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He assumed I had in some way wanted or asked to be violently abused. No woman has

ever wanted or asked to be raped. With his words, he was raping me again.

I tried desperately to find some way to forget. I found myself wishing that I was

dead. Part of me was and is. For a period I felt I was an empty shell, void of any feeling except fear. Fear became a dictatorial power in my life.

Fear was the reason I ran off the bus last week when it became crowded and I couldn't breathe. I had closed my eyes and found that dark spot I had hidden myself in and it all came back. I screamed. I don't know if anyone cared or heard.

I had to leave work. I had to find some way to heal myself.

There aren't many places for women to go. The local rape crisis and counselling centres are extremely supportive, resourceful, caring and...understaffed.

The government is spending another \$10 million on a Royal commission dealing with violence against women. The commission is to verify the findings of a similar study the same government poured money into last year. The government refuses to give money to women's shelters (the few that do receive funding do not get enough).

Out of work and out of money, I started to think of what would happen to my attacker if he ever went to jail. They don't put sex offenders in with the general prison population. In fact, there are a couple of federal institutions in Canada that deal primarily with rapists.

While in jail, this man would have access to entertainment systems, food, room and board, and university courses. He could earn a bachelor's degree and go on golf excursions. All courtesy of the taxpayers.

He's the criminal. I'm the victim. I have lost my job. I am struggling to pay rent and buy food. I have to pay for education. I have to fight to get into college.

A few weeks ago the police called. They had decided that they finally had enough complaints against this man to take him to court. Four other women had pressed charges and they wanted me to do the same. I had only made a statement at that point. (Ten percent of all rapes are reported to the police, an even smaller percentage see the accused go to trial.)

The constable asked if I would press charges, and I hesitated before answering. He

must have taken that as a negative response because he proceeded to coax me. First he tried to persuade me to press charges by explaining that the other women weren't white and a judge (being white himself) would be more sympathetic to a white victim and therefore impose a harsher sentence. At that point I refused. I was not going to put up with any more shit and I was not going to press charges.

It was at that point the monster removed its mask.

The RCMP located and called my mother without my permission. I don't live with her and I didn't and couldn't tell her about my assault. After explaining to her the details of my rape, they told her that since I had made a statement, I could be subpoenaed. If I ignored the subpoena, the police would not hesitate to put me in jail. The police gave my mother the same reason why I had to testify—I was white and so was the judge. Despite my mother's pleading, I am still refusing to testify.

That was the RCMP's first threatening call. They have yet to stop. As of today, I have not been subpoenaed and I am not in jail. Tomorrow, however, is another day.

If my situation was an isolated incident, it could be seen as a slight miscarriage of justice. But by the age of 19, one of every four women will have been raped. My story is the story of thousands of women every month. It is in no way isolated or unique. It is typical of the way women are treated in a system designed, defined and enforced primarily by men. It is a system that punishes the victim and rewards the criminal. It is a system that is unsympathetic to those who did not have the good sense to be born white. It is a system that puts fear in women and swallows children whole; a system instilled with bias and inequality.

For those men out there who read this and complain about being made to feel guilty: DON'T BOTHER. Work to change society or shut up. Don't talk to me about equality until 51 per cent of the population can stop living in fear.

Don't twist my rape till I'm the criminal.

# Disturbing Stats on Sexual Assaults

**OTTAWA (CUP)** - Annual reports of sexual assault have more than doubled since 1983, when the "rape shield" law - part of which was struck down in August by the Supreme Court - came into effect. Women could not be questioned about their past sexual relations while the statute was in effect.

29,111 sexual assaults were reported in 1988, a 127 per cent increase over the 12,848 assaults reported in 1982, according to a study by the federal department of justice. "This is significantly higher than the increase in the incidence of non-sexual assaults reported to the police," the study found.

Police tend to filter out reports that don't fit their idea of who a rape victim should be. A report released last week by the Newfoundland Advisory Council on the Status of Women says police expect women who say they've been raped to be "virginal, untouched, innocent, employed, middle-class and vice-free."

Police are more likely to take a woman seriously if she is hysterical, suicidal, has been beaten, and has ripped clothing and witnesses. "The fact is, though, very few complainants have all the attributes of the 'good' victim," said the report, released Sept. 17. "As a result, the overwhelming majority of women who are victims of sexual assault continue to be ill-served by the judicial process."

Some police comments from the files studied:

\*"Did you sexually assault (the woman) or was it more of a joke?"

\*The offender "does not deny touching the victim's breasts but did so with the intention of being friendly."

\*The complainant "does not appear to be a very intelligent person and I don't feel she would be a very credible witness in court."

Some other statistics on sexual assault:

\*an estimated 10 per cent of rapes are reported to the police

\*surveys in the United States indicate 25 per cent of women at colleges or universities are survivors of rape or attempted rape

\*84 per cent of survivors knew their assailants

\*30 to 40 per cent of American college men surveyed in various studies over the past decade have indicated they might force a woman to have sex against her will if they knew they wouldn't be punished

\*preliminary studies in Canada have shown similar results

Sources: *Toronto Star*, *Globe and Mail*, and *Village Voice*

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