

Victim

Category: Me, Too

written by Julie A. Dickson | January 2, 2023

I woke up feeling groggy and disoriented. Staring at the ceiling, I did not recognize where I was, whose bed I was in. Looking down, I noticed that I was half-dressed and beside me was a man I knew of as the father of my daughter's boyfriend.

I thought back to the night before, rubbing my eyes and trying to clear my head from the fog that seemed to hang over me. I had been invited to their house for supper, my daughter making shepherd's pie for the group that included her boyfriend, his brother and sister. I could recall eating dinner and drinking a couple glasses of wine. Ian, the father, had played his guitar, insisting that I sing along, harmonizing to his renditions of

Paul Simon and James Taylor tunes. From there, everything was blank until I woke this morning.

I know that I had intended to drive home. Had I enjoyed more wine than I remembered? No, I was a light-weight, only having two glasses ever. I was never much of a drinker. Why was my head feeling so thick? Running my hand down from torso to my leg, I felt stickiness there and drew my hand back quickly.

Suddenly, as if he sensed my movement, Ian awoke and grabbed me roughly to him. I cringed, as even though I know him as Ivan's father, I was very uncomfortable lying in his bed, clothes disheveled. He kissed me, and I tasted last night's cigarettes and beer on his breath. He whispered hoarsely, "you know you want it again."

I realized that the thick-headed I was feeling was odd, as if I had been drugged! I was over forty years old, had apparently just spent the night comatose in bed with this guy, in a house where my daughter and her boyfriend slept in another room. Feeling panicky, I tried to pull away from Ian, but he only tightened his grip.

I had heard of "roofies" but closed my eyes in disbelief at the thought of falling victim to this guy, the father of someone I knew. I was going through the previous evening in my mind again, even as I felt clothes being torn aside, even as I felt his immense weight on me. I didn't move at all, kept my eyes shut; just lie quiet, I thought. Think of something else.

After he flopped onto his back breathing loudly, I quickly got up, grabbing the clothes strewn around me and said quietly, "I need to leave before the kids wake up. I don't want them to know that I didn't go home last night." Ian said nothing as I left the room, seemingly dozing off.

I was shaking when I got into my car, driving like an automaton; I reached my driveway and parked. When I got inside, my brother sat at the kitchen table

drinking coffee. He was staying at my house for a week, and remarked that I looked tired. I nodded dumbly and took off my jacket. My brother leapt from his chair, staring at my arms, which I hadn't even noticed were covered with ugly bruises. "Who did this to you?"

Still feeling dazed, I shook my head and sat down at the table. At this moment, I felt responsible. I had gone to their house for supper, willingly drinking wine and singing with Ian. My brother angrily pried the details from me as I sat there. No, I wasn't willing to call police. No, I wasn't really hurt. I decided to bury the incident. Contrary to what my brother said, I blamed myself for being there, not realizing what would happen.

I would remain a silent victim.

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