older boy's car. She thought they were going to get Chick Fil A and maybe get to know each other, since they met just four days before.

It was a Tuesday during Spring break. After dropping off a friend at the salon, the 17-year-old boy that Abby kind of liked, kind of was interested in, thought she could have a relationship with, drove around Mt. Pleasant. She was sitting in the passenger seat, just talking.

It was late afternoon when he pulled the car behind what looked like an abandoned building. A quiet, lonely neighborhood. Her heart started beating fast but not in an excited way.

He got out of the car to see if they could get in the building. The door was locked. When he came back to the car, he sat in the back seat.

Abby, still in the passenger seat, looked back at him.

"Come on. Come on. Get in the back," he said over and over again. She got in the back.

"I didn't think it was going to be that serious. I just thought that we were going to make out," Abby said.

He began to kiss her.

"He got on top of me... and he tried to take off my shirt, but I said no to the shirt thing, which he stopped with the shirt. But that was the only time he stopped during the whole thing," Abby said. "I told him I didn't want to do it and that I wasn't ready, that I was uncomfortable, and he did it anyways."

No. This is rape. Stop. No.

Over and over again, she said -- yelled -- the words. Over and over again.

But the words meant nothing to the boy.

Straining her neck from underneath the 200-pound athlete to look out of the car window,

Abby searched for anyone. Anyone. There was one person walking in his house after throwing out the trash. Even though far away, she thought she should try to yell for help anyway.

She screamed. Nothing.

At least it was nothing until the boy slapped her across the face.

"Right here," she said pointing to her right temple. "It was bruised and swollen and red a little bit. It hurt. He was a man hitting me... I don't remember how it happened, but I had a bruise

all across my lower lip. I will always remember -- this is the one injury I will never forget -- I had scratch marks right here. On my chest."

It was the nightmare girls have day to day, but it was happening to her. The nightmare that parents try to prepare their little girls to avoid, and then how to deal with their entire lives, and it was actually happening to her.

After it was done, he casually got out of the car, walked around, opened the front door and returned to the driver's seat, Abby said. Stunned, she slipped her shorts back on and returned to the passenger seat. He made a joke. He said he had to go to sports practice.

Before she knew it, they were back at the salon, where he simply dropped her off with the friend she had been with before. "Why is your face red? Why is your lip swollen?" her friend said.

She spotted a bruise on Abby's inner thigh.

"I fell," was all Abby said.

She felt ashamed. Ashamed of being so weak that she let a guy hit her, take advantage of her.

Spring break went on. Abby pushed all of the memories of that Tuesday night to the back of her mind.

Sunday night rolled around. School was starting back up the next day. She thought to herself -- I've been raped. Raped.

"I just broke down in tears at school. My favorite teacher asked me what was going on, so I asked him 'What would you do if this happened to you?'" Abby said. "He brought me

down to guidance."

In that moment, after almost a week of suppressing those memories, it all became real. As real as when it had happened that night. It was time to tell her mom.

Her mom and dad are divorced, and Abby has lived with her single mom for most of her life. She has not seen her dad in 18 months -- including the six months before the rape.

She called her mom from the guidance office and told her. Her mom was in shock. Confused. She thought her daughter was kidding.

Abby told her one more time that she was raped, and her mom came immediately to the school.

Abby called her dad. At that time, they still had a pretty close relationship, long distance, but she did not know what to expect from him.

He picked up the phone. She told him.

"What were you wearing?" he asked.

"I really do believe when a girl says she's been raped or sexually assaulted, that it happened," Abby said. "It doesn't matter, like with my dad, what the girl was wearing. People have a choice. To not hurt someone in a sexual or physical or verbal way. Even if I was wearing something inappropriate for my age, that doesn't justify what he did."

Abby and her mom filed a report with the police. She made her statement, but it was over five days after she was raped. His

car was swiped for any evidence, and it was too late for a rape kit to be effective.

It was her word over his.

"After I finished my statement, and [the] police lady came into my room and said, 'I just interviewed [the boy's name]. You are lying to me,'" Abby said.

Abby was stunned. There were details she had forgotten. They were used against her when compared with the boy's story.

Without any evidence except her word, Abby lost hope in taking the case to court. She was conflicted. Every time she saw his face, she would relive that event again and again, so she would have to see him every day during trial. That scared her.

Four months later, the police confirmed that he was off the hook. No charges. No trial. No justice for the innocence that he took from Abby.

She fell into a deeper depression. So deep that her thoughts went to the worst place.

"I've had a history of depression... I'm the one where I have an actual chemical imbalance in my brain, so I have to be on super high doses of medicine," Abby said. "I want to keep it real, so I thought of killing myself... But I looked at my guinea pigs, and I knew I couldn't do it."

She reached her lowest point in that brief night that summer. But that was not the end of her story. He was not the end of her story.

She decided after that night that his actions did not define her anymore. She was no longer just the girl who was raped.

She was also no longer going to be the girl who expected everything from the men in her life.

"Because I don't have a dad, I feel like that is the reason I cling to guy teachers more and like to have guy therapists because I don't have that male interaction every day like a lot of girls do. Before it happened, I was just throwing myself at guys," Abby said. "He took my virginity. My physical, not my mental, of course. It made me realize now that not every guy is good."

In the following weeks and months, she believed that all men had the capability to take advantage of her again. Her trust in men was gone -- temporarily.

She is at the best that she has been in her life now -- a year after she was raped -- she said. She is building back her relationships with the men in her life -- her dad, her brother and her grandfather.

Her body is a temple. She knows that now. She will not let any man, definitely not the high school student from that April night, destroy that anymore.

She is going to save her real, mental virginity until marriage -- when she knows for certain that the man she has chosen will respect her consent.

Abby said her heart is now is pursuing law for a career. She is going to dive into her studies to hopefully become a criminal attorney and never let someone like the boy who raped her be exempt from the law again.

"Since I have prayed about it so much and spoke out about it, I'm free now," Abby said. "It is really hard to try to forgive him, but I know that if I try to forgive him, then that will free us both."

*Name changed.

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