

A hand with fingers spread, set against a blurred background of people. The hand is in the foreground, with fingers pointing upwards and outwards. The background shows a crowd of people, but they are out of focus.

# I Was Not Raped

A Short Story  
by

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# Part 1

## The Reasons

Let me list the reasons why I wasn't raped. I went there willingly. I consented to it – right? It wasn't until many years later did I realise, or was I made to realise that what happened to me that afternoon wasn't okay.

I think perhaps I knew at the time too. When I tried to leave or knew I wanted out. But at the end of the day, I let him. I let it happen and years later I can picture myself there. I am inside my body as it's happening. I can see the reflection of it on his television screen. I can hear his rickety bunk bed, his grunts, and I can still hear myself asking 'how did I get here?' But, I was not raped.

No, for a long time it was just another sexual encounter that went wrong. It was the butt of jokes and I was okay with that. It was better than having to actually come to terms with what kinda happened – what *did* happen.

I remember that afternoon vividly. I remember all the days after it and all the days before too. What led to that moment and what foundations grew because of it. It's not something I like to talk about and it's not something that, in a discussion about sexual assault or rape, I would ever bring up. For years, I was convinced that no one had ever laid a hand on me without my permission. It wasn't until I got older did I realise that, perhaps, I hadn't been in a position to really consent to it. Perhaps, I had been vulnerable. Perhaps, he should've known better. Perhaps, you don't realise until afterwards. Until years later.

Because rape and sexual assault are always portrayed in TV, books and movies to be violent and aggressive. You're supposed to know exactly what's happening and be fighting them off, begging them to stop. Saying no.

Over the years, I've listened to countless stories of rape and sexual assault and I admit I am guilty in that I've always wondered why they didn't fight harder? Why didn't they say no and run away? Why didn't they stop it? I guess in hindsight, I need to apologise to anyone who I may have implied that ridiculous accusation to; because sometimes, in the moment, you just can't. Mentally, you just can't. But I was not raped.

I don't want to ever categorise myself as one of those poor persons that are pinned down and taken advantage of; backed into a corner and made to feel as if they have no way out. I don't want to ever categorise myself as one of those persons that are touched without their permission. It's horrific, nauseating and mentally scarring. It's not fair. I don't want to categorise myself, not because I'm in denial but because I don't think what happened to me

will ever be as bad as what happened to them. I'm not self-deprecating. I just strongly believe that what happened to me was not rape.

I think about that afternoon and I don't know what I feel. I know what I get told to feel by the few people that know. My Beloved and my best friend. They know the truth. Not the story I told my friends about the guy and the bad sex. Not the story I told my parents which is that I was at a friend's house. Not because I don't think I could've told my mum. But because I would've disappointed her.

My mum is fierce and she trusts me. She's always trusted me. No matter how many times I lied and no matter how many times she found out, she's always trusted me that each time I told her something it would be the truth. Suspiciously trusted me, but trusted me nonetheless. If I ever have children and if I was ever capable of telling them about that afternoon and about the lessons I learnt, one of them would be 'never lie to your parents about where you are'. Not only so if you're ever in danger they know where to find you or simply just to put their minds at ease, but because if something happens and you weren't where you said you were, you have to keep that lie. You have to keep what happened to yourself.

I couldn't tell my mum about what happened and I hate that I can never tell her what happened to me. And I know she wouldn't be disappointed in me for not saying no and running away. She'd be disappointed that I lied. Quite frankly, disappointing my mum hurts me more than what actually happened. I lied to my mum – my best friend, the person I can always depend on. The person I respect the most in this entire world. It's like a slap of silence and it's my fault. I went there willingly. I didn't say no. I didn't try to leave – really. I was not raped.

## Part 2

### The Pathetic Truth

You want to know what led up to that moment and I don't want to place blame. The only person to blame is me. I should've tried harder. I shouldn't have gone there in the first place. I shouldn't have let my heartbreak drive me to despair. To the point of no return. To a point, I'm not even sure I ever came back from. I just continued.

I don't really want to talk about it, but I guess, here it is. The pathetic truth of what led me to the afternoon I wasn't raped.

For a little while, I'd been online. I was part of the beginning of the age of social media and that meant talking online to complete strangers and using dating websites when I was fourteen/fifteen. I was bullied in school; I wasn't popular. I was chubby and 'emo'. I liked the wrong music and I liked the wrong clothes. And I was absolutely terrified, ashamed even, that I would never have a boyfriend. Stupid, I know. Truth is now it feels like I've had a boyfriend since I was thirteen. I've actually never really been alone.

Sometimes I wish I'd had some time alone; maybe to do better at school or enjoy being a teenager. I don't regret it in the end. My Beloved is my best friend.

So, it was the summer of 2010 and I was going to meet, who I thought, was the love of my life. Thinking back on it, I kinda realise how ridiculous I was to ever believe that *He*, this boy, would be the love of my life; not just because I was so young.

We'd been talking for 8 months. We'd discussed meeting, but nothing serious. Not until August, by which point, *He* had had numerous real-life girlfriends and our friendship had grown. Sadly, inside of me, something else had developed.

Little did I know at the time, this was all just a fairy tale inside of my head. A blissful fairy tale. A fairy tale that was about to come true that summer when *He* told me he was coming to visit. And boy did I think all my Christmases had come at once. I was so happy. So, ignorantly – no, *naively* happy.

I like to think back on the day I met *Him*. I like to appease my fifteen-year-old self with that memory. That old memory that's still very vibrant in my mind but fading along with the rest of it into a haze. So much so I probably don't even remember what it was actually like. I just remember how I felt. Happy. Just, happy.

That day, I went into town with my best friend. She was going to meet him with me because that's the sensible thing to do, isn't it? To meet someone you've never met before online in real life with a friend. Just in case.

I still remember the colour of his dyed black hair. The blue of his eyes. What he was wearing. His ridiculous lip piercings. And now, when I look back on it, I like to tut and laugh at how happy that made me when I was fifteen.

Some people say you shouldn't dwell in the past. This isn't dwelling. This is me rereading my past like a book, learning from these experiences. Besides, sometimes it's nice to revisit old fond memories. Those are, after all, the make-up of ourselves. Who we are today.

So there *He* was and there I was, on the platform, and I could see him walking towards me, headphones dangling down the front of his t-shirt and baggy joggers hanging from his slim hips. He was every bit as gorgeous as I always thought he would be, you know from the pictures and webcamming. And I, of course, was nothing like *His* usual type. I wasn't tall or skinny with a big bum. I wasn't anything like his foundation-lipped girlfriends that *He'd* had before in the time I'd known him. The ones that had made me green with envy.

*He* used to call me his best friend. *He* used to say I was the female version of him. The problem is, when I look back on it, I don't even remember what we used to talk about. I don't know how we used to spend hours on the phone – other than when we were having phone sex. I don't remember how we were so alike, for when I look back on the times, the three times we actually spent together in person, I don't think we were alike at all.

You know I've always wanted to ask *Him* now: did you ever love me? Was there ever anything between us? What was I to you? Why did you do that to me?  
Yet another thing I don't regret. It shaped me. In the good, the bad and the ugly.

So there we were, standing on the station platform and I still remember the way *His* face lit up. Or rather, I remember his face lighting up but maybe it didn't. Maybe it's just something I projected upon him because I was happy enough for the both of us. Maybe in truth, when *He* saw me he realised he couldn't be with a petite – no, let me rephrase that; a short, chubby girl. A short, chubby, fifteen-year-old girl with fake hair extensions and crooked thick black eyeliner; wearing my short, shorts with the denser weave of the reinforcement at the top of my nude tights just peeking out. My young, large breasts stuffed into a chequered shirt and my favourite pair of high top Dunks on my feet. But I didn't care. I was with *Him*.

I remember he took me in his arms and he held me. Then he kissed me and it felt as though I'd died and gone straight to heaven. Every one of my teenage fantasies was coming to life. The chubby awkward girl gets the hot 'scene kid' guy. And then he spent the week with me. It was like something out of a chick-flick. Stand back *Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging* – you have a contender.

It was August. It was sunny and it was hot and I was so in love. Summer days in the fields and warm evenings in my garden. Watching movies late into the night. Eating curly fries and going on adventures; exploring Camden town together. Holding his hand. Being beside him. It was perfect.

*Him* sneaking up to my room late at night. My mum getting angry at me because we were having 'midnight hanky panky' after she specifically told me not to. And here's the thing. The sex wasn't good.

Now, granted, I was fifteen and I know that most of you wouldn't have even dreamed of having sex at that age, or if you had, you probably weren't in the position to do so. But I lost my virginity at thirteen. I gave mine away to a nice, kind boy. I don't regret it – except perhaps my age. He loved me, even if we never lasted. What does last when you're that young? Maybe that I still respect him. That I'm thankful it was him. He was the last boy in my life until I met my Beloved that I think truly respected me.

Except for one – the one boy who I hurt...who didn't deserve that...to whom I'm deeply sorry. But he's not a part of this story. He's too kind for this story. So let's keep going.

After I lost my virginity, there was one other boy. I wasn't in a relationship with him. It was a forgotten sexual encounter that took place between scenes of *Pulp Fiction* and *A Clockwork Orange*. I don't regret that either. Especially as it was pretty insignificant – sorry!

But this was *Him*. I thought sex with *Him* – I mean, I'd dreamt about it, spent hours thinking about it – would be magical, mind-blowing. But something was missing. I guess the hopeless romantic in me realises now when I'm having toe-tingling, earth-shattering sex with my Beloved, that sometimes when the love ain't there...it just doesn't work. And I was fifteen – so what the fuck do fifteen-year-olds know about having sex?

Asides from the sex, which compared to everything else I was feeling, was insignificant, I was happy. I thought *He* was too. Oh, I remember weeping for hours when he left. The bed sheets smelling like him. I hated it when he had to return home. I hated it even more when I found out that he was already chatting to another girl and arranging to meet up with her. Oh, that was the perfect way to end what I had believed to be the best week of my life.

If you've ever had your heart broken then you'll know that pain in your chest. That hollowness. That sickness. It consumes you. That complete and utter agony. We had just spent an entire week together, one that I thought had meant the world to both of us, and already on the train home, *He* was texting another girl – who I happened to know. Arranging to meet up and go on a date with her. Because that was the thing with *Him*. He was a major womanizer.

I knew that. He never tried to hide it and yet I had fallen prey to his kind words and sweet kisses. To the fact he'd travelled all the way to see me – spent a week with me – and spent the money, he'd been given to learn to drive, to buy the tickets. And boy, did *He* like to remind me of that. Whenever I questioned how much he cared for me, he'd always say:

“You know I love you. I spent that money to come see you. You're my best friend. You're who I want to be with. But it can't happen. There are so many miles between us and I can't be in a long distance relationship.”

I'm paraphrasing but I reckon He may have told me that a few times, however, I was young. I was in love and I desperately clung to the small sliver of hope that he would change his mind. That maybe, just maybe, *He* loved me enough to try.

Because that's the thing about love. Speaking as someone who spent the first five years in a long distance relationship with my Beloved, if you love someone, you find a way. You make it work. Distance or not. Love defies distance. Love doesn't care for the miles.

But we were young. I was fifteen. He was just eighteen. He wasn't ready to commit and I shouldn't have been considering commitment. We were young but already I felt as though I'd lived an age. I've always been older than what I actually am. An old soul perhaps. And because of that, I lived beyond my years.

My heart ached for *Him*. I was adamant this relationship could work. Age or not, distance or not, no matter what he told me, I could only see that small flame of hope. Hope that one day we could be together. But one day wasn't enough. I wanted *Him* now. I wanted what we had that summer to last forever. Never have the words in *Grease* ever made sense until then:

*Summer loving happened so fast.*

*Summer loving had me a blast.*

I was blind. It was never going to happen. It should've ended there.

## Part 3

### The Other Boy

So coming back to the events that led up to the afternoon that I wasn't raped.

After *He* went home, I was pretty lost. I had my friends asking me 'when are you going to see him again?' and 'are you and him in a relationship?' I was never brave enough to tell them. No. No, it was one week, one summer, when I was fifteen.

I was too ashamed to even admit he was already texting other girls – shagging other girls. It tore my heart in two. But *He* didn't do, I suppose, what any good person should've done. What someone that cared for you would do. He didn't shut me down. He didn't stop talking to me. He didn't tell me no – or at least, not that I remember. Then again, it was nine years ago. I'm not sure whether he ever told me that I had to stop loving him. I wonder if *He* ever tried to stop leading me on? Whether he ever tried to halt my advances. Because it needed to end. Yet, *He* continued to talk to me, confide in me. He continued to allow me to believe and keep my hopes up that one day he would love me the way I loved him. I was so sure...so stupid.

Around the same time, I was friends with another boy. Let's call him Tyler. He was another guy I'd been chatting to online. We'd known each other a little bit longer and we always had a laugh. We were good friends. Even through a computer/phone screen, we were attracted to one another. He made me laugh. Plus, he was cute – which helped.

And so as summer came to a close and autumn drew in, I went back to school still with this pain in my young broken heart. I sought comfort in Tyler in those long nights. He was my friend and the other guy...*He* didn't like that. He didn't like that I had somebody else. He actively hated Tyler – and they'd never met. They barely knew me. And Tyler didn't like *Him* either. He said *He* was bad for me. Said *He* would hurt me. I guess it was probably the one time in Tyler's life when he was actually right.

So there I was, heading off the rails with my broken heart. Completely prepared to do something irrational. And for what?

It was that autumn of 2010 when so much of my life changed. Who I was...what I was willing to do...and how much my pain would cost me. How far my depression would take me.

I remember at the time, I had another friend. We'll call him Skylar. He was much older, wiser and there wasn't anything between us. It was refreshing. He was like a big brother. We used to hang out in Camden together; we'd drink coffee, eat noodles – throw said noodles at



pigeons. He taught me how to roll my first cigarette, taught me what drugs *not* to do, called me 'Bub' or 'Bubbles'. Skylar was great.

I still remember the time he fell down the stairs to the coffee shop we used to haunt; he had pink eye and looked disastrous from a rave the night before. He is a character so vivid in my mind that I'll never forget him. Skylar. I learnt a lot from him. I wonder what he's up to now...

Anyway, he was always telling me I could do anything. Encouraging me to forget about this guy. That I was better than that. I wanted to believe him. So badly.

See here I am, writing, and I'm worried that you're starting to make tracks of blame. I don't want that. I don't want to blame anyone for what happened on that afternoon when I was not raped. Just where everything changed. Where I made a decision that altered things.

On the advice of Skylar, I decided to finally meet Tyler. This was the first time I lied to my parents. They always knew I went to see Skylar. They knew all about him. They knew what he looked like, where he came from. Even dribs and drabs about the fact he had been in a young offenders' prison for a little while for stealing a tractor...aha, that's a story for another time.

I went on his advice and met Tyler. I travelled from my house, all the way through London and down. I had a picnic of homemade rocky roads and quiche. The best picnic in the world. I met Tyler alone. At his station. We got the bus back to his apartment, which he lived in with his mum and younger brother. And I guess you're all sitting there reading this thinking 'what an idiot'. 'What a stupid girl'. It turns out, I was safe. In fact, I've always been okay. Luckily. They've always been who they said they were and I never got hurt. Well, almost.

I remember that afternoon sitting in his messy two bedroom apartment, chill on my cheeks and fingertips from the lack of heating, and being snuggled up to his long yet solid frame. He was all limbs and wide, kind smiles. He was tall – very tall. And we made out. Just made out. That was all. We made out on the sofa, on his bed...and it was nice.

There was almost more. I certainly wanted more. So had he. His kisses had been moreish and my body had positively sung lying beneath him. But no. We only kissed.

You see, I was on my period – that old chestnut – and for a long time afterwards we talked about meeting up again when he'd finished university and I was done with whatever guy. We'd meet and finally have the sex that we had wanted that day. But you know what? I'm really glad we didn't. Not just because I'm with my Beloved and Tyler found someone to be happy with too, but because that day, me and him – us then, not now – eating rocky roads and quiche and cuddling and making out...and dry humping on his bunk bed will always be untarnished by sex.

It was just fun...and nice...and unparalleled to any other moment I'd spent with a man until my Beloved. It was how it was supposed to be for fifteen year old me.

I still remember him telling me how nice my arse looked in my jean shorts. I still regret getting rid of those jean shorts.

That day was beautiful...blissful. And I can't remember why I didn't go see him again. Why it wasn't Tyler I went to see that next weekend. Part of me is glad, because like I said before, it's a nice memory to keep. Another part of me really wishes it had been Tyler. Because, as much as he was a smug git...and as much as he used to joke... I'm pretty certain Tyler would never have hurt me. And neither would *He* that summer.

*He* only hurt my heart...my young, naïve heart. And because of all that pain, because of all that pent-up want for attention – my pining for *Him* – I just wanted to be held. And that was the sad truth.

I hate when I tell people that and they're like 'you can get a cuddle from your friends or your mum'. And don't get me wrong, I love my parents. My mum's cuddles are magical, full of healing properties. I'm not a girl with daddy issues. My dad, to me, is the greatest father in the world. I don't have father issues, I have men issues. And right then, a hug from my best friend or my mum wasn't going to fill this void inside of me. To anyone who's been in the same position as I had, you'll know that a cuddle from your mum is not the kind of attention you need.

I hate that I am the product of this patriarchal society. That it was a man I needed to fill the emptiness *He* left. I wanted to feel wanted....wanted the way *He* didn't seem to want me. So, that next Saturday I left the house and I lied for the second time that month.

## Part 4

### Half Way Between London & Brighton

October. October 2010. I lied to my parents again. Said I was going to see friends. Skylar probably. When actually I was going to visit him. Jacob.

I knew Jacob the way I knew most of the guys in my life and that was online. We'd chatted on the phone and MSN and we'd met briefly at a gig earlier that year. In Fear and Faith. I still remember the band; the sweat in his hair and the tattoos on his skin. It was a brief meeting and just long enough for me to know he was attractive. He was my type of guy – then – with dark hair, tattoos, piercings and all the right kind of bad for fifteen-year-old me.

And so we chatted, the same way I chatted to all these boys. We grew to know one another, I guess. I knew what he wanted. And he was what I wanted too. Or so I told myself. This was never going to be a relationship – though I think a ludicrous part of me believed I had the power to change that (had I learnt nothing?). This was just sex. Yet when he invited to come to his and watch films and hang out, I naively thought that was exactly what we'd do. Maybe it would even be a bit like what happened between me and Tyler. We'd kiss and cuddle and it would all be nice.

Once again, I travelled from my home, through London and down to Jacob's house. I met him at the station; his hair kinda dirty, beard untrimmed and wearing just an old t-shirt and shorts. I think he was even wearing flip-flops. Whereas I'd done my hair, had my extensions in, my makeup on and was in my favourite outfit. The one I think I'd even worn to meet Tyler – Tyler in his soft hoodies, tight skinny jeans and floppy hats. Tyler with his soft, large hands and big docile eyes.

All too late I realised that this wasn't going to be like Tyler. No, he and Jacob were very different. Jacob never made an effort with me. If I'd been older, a little wiser, I would've turned around and left. Seen this was a 'booty call' and gone home. But I hadn't...I didn't...and I forgave him for looking as though he'd just got out of bed. After all, we were only supposed to be watching films...right? This wasn't a date.

At this point, I'd never even been out on a date. I wouldn't go out on a real date until I met my Beloved...years later. But enough about him and more about that afternoon, where I wasn't raped.

We walked back to his house from the train station. Halfway between London and Brighton was what he used to say. That was where he lived. Where he actually lived was a pigsty. It

was filthy. Cluttered and messy; it stunk of damp and old socks. My mother always complained when we were growing up that our house was cluttered; it wasn't, it was homey. My home. This house was cluttered. This house looked like something out of one of those 'hoarding' documentaries. My mum would've had a heart attack. In fact, my mum would've left right then. I should be more like my mum.

We went into his bedroom which he shared with his younger brother, just as Tyler had. Unlike Tyler's bedroom – with its band posters and the bright grey light of autumn spilling through the large window – this room was tiny. It was dark, cave-like and when the door closed, it was claustrophobic. I look back on this now and wonder why I hadn't just left. What on earth was I still doing there? But I guess teenage me didn't care and I'm not about to judge her. She was young. She was in pain. She just wanted to be held. Oh, babe.

There was a bunk bed again and this time, it was the top bunk. We got on top and straight away we were lying down. I still remember his cold fingers running up underneath my baseball t-shirt finding the hollow of my hip. I still remember him telling me; "This is it. This is my favourite part of you."

And boy...to think, out of my entire body *that* was his favourite part. Not my eyes or my lips or my hair...or even my brain. No, he didn't know me well enough to know I had one. Right then, lying there in that position, I wonder whether I had one.

I recall when *He* used to tell me I had beautiful eyes – something which I've always believed about myself. Even when I was told every day I was fat...ugly...worthless...when I wasn't certain about anything else, I always knew I had beautiful eyes. Not blue and transfixing. Not green and unusual or even hazel and wise. Just brown... fierce, loyal and loving eyes. But I don't think Jacob was interested in my eyes.

But the hollow of my hip? That's a strange one.

I remember his hands pulling down my jean shorts. Pushing them down so he could feel my thigh, my groin. I can see myself pulling his hand back up and giggling:

"No, you said we were going to watch films..."

I just wanted a cuddle. I'd only gone because I'd wanted a hug. I wanted to feel a man's arms around me, holding me...hoping I could pretend it was *Him*. Pathetic.

But there I was, lying there on the top bunk of Jacob's rickety bed, pulling his hands away from me, 'teasing' him – but was I teasing him or was it what I actually wanted? For him to stop. I guess it doesn't really matter now.

Hindsight doesn't do much good when it comes to the past. We can only learn from our mistakes. Trust me, I never found myself in that position again.

Lying there, we started to kiss, me allowing him to put his hands up my t-shirt and down the front of my shorts...putting my hands down the front of his shorts. Now I guess you're

expecting me to make some degrading snub about him but if I'm honest, I don't even remember.

I only remember laying the wrong way on his bed and him sitting on my chest with his dick in my mouth. To put it bluntly. Because I didn't really want to give him a blow job...and I also didn't want to leave. I wanted to be wanted and he wanted me.

So I stayed there, I let him do it, and it was okay.

I remember him putting his hands on my shorts. Pulling them down with my knickers. I remember thinking 'I want this'. 'I want to forget'. 'I want to lose myself in this moment so the pain in my heart doesn't hurt; so that I can find comfort in something other than *Him*'. *He*, who was still dragging me on, making me believe and hope.

I don't want to think about this anymore. I want to talk about after.

## Part 5

### Love-Kick Starts Again

After I left, pulling pubes from my mouth, I sat on the train and I called *Him*. We laughed about it. We joked about the hair in my teeth as if what had just happened meant nothing. I bought mints from WHSmith at Waterloo station just to get rid of the revolting taste in my mouth.

Then I remember, I was at school, Monday morning and by that point, I'd realised that what happened on Saturday wasn't funny anymore. I must've been acting oddly because my art teacher took me aside in her office and asked me what was wrong. I told her – 'I've had unprotected sex' ...and I didn't know who to talk to. So she comforted me; told me it would be alright and we called the doctors together. She was a good teacher. And that was the first morning after pill I had. I was fifteen.

For months, maybe even years afterwards, I suppressed the memory. I suppressed what really happened and why it happened. I was able to convince myself that it was just another stupid sexual encounter. I even joked about it with my friends. It was nothing. And it was nothing for years to come. Even when stories of what my friends had been through came out; I listened patiently and understandingly and rarely did Jacob come to mind. That afternoon faded. He was just another guy I had sex with.

I guess you probably want to know what happened between me and *Him* in the end. The guy. I did see him again. Two more times. We got close again; friends even, when I was with another boy, maybe four months after the afternoon with Jacob. He was going to visit me for my sixteenth birthday; going to come to the big party I was having.

He wanted to give me a present. I said I wanted a threesome...he obliged. Truth be told, I just wanted to feel him again. To have him want me again...and maybe, for the briefest of seconds, he did too...maybe?

I still remember how happy I was when I saw *Him* again. Skirting around my own boyfriend at the time, I went straight into his arms. Fuck my boyfriend...I just wanted to be with him. Anyway, as it turns out, my boyfriend at the time wasn't so good after all.

On my last day of year eleven, two days before my sixteenth birthday, I found out I had chlamydia. My boyfriend had given it to me. And I know that to be true because, succeeding my morning after pill, the nurse asked me to do an STI test. I had been clean and it had been a wise decision. Wise and, as it turns out, helpful so that when I was diagnosed with that rotten disease seven months later, I knew for certain it wasn't me. It wasn't that afternoon

with Jacob – the one I so desperately wanted to forget – coming back to bite me. No, it was all on my boyfriend...we'll call him Elliot.

The weirdest thing about the whole situation was that I wasn't upset that Elliot had clearly cheated on me. I was angry. Angry that I had this disease, that left untreated could ruin my chances of having children. I was furious that he had cheated on me. I was disgusted that this had happened around my birthday – my goddamn sixteenth! And finally, I was irritated because I wouldn't get to have sex. I wouldn't get to have sex with *Him*. Wow, I know right? So there I was celebrating my sixteenth birthday with the chlamydia I got from my cheating boyfriend – whom I really should've broken up with that night – wanting desperately to jump into bed with *Him* again. It really was a delightful time in my adolescence. Just the cherry on top of the cake...on top of the mess I'd made of things.

I make jokes about the fact I got an STI now and even kind of then. But it was just a cover. On my last day of school, after receiving the phone call that morning, I cried my heart out – for all the reasons I stated above. I cried to my closest friends and they all thought it was because I was upset my boyfriend had cheated on me; it should've been about that. But shamefully, it all came down to the fact I wouldn't be able to be with *Him* that weekend. I wouldn't get to be in his arms.

When I told *Him*, later that day, he laughed and said;  
“Shit happens.”

I remember how frustrated I was with him because of that. In my mind, I had all these big fantasies of *Him* hitting Elliot and telling him what a scoundrel he was...perhaps slapping him with a big glove as they did in old movies. Ridiculous. I laugh out loud about it now but it had been my fantasy nonetheless. I really believed that *He* cared about me that much that in my sixteen-year-old head the things that happened in books, TV and movies happened in real life too. We were finding each other again. There was hope for us, and this man, he would defend my honour.

I've had my honour defended a few times by my Beloved and it's magnificent each time – it turns me on each time too. But my Beloved loves me...he respects me. I don't know whether this boy ever did. I'd love to ask *Him* but I've never had the guts. And what does it matter now anyway? What does it really matter in the grand scheme of things whether the boy I was in love with for over two years was in love with me too? It's all history now.

I came close to almost knowing the truth at my sixteenth birthday party, after catching *Him* and one of my male friends going at it on my bed with a large audience of female spectators – man, that image is burned onto my retinas. Drunk and horrified, I stumbled out of the house and into the night with my boyfriend on my tail – I think he was still trying to wheedle his way back in, unbeknown to the fact I didn't love him nor even care about him anymore (or ever).

I ran away from the party. When I returned, I found myself in the company of *His* best friend, Miles. The one who had come with *Him* that weekend. And when I say the company of, I mean in the comforting, kind company of. Miles was one of the good ones. A really good one. I like to think that wherever he is now, he's happy and that whoever he's with treats him right. He deserves that.

I remember Miles calming me down outside my house. Wiping my tears, soothing me and hugging me. Talking to me, telling me that his friend, *Him*, it's just who he was. It was in his nature. And there's no stopping it.

In reply, I no doubt waffled on about how I love *Him*, drunk on Southern Comfort and high from the several joints I'd smoked that night. How I love *Him*...why doesn't he love me back? And I remember Miles turned to me and said;

"I shouldn't be telling you this...but a few months ago, we got drunk. We got really drunk and *He* was sick so I put him in the shower. We were chatting...chatting nonsense when I asked him 'if you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be?'

And *He'd* replied "With *Her*. I wanna be with *Her*."

That knocked me. That threw more fuel onto the fire inside of my young heart – my young *broken* pining heart. Touching the dog tags around my neck which were inscribed with our names and with promises. Our nicknames. I was so, so, *so*, so resolute and believing that everything I'd been through, all the heartbreak, all the boys that I'd dated who had felt uncomfortable like an ill-fitting shoe, it was all over. It was all over now because *He* really did care about me. But no...

When *He* did come out to chat, I can't even remember what we talked about so it must've been pretty insignificant in the end. Because none of this matters in the end.

None of the story beyond that afternoon. Not the STI, the talk with my art teacher, the morning after pill...none of it. Not even this small ray of hope; of finding out that *He* cared about me but couldn't commit. It doesn't matter. None of it matters now. All that matters was that one afternoon when I was not raped.



## Part 6

### I Was Not Raped

That afternoon, after he'd sat on my chest, after he'd pulled my shorts down, after I'd thought long and hard about whether I should stay or go, I was constantly aware of how much I needed this attention. How much I hungered for it. How I was an addict looking for my next fix. I needed him to want me. To fill this void, to satisfy this self-destructive impulse, this self-deprecating yearn.

I want to say it was because I was bullied. I want to say this absolute need to be liked, to be wanted, to be loved and accepted, this need to be seen as beautiful like the skinny and pretty (sometimes not even that) girls in my school, came from when I was bullied. But it wasn't. It was all of it. The bullying, the worthless feeling I carried with me every day and the heartache in my chest for the one boy I had wanted to be loved by – it was all of it. One huge storm of emotion that rose up to the surface and grew into this enormous unstoppable wave that came crashing down...that led me to *not* leave Jacob's bedroom when I nearly did. Because I did. I did nearly leave.

I remember his hands between my legs...I remember him there, wanting more, always pushing and urging me on. And I said no.

“Not unless you've got a condom.”

I was being stern. I didn't have any condoms on me. I didn't bring condoms. I always carried condoms with me. I guess all of those lessons in PSHE paid off. *Always wear a condom.* I even brought condoms with me to meet Tyler – and I was on my period! But when I met Jacob, I didn't have condoms. It felt like the universe saying ‘*don't*’ – ‘*don't do it*’. And if I had stuck to my guns, I would've left. If I had been certain with myself...well, it's just another reason why I wasn't raped. I obviously wanted to do it badly enough.

When I told him No, he replied;

“Go on.”

“No.” I just wanted to cuddle. “I came here to watch TV and cuddle with you – you said we could do that.”

Paraphrasing, he replied, “It's just a bit of fun.”

“I don't wanna do that” – so I got up, I got dressed and he said;

“Okay, just leave then.”

And I should've left. I should've gone. I should've told him to fuck off and left. I should've been stronger. I should've been the girl that I am now. The girl that I thought I was. The girl that my friends thought I was. Strong and fierce. The girl that my mother raised. I should've got out of there.

But when he looked at me...when he looked at me as if I was wasting his time...as if I wasn't good enough for him...as if he didn't want me anymore...I didn't want to leave and he didn't want to just cuddle.

I foolishly thought if I stayed, I could keep him under control. I could get what I wanted in the end. I always got what I wanted, didn't I? Though my track record when it came to men would say otherwise. I had wanted *Him*. I had wanted him that summer and I had wanted him forever but I didn't get him.

So with my shorts barely on, my breasts unseated from their bra, I should've just gone to the door and left. But I didn't. I turned to him and thought I was in control when I said;

“Fine, I'll stay – but I just wanna cuddle and watch TV.”

When he looked at me, I should've seen it. I should've seen it in the way he smiled so triumphantly. He wasn't happy I was staying because he liked me and because he enjoyed my company. He was exultant because he knew. He knew that it was only a matter of minutes before he was taking off my clothes again and fucking me. I was just too immature to see it. It was the grin of a predator. That look. You see it in the wild when the lion takes down the gazelle. You see that triumphant look in their eyes when the gazelle gives up. It just stops fighting, stops running and gives in to the lion's teeth in their haunches. The lion is smug. Hungry. And that's how he looked.

Because he knew. I wasn't in control of this situation at all. He was and I'd just given up.

So I climbed back onto the top bunk. He didn't turn on the TV. I don't really remember how we ended up lying back down. His fingers grazing the hollow of my hip. My shorts off and me telling him again 'not without a condom'.

He just smiled. He smiled at me and took my thighs in his hands.

I don't remember what it felt like other than that it didn't feel the way they say rape feels, the way they portray it. Because it wasn't. I let him. I let him do it. I didn't walk away when I should've done. I didn't say no. I didn't push him off or fight him. I just lay there, staring at the reflection in the TV, the bed creaking...back and forth, back and forth, backandforth, backnforth, back – and – forth.

It was probably over in about two minutes. Now I don't know how many of you have had bad sex but for those of you who haven't (which would surprise me), it feels a bit like a flavourless lolly in your mouth. It's nothing. Doesn't arouse you or get you anywhere. You are emotionally and physically bored. And unlike the sex you want, I didn't try to make it better. I wanted this to be over.

I was bored...I felt nothing...I was nothing. It didn't hurt. I didn't scream. I didn't try to force him off. I just laid there feeling bored. Ashamed. And uninterested. Even when he came inside of me.

Even when I put my knickers back on and he turfed me out five minutes later, saying his mum would be home soon. I felt absolutely nothing as the seamen seeped through the fabric to my shorts. Even as I sat on the train trying to rid the taste from my mouth with breath mints. I felt nothing.

I left, feeling no better than – no, I won't say escort. I won't insult escorts with that because at least escorts get paid. I didn't get paid.

All I got was cum in my best knickers, pubes in my teeth and the morning after pill. And the memory and knowledge of knowing that I wasn't raped.

Something happened to me that afternoon; a momentary lapse in my judgement? In my senses? Overruled by my heartache? Led there by false pretences? I'm not sure. All I know is I wasn't raped. And that hurts more than knowing I was.