



## **Punished For Being a Victim (Content Note - Graphic description of rape)**

She did what?

Those were the first words that came out of the police officer's mouth, he stared at me and from the look in his eyes, and he had already tried, judged and sentenced me to death.

Am sorry, my name is Lola (Not her real name), I am 26 years old, single and I work as a receptionist at a real estate firm, and I was raped by my neighbor on my way to work, funny thing is, I told the better part of this story from a holding cell, and I got bailed out by the writer.

I live in a small neighborhood, you know the type where everyone knows your name, and you know everyone's name also, so you can imagine how it feels to have something like rape happen to you, and everyone turns on you and tries to blame you for it.

My attacker is well known to me, in fact our parents attend the same church, and they are or were pretty close. He had been making advances at me for a while now, but honestly I really didn't find him as being the kind of guy I wanted to have a serious relationship with, don't get me wrong, I didn't think little of him neither did I think he was a bad person, at least not then, but I didn't find him attractive enough, and I have never been one to date someone out of pity or material gain, so I kept letting him down gently.

He always acted as if he was cool with it, and on many occasions he would get me nice gifts, and even took me on a dinner date for my birthday, and got me a really nice gold wrist watch, and in his own words "even if I can't have you as a lover, it warms my heart to have you as a friend". I tried to refuse his gifts, but he would act like he was offended, and I in turn decided to accept and take him as a friend, but now in hind sight, I should have run like the devil was chasing me.

We lived a couple of streets from each other, and everyone adored him, young boys aspired to be like him, all the girls wanted to be with him, his parents were so proud of him, and in the eyes of the community he was the perfect man, respectful, handsome, generous etc.

He was their hero.

Many times he would offer to drive me to work, mostly because it was on his route to work, and we left for work at the same time, in order to beat the traffic, it was really a relief for me, because it was always hectic using the public transport system, and I was also very scared of being robbed or attacked because I always left home very early in the morning, if I knew then, what I know now, I probably would have taken my chances with the outsiders, it wouldn't hurt me as much because I would never know or meet them again.

I can remember it like it was yesterday, 21st of September 2012, it was a Friday, so I was casually dressed, I had a short skirt on, with a nice blouse, and sandals, I just came out of the



house, when he drove up and honked his horn, I was very pleased and rushed into the car, he complimented my outfit and we drove off, I noticed he kept staring at me, and it made me a bit uncomfortable, but I decided not to dwell on it, I never imagined it would lead to anything, twice while trying to change the gear of the car, his hand brushed my knee, he excused himself and I really didn't read anything into it. We eventually hit the third mainland bridge and he began asking me very weird questions. He asked if it was fair to him for me to keep leading him on the way I was, he insisted I was sending him mixed signals, if not why would I decline his offer of a relationship and yet continue to accept gifts from him, at first I tried to laugh it off, but realized he was serious, and that was when the whole thing took a turn for the worse.

He pulled over to the curb, switched off the engine, locked the doors and turned to me, I really couldn't see his eyes, it was still dark, but from the sound of his voice, he had worked himself into a frenzy, he went on and on about how ungrateful and selfish I was, I tried to calm him down, but that seemed to annoy him the more.

Suddenly he pulled out a knife, I could see that very clearly and I became paralyzed, I opened my mouth to speak and no words came out, he told me to shut my mouth, he said today was payback day, he said how stupid I was to think there was a free meal in life, he looked at the wrist watch and laughed, he said I should note the time and day, this was the day I would pay for the watch, for the free stuff and for all his time, he held my hand, reached he rubbed the knife on my hand, it was cold, my heart raced, he leaned over and reclined my seat, he used the knife to run down my thighs, I shivered, and began to weep silently, because at that point I realized what was happening.

He ordered me to take off my panties, and then he raped me, he was violent, he was rough, he called me names, he insulted me, he even spit on me, and all through he held the knife to my neck, it felt like an eternity, eventually he stopped, zipped up his pants, started the engine and drove me to my office without a word, he dropped me off and drove away, I stood dazed and confused, what had just happened, I thought I was dreaming, I prayed I was dreaming, suddenly I felt a bit damp, I rushed into the office, went straight to the bathroom, and discovered I was soaked, I was in so much pain and I was soaked, I tried to clean up as much as possible, dropped a note for my boss, and went straight home.

Immediately I got home, I told my mother what had happened, she immediately called my father, who in turn called my attacker's father, it was all happening so fast, long story short, he denied everything, and in his charming way, he turned everything against me, he told his folks I had been making passes at him, went further to say I had tried to offer him sex on my birthday after he gave me the watch, he said a lot of stuff, but he nailed it home when he told his parents I was very easy to bed in the neighborhood, stating I always dressed to attract attention, was it my fault I had a full figure, and always tried to dress in what looked good on me?

Believe it or not, at some point I actually blamed myself for being raped, alongside everyone else, I tried to justify his action by trying to convince myself that maybe my dressing or my constant interaction sent him wrong signals and ultimately pushed him to raping me, but after some time I realized that no sane woman would intentionally provoke a man to such a level.



The news spread around the neighborhood, and everyone immediately took his side, I was called various derogatory names, and once I heard some women talking, stating I wanted to force myself into his family because they were so successful, my father reported the case to the police, but they did nothing, stating there was no evidence to back up my claim, but the real truth was his father was very influential so it was like, dancing in front of a blind man.

Weeks passed, I tried to put it behind me, but I just couldn't do it, I was stigmatized, and at a point I couldn't even leave the house, I quit my job, and reclined into myself, my parents fought constantly, my mother blamed my father for not pursuing it further, my father was angry for not being able to do more, and I felt dirty and useless, I would take very hot baths, scald my skin, but I still felt his hands on me, I still felt him inside me, I still felt the pain, the nightmares became scarier with each passing night, this continued until I snapped.

One night in December, I sent him an SMS message "I will make you suffer for all you u have said and done", well I guess I didn't think it through, because the message was interpreted wrongly by the police as a threat to him, and I was arrested the next morning.

While I was in holding the police mocked and taunted me, calling me names, and one even called me a gold digger, they refused my parents having access to me, and they tried to make me sign a statement, trying to absolve him of any wrong doing, the readymade statement was a confession that I had tried to set him up, but I refused to sign, so they kept me for 2 weeks.

Lady luck smiled on me, when the writer of my story came to the police station to bail out a woman in a cell next to me, I and the lady had got talking and we discovered we were in similar circumstances. She told him about me, and well he spoke to a few lawyers who agreed to help out, they were able to agree on the terms of my release, on my release I was made to sign an order preventing me from communicating with him in anyway, and refraining me from slandering his name, and from accusing him of any wrong doing. If I hadn't agreed to those terms, I would probably still be behind bars, and eventually some trumped up charges would have been made against me, and the situation would be worse that it already is.

This story has no happy ending, I got raped, and I still got punished for it, I am now a social pariah in my neighborhood, I will probably leave for someplace else, my parents are moving anyway, why I decided to tell this story, well I just want people to know , this is no fairy tale, heroes don't come to save the day, the society mostly finds ways to blame the victim, and in turn make the rapist the victim, because they believe all women are harlots and always want to take the "MAN" down.

Eventually I will get over this and move on, maybe not today, or tomorrow, maybe I might not be able to dig deep and find that inner strength just yet, but I guess talking about it is therapy on its own, but in all my dreams and imaginations, I would never have believed my first time would be so horrific, yes you heard me, I was a virgin until I got raped by a man I thought I knew.

If you ever come across a rape victim, understand her plight before you judge her, because no matter how crazy a person is, no one ever goes out looking to be raped.



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