

## **I Know The Girl Who Was Raped**

One night this past October, I was having dinner with friends in this dining hall and talking about an article that had just come out in the Crimson titled, “Here’s How I Was Raped.”

One of my friends knew the girl who wrote it.

“It’s crazy that now, I know someone who was raped,” the friend told us.

We talked about the article and about rape for nearly an hour. And during that whole time, there was one person at the table who did not say a word.

That was my friend, Eve.

It seemed out of character that she was being so quiet. But I did not ask her why, and I would never have known if she hadn’t brought it up again out of the blue two months later.

“Of course you know people who have been raped,” Eve told me.

“I know that for a fact,” she said, “Because you know me.”

Eve told me that she met the man who would one day rape her when she was a sophomore in high school. She had been home alone, either doing homework or pretending to, when she heard the doorbell ring. When she opened the door, she saw a wiry, wide-eyed, wary man. Her mind flashed to an image of her cat when she caught it doing something bad.

Cliché as it sounds, she felt during that first moment that he would wreck her life.

Eve told me that she wanted to slam the door. But then she saw her mom coming up the walkway behind the man. So she let him in.

Over the next couple years, he became a family friend. He came over for Christmas dinner - and for New Year’s.

Over time, Eve forgot her first impression of the man. So when he asked her out during her senior year of high school, she said yes.

She was seventeen; he was twenty-four.

Eve told me she had not dated much before that. She had always prioritized her academics, and it had been her goal to get into Harvard from the time she first heard of its existence, when she was in fourth grade. She was nerdy and not good at being likeable, and it was not cool to date her. She was naïve.

So when that man who would rape her began showering her with roses and chocolates and Hallmark cards, Eve was won over. There was nothing more she needed to know about him.

It happened a month after she got into Harvard, in May of her senior year. He brought her home at the end of a date, and for some reason or other, neither of her parents were home. So the man asked Eve to let him in.

Eve was raised in a conservative, religious family. She grew up thinking that sex should not happen before marriage, and if it did happen, it would ruin her. She was a virgin.

Her family trusted this man. She trusted him. She let him into her house.

When he began taking off her clothes, Eve was terrified. She told him to stop.

He told her to stop being a coward.

Her body went cold and limp. Her heart felt as if it were being squeezed inside a fist.

“You’re such a little underage misery,” the man said.

When she thought about it the next day, she was not sure what had happened to her. Because in Eve’s eyes, rape, like death, was a thing that happened to other people.

In the days that followed, she decided to bring up the subject of sex with her mother.

“Don’t do it,” her mom said. “Stay a virgin. Imagine if you start dating a nice boy one day, and he wants to marry you, and then he finds out you’re not a virgin. What then?”

Eve told me that one thing became clear to her. She could not break up with this man.

And maybe he knew it, because a few months later, during her first semester at Harvard, he asked her to marry him.

And she said yes.

Even though she had graduated high school as valedictorian, Eve felt that without the man who took her virginity, she would not be whole.

As she began attending college, for the first time in her life, Eve was no longer comfortable at school. She could not understand why. It became irrationally difficult to show up to class, or open a textbook, or check an e-mail. She hid behind her computer screen and pretended to be

productive in front of her roommates, but meanwhile, she had to reach overwhelming levels of anxiety before she could do anything at all.

The engagement lasted until the end of her freshman spring, when he began threatening violence.

Her depression lasted three and a half years, which is how long it took for her to talk about her rape to just one person. That was me. She still wonders whether she's making a big deal out of nothing.

Why tell the story?

Eve asked me to tell this story.

When Eve's story was secret, we believed things that weren't true. During that conversation in this dining hall, we believed that rape had not happened to her, and that it had not happened to anyone we knew. Rape had not happened to anyone at our table, and it had not happened to anyone in this room. None of those things are true.

And so long as people believed those things, Eve was trapped. As she put it, even when she was no longer trapped, with him, in her parents' house; even when she was no longer trapped in that engagement; Eve was still trapped by a suffocating fear that she must keep the secret forever.

I want to help break open that trap.