

The Night I Could Have Been Raped.....Or Worse

I went to college in a small town about 3hrs away from home. To be honest, I don't know why I went to this school. It was the opposite of everything I thought I wanted in a college: small campus, very small town, high academic standards, and literally plunked in the middle of nowhere. The most exciting thing in town was the Super WalMart. However, I absolutely loved the look and feel of the college so I figured I would give it a try and if I didn't like it I could always change the next year. As luck would have it, I loved the school and stayed for all 4 years.

I joined a sorority and spent my weekends socializing with either my friends or sorority sisters, and usually attended a fraternity party or two. My sophomore year, I liked a guy who was in one of the well-known fraternities and it seemed as though he liked me, as well. We spent a couple frat parties sitting in a stairwell talking before he got up the courage to ask me out. I was excited and looked forward to the night of our date, although we didn't have any real specific plans.

I don't remember how the date started to be honest. I think maybe we went to dinner? I really have no idea. What I do know is that after it was dark he suggested we drive to a state park that was about 10 miles outside of town and go for a walk on one of the many trails. At the time, I thought he was being extremely romantic and certainly thought it was a great idea!

Before I go any further with this story, I should give you a little background history on my dating life prior to that. In high school I was



totally smitten with a guy that went to a different high school from me. He was interested in me, as well, and we dated on and off through high school and into my early college years—all the while he was seriously dating a girl at his own high school (and then they both went to the same college). I knew about her and she knew (somewhat) about me. But whenever I would “go out” with this particular guy, it was either just driving around (which was the thing to do back then on a Friday or Saturday night) or we would go watch a movie at his house. We never went anywhere in public. Never went out to dinner. Never went out to a movie at a movie theater. I barely ever met anyone in his family.

Considering the number of years we dated, it seemed strange to me that I was never invited to any of his family holidays or events...but it was because she was always invited to those. His close friends all knew me quite well but I guess he didn't want anyone else to see us out in public because that would likely cause issues with her. So, fast-forward to this particular time in college where a guy not only likes me but is willing to be seen in public with me AND go take a romantic stroll down a moonlit trail? Well, hell. I was completely flattered and nearly giddy that he was making any kind of effort to actually “date” me.

So, we get to the park, which is, of course, closed at this point in the evening. We parked outside the gate and walked down the road until we got to a trail and then headed into the woods in the dark. Here we were, walking along and holding hands, talking, and it seemed nearly perfect to me. I was totally caught up in the moment!!

A few minutes into our walk, he stops me on the trail and turns me around facing him to kiss me. And then he says, “Do you know why I really brought you here?” And I said “No?”naively thinking he had something else magical planned. His response was “So that nobody could hear you scream.” I shit you not. That's what he said. And then he laughed. He thought it was hilarious. It was all some kind of funny joke to him. I immediately realized my immense lapse in judgment. He was absolutely right. NOBODY would hear or see ANYTHING. It was late at night, the park was closed, we were miles outside of town and I don't even think I had the opportunity to tell anyone where we were going since it seemed a rather impromptu suggestion that evening. (Additionally, this was

before cell phones....I mean, I did actually have a bag phone back then but that certainly was not with me on my date.) I immediately told him it was time to leave, which thankfully we did. I'm incredibly fortunate the night ended the way it did!! He took me back to my place and when he tried to come upstairs to my apartment, I told him the date was over and I never went out with him again. I never spoke to him again. I could hardly look at him when we passed each other on campus.

I don't remember the walk back to the car that night. And I don't remember the car ride back into town. It's strange now because I will go several years without thinking of that night and then all of a sudden something will bring it back to my attention. Whenever I think of it, I still get sick to my stomach of what "could have happened." I could have been raped. Or murdered. Or kidnapped. Or who the hell knows what else could have happened?! I'm extremely grateful that NOTHING happened to me that night. I've always wondered if he actually had ill-intentions that evening or if it really was all simply a sick and twisted kind of joke to him? But I will never forget the chills that went through my body in that split second. My heart immediately beating out of my chest in fear. The hairs that stood up on the back of my neck. Or the huge lump that formed in my throat. No, I'll most certainly never forget any of those things. Those are things that will literally scar you for life. They have certainly scarred me. I will never forget exactly how I was blissfully unaware and happy one minute and then horrifyingly scared to death a split-second later.

I share my story with you as a means to start a conversation with your teenagers. Boy or girl. It doesn't matter. There are lessons to be learned for both.

1. Never automatically trust someone you don't really know.
2. Always let someone know a general idea of where you are going/what you are doing/who you are with when you go out on a date.
3. Definitely keep your cell phone with you. I wish I would have had one that night.
4. Realize that there is a fine line between something being sweet and romantic or being a realllllly bad idea. I think because one of my prior boyfriends never took me on an "actual" date that I let the attention from this guy and my general excitement cloud my (normally good) judgment.
5. Use me as the example for conversations with your teenagers (or have them use

me as the example when talking with their own friends) that “she got incredibly lucky that night and nothing happened....but it could have easily been a completely different story.” Because it absolutely could have been.

6. Never ever think that suggesting or hinting at violence, rape, murder, etc. is even remotely funny while on a date. It is most assuredly NOT funny.
7. Always trust your gut. If it's telling you something isn't right, believe it. There is a terrific book about this called [The Gift of Fear](#) that details how we (primarily women, but society in general) don't want to come off as being rude or impolite. However, if the hairs on the back of your neck are standing up when someone gets on an elevator with you and you don't step off....you might end up dead. We are given animal instincts for a reason. Listen to them. You'll never see this person again so don't worry about being rude by getting off the elevator. Read the book. It's fantastic.

I'm a real person. This really happened. He was a real guy. And I am REALLY LUCKY.

Thanks for listening to my story and I hope it encourages you to use it to start a conversation with those you love. If interested, you can download a printable copy of this blog post [HERE](#) to share with your loved ones.

Here are some additional resources in case they are helpful:

[RAINN.org](#) - National Sexual Assault Hotline

They have both an 800 number and an online chat capability.

1-800-646-HOPE (4673)

[TheHotline.org](#) - National Domestic Violence Hotline

They have both an 800 number and an online chat capability.

1-800-799-7233

If interested, there is a movie called *The Hunting Ground* that addresses sexual assault (specifically) on college campuses. I saw Annie Clark, one of the victims and lead Title IX activist speak at a women's conference in Boston and it was incredibly powerful. Here is

a link to the trailer for the movie if you are interested:

<https://youtu.be/GBNHGi36nIM>

Last but not least, here is the affiliate link (again) for the book, if you are interested:

[The Gift of Fear by Gavin de Becker](#)

~Pickles and Punch

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