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How do you write a victim impact statement? How do you put into words the impact that a rape had on your life? It's hard for me to label myself as a *victim*. It's not even easy to admit the *impact* this had on me, much less make a statement about it. How can one be expected to do this?

I want to clarify that I am not going into detail and to explain how the defendant sexually assaulted me. I've already come forward and given my statement to the police. The Minneapolis papers already told my story and plastered my rape all over their headlines. Most of campus read the details in the paper, in an article I couldn't even get through. It had happened *to me*, I lived through it and I still couldn't read about my own rape when it was put into words. But I'm done explaining what he did to me that night. I want to tell my story of what happened after that night. Because that rape didn't stop on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014. It wasn't over after one night. It still isn't over and that's why I'm in front of all of you today, almost two years later.

I'm reading a "victim impact letter" right now but Daniel Drill-Mellum did not "impact" my life; he completely uprooted and altered it. In one night I felt like my life wasn't mine anymore. I was going through the motions but it wasn't really me doing it. My mind was elsewhere; my mind was trying to process what happened to my body.

My body went to the hospital the morning after he raped me. My roommate told me I should go and so we walked across campus to Boyton. When I walked into Boyton and they asked what was wrong I didn't know what to say, I didn't know how to say the words "I was raped." Eventually Boyton staff put me in a wheelchair and told me they needed to bring me over to Fairview Hospital. I remember begging them to let me walk. I was fine, I could still walk, I wasn't broken, my legs still worked. I clung onto walking as this sense of normalcy. If I didn't have to sit in a wheelchair then maybe something wasn't really wrong with me. I spent the day in the hospital talking to nurses and doctors, being pressured for insurance information. I refused to let them do a rape kit or any other test they offered me because I was scared I would have to pay for it. My biggest fear was the money. Isn't that crazy? I was worried about how I was going to pay for my emergency room bill. I couldn't pay for rape kit or a blood test to calculate what my blood alcohol level was the night before. I couldn't give them my parents' insurance because then my parents would know that I was in the hospital. I didn't want my parents to worry that I was in the hospital. The morning after I was raped I was worried about the money. It sounds ridiculous when I say it now, but it felt like a valid reason back then. At that point it still felt surreal, it didn't feel like my life. I was at the hospital because that's what you do when you get raped. They couldn't do extra tests because I couldn't pay for it. My mind was working in very black and white ways. Everything seemed clear then, my decisions were easy. That's the last time anything would seem easy in this process.

After being at the hospital all day I walked home and tried to act like everything was normal. Then came Monday when I had to walk across campus to my first class of the day. By the time I got to class I was shaking. I walked in pale white, unsteady on my feet and barely able to speak. My classmates were looking at me, they could tell something was

wrong. I sat down next to my roommate and she asked what was wrong. I explained that every blonde haired kid I passed on the way to class I thought was "him." I saw the defendant in everyone I passed and my paranoia reached an all time high. That feeling didn't stop. I walked home from that class that day with my head down; I stared at the ground the whole way home. From that point on I felt threatened when I walked to class. I was terrified of seeing him.

I had no idea who he even was. I didn't know his name. I had never met him before. I found out who he was through a Facebook picture. My roommate showed me his profile on Facebook and the second I saw his picture I knew he was the person guilty of sexually assaulting me. It was his smile. He smiled at me as I left his fraternity house that night. He smiled, it was a sickening. He had the audacity to smile at me after what he had just done to me.

Still even after I knew who he was I tried to carry on living my life normally. He was still just a name to me, I didn't *know* him. Then the anxiety attacks and flashbacks started. It usually happened when I was in a crowded room with lots of people. I would start feeling anxious and suffocated. Thinking it would help, I would leave for the bathroom to remove myself from the crowd. The bathroom made it worse. Suddenly I *really* couldn't breathe, the bathroom walls would start closing in around me and I felt like I had no escape and then all suddenly I was back at the fraternity house and he was on top of me again. I would carry on like this hyperventilating with tears streaming down my face. Sometimes I passed out because I wasn't breathing steadily enough. I would come to terrified and confused. The first time it happened, my boyfriend almost called an ambulance, he couldn't get me to calm down and I wouldn't let him touch me. I kept passing out because I wasn't breathing normally. When I finally realized where I was, he was in tears and a friend of his was sitting in front of me looking scared and holding a glass of water.

The flashbacks happened countless times after. They weren't any less frightening for other friends who tried calming me down. They would try to hold me or give me their hand to let me know they were there and I would cringe and pull away. All I could say was "Don't touch me, don't touch me, don't touch me." Sometimes I heard my friends trying to talk to me and would latch on to their voices. They would talk to me about my family and tell me where I was, they would ask me to open my eyes and look around. They tried anything to ground me to the place where I was and to get me out of the place inside my head.

The anxiety meds I was prescribed didn't help much and it wasn't until summer after my freshman year when I finally opened up about the assault and told anyone the details of it. My mom forced me into therapy. My anxiety and flashbacks had gotten so bad and she decided it wasn't my choice anymore. After countless therapy sessions I was going back to school in the fall more confident about my control over my anxiety. My flashbacks had almost completely stopped and I really felt like I had some control over my life again.

October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015 he took that control away from me again. Up until this point I never considered coming forward. I heard about Abby's story. It happened one week after mine. I silently supported and believed her and hoped she would fight this battle for me. If Abby could go to court and win then he would be in jail and I would never have to deal with this

again. I followed her case; the Aurora Center sent me updates. It felt like some stroke of luck that the same thing happened to both of us but she carried the weight of it publicly. But then the case fell through. Abby did everything she was supposed to do and still he wasn't in jail. She called 911 immediately after it happened, she went to the hospital and reported it to the police, she got a rape kit, but still he wasn't in jail. I cannot imagine being in her place and watching everything fall apart in front of her. From my perspective it was devastating. If Abby couldn't get *her* case to hold, my case had no chance. Then I got news that the University launched their own investigation and the defendant was suspended from the University of Minnesota for 10 years and banned from campus grounds. At that point I felt like maybe it was over, I would never have to worry about seeing him again. I could walk freely on campus and continue with my college career normally.

Then it was Halloween 2015. Halloween is a holiday, our campus was filled with students dressed in costumes and celebrating. Campus was celebrating because that's what you do on a holiday. I was trying my best to be enthusiastic and join the festivities when I got a call from a friend who had seen Dan at his fraternity senior house a block off campus. This wasn't just a normal friend; this was a friend who was ALSO sexually assaulted by Dan. We bonded over the fact that the same man sexually assaulted us. I was furious when she called me, of all days, he chose Halloween to show up. The exact year to the day that my assault had happened and Dan was on campus? How dare he? I felt so vulnerable and exposed. He wasn't technically on campus either, he had found a loophole to the University rule. All the fraternities, apartment buildings, sorority and fraternity houses are off of campus. I now felt threatened in my own home. I found my friend and we went home and cried to each other. I made two phone calls that day, one to campus security and one to the detective who was working on the case at the time.

Soon after both my friend and I walked into the University Police Station and gave our statements. I want to be clear that this woman is not either of the two us here today. Lacking evidence the lawyers decided against charging her case and pursued my case and Abby's instead. But she is not forgotten, nor are the other girls that the defendant sexually assaulted.

Almost 2 years after he sexually assaulted me and almost one year after I came forward. This is finally ending and he is going to prison.

There are two of us brave enough to stand in front of him today and face him. Two of us, but there are so many more girls that he violated and assaulted. A detective I worked with on this case described him as the worst predatory rapist he has ever encountered in the duration of his position. His actions are calculated and planned and it saddens me to think of the other women he has hurt. They, too reluctant to come forward in this system that gives rights to defendants and allows money to buy a criminal out of custody. The date of this trial was changed so his parents could support him. Dan, the rapist, got to change the date of this trial so he could be with his parents. Parents who sent him out of the country so he could attempt to escape this, parents who tried to buy him out of his crimes, parents of daughters allowing him to rape other people's daughters.

I am going to watch him walk out of this courtroom in handcuffs today and count it as a victory for all the daughters at the University of the Minnesota. A victory for women and daughters everywhere. I am proud that I had a part in putting him behind bars.

I will *never* be defined by him and what he did to me but he will forever be defined by me and the other girls he raped. That will stay with him forever. I am not a just victim of a rape. My identity consists of so much more. But Daniel Drill-Mellum will only ever be a rapist. That is where the description of him stops. He put me through two of the hardest years of my life. This process is exhausting, but unlike him I can say that I came out the other end of this a stronger and better person. I am in control now, I write my own story and define my own life. I am capable, I am confident and I define myself.



From my experience with Mr. Drill-Mellum, I have no faith that he will change his behavior. This letter is not for him, his lifetime status as a sex offender is what he gets to walk away with. I have no other words for him. He knows what his actions were, and I have never seen any remorseful or apologetic behavior from him. In fact, during his free time, there were several girls who reported to me that he attempted to get them alone and I have no doubt that he had similar intentions with them. His parents on the other hand, who protected him through his actions financially, and allowed him to walk free for nearly two years after the violent crime that he committed, are who I hope will read this. I've never met them, but I've heard that they have daughters. I've heard that one of them is a medical doctor who gives speeches about empathy. I wonder if they ever realized that by helping their son, they were also helping to exhaust me of everything I had, and to bully and intimidate me. I'm sure that they never meant to hurt me through their protection of their child, and I understand that. But I want them to hear what the result of their negligence and enabling behavior with their son was. Everyone else in this courtroom might not know his history, but I know of many other things their son has done and gotten away with before he got to me. This could have been stopped a long time ago, and I want them to remember it and feel it so that they don't make the same mistakes again upon his release.

I never expected anything bad to happen that day. My only plans were going to a football tailgate when I was introduced to Mr. Drill-Mellum. He was in our group and asked me if I would help him get more alcohol from his apartment. I asked a couple friends to come with me, but they both said no. I didn't think much of it. All I thought was that I was helping a friend of a friend grab some alcohol from his apartment. I'll always wish I had fought back stronger, I'll always replay the whole situation and think about what I could've done to stop it, even though I've repeatedly been told by some very helpful people that it wasn't my fault. I remember realizing once I walked into his apartment that there was no one else there, and the terror that quickly set in when I realized what he was about to do. I told him I didn't like sex and I didn't want to have sex, I told him it had been a very long time and I didn't want to. I begged to go back to my friends. He didn't listen. I squirmed away and tried to roll over, but he kept pulling my body back. Eventually, he allowed me to flip onto my stomach as he raped me. I remember thinking "just close your eyes and you can get out of here soon". I didn't even realize I was crying until he asked me if I was; except it wasn't in a caring tone. The tone was mocking, aggressive, and I defiantly said that

I wasn't and continued sobbing into the pillow. Despite my protests, he raped me anally as well. He told me that he was going to finish inside of me. He stuck his fingers inside of me and then shoved them down my throat, tearing what I think is called a frenulum. I felt like I couldn't breathe as he forced one arm down on my back and shoved the other hand down my throat as I choked. I thought I was going to die. I kind of hoped I was going to die. When he finally did finish, he grabbed me from behind like we were spooning. It was so horrifically personal that at this point, I started truly physically struggling to get away. Each time he grabbed me back down onto his bed, and said "no" when I begged him to go back to my friends. Then he announced that he was going to rape me a second time. He called it "sex", but I knew that wasn't what this was. Finally, my fight or flight response truly kicked in and I was able to get away. Not before I was raped a second time, but before he was able to choke or bite me again, or degrade me in any other possible new way he could think of. I remember grabbing my clothes off the ground in a heap once I was able to get away from him, and shoving them on as quickly as possible. I remember stumbling out of the apartment and running in fear, thinking that he would surely come after me. That feeling still sticks with me to this day. I first texted a friend to come and get me, and then called another. The friend who, earlier in the day, told me "I love Dan". This friend answered the phone to me sobbing uncontrollably and said "don't even say a word, I know what happened. He raped my friend too". In the months to come, I would become angry about this statement, and the fact that this wasn't the first time he had done this to someone, but at the time I was just happy that he had said "rape" so that I didn't have to. I had no words for what I had just experienced, and I still don't. No one word can sum up what was done. As I sit writing this long, endless paragraph, I still don't feel that I've accurately expressed what happened. I still remember the officer asking me if I knew the name of the person who raped me, and I realized I had no idea who he was. I remember crying hysterically in the ambulance that I wanted to call my mom. One of the officers told me that wasn't a good idea, because he said the situation was embarrassing for me. I remember being questioned about how much I had to drink, and the impatient tone of the detective who told me this "probably wasn't gonna go anywhere". I remember hearing later from this same detective that Mr. Drill-Mellum had insisted that I wanted what happened to me, because I "liked rough sex". I do remember the wonderful, wonderful SARS nurse who came and gasped when she saw my injuries, and truly listened to me when I told her what had happened, no matter how scattered my brain felt at the time. I will never forget that. It helped put an emotional bandage on the humiliation I felt when she took pictures of me with my legs

spread open, and documented every laceration, mark, and tear on my body. The secondary humiliation I faced when he was released from jail without charges, and I was told to move on with my life, was just as devastating if not more so.

After the rape, I couldn't sleep for weeks. I stayed up, rocking back and forth in my bed all night with the lights on, and barricaded the door to my bedroom with my desk chair because I was so afraid. Every time I did fall asleep, I had nightmares in which Mr. Drill-Mellum was raping me and I couldn't scream no matter how hard I tried. My mom got me a taser, which I held in my hands even when I finally did fall asleep. Due to the physical injuries he left on my body, I cried in pain every single time I went to the bathroom for 2 weeks. Every time I took a step, I was reminded of what happened due to the searing pain that was so unbearable I stopped drinking water, just so that I wouldn't have to go to the bathroom. When I got home in the clothes that the hospital gave me, I couldn't get myself to take them off. I didn't end up showering for over a week. I suddenly felt like my body didn't belong to me. I would see it in the mirror and feel so disgusted that I would end up vomiting. There are still physical reminders on my body of what he did to me. They're small; so small that no one else would notice them but me, but they're there, and as far as I know, they're permanent. I can't brush my teeth without seeing the part of my mouth that he ripped apart when he shoved his fingers down my throat. I can't look down at my chest without noticing an indent that wasn't there before he repeatedly bit my breasts. I can't look down at my stomach without remembering the panic I felt looking down at my naked body while I struggled to get away from him, before he raped me a second time. I can't wear blue underwear because I remember what it looked like as I struggled to pull it on as I ran away from what he had just done to me. Any time anyone tries to touch me, I mentally associate their kind gesture with Mr. Drill-Mellum's violent ones. Every time I cry, I'm reminded of how I cried into a pillow and heard his mocking voice. Every time I consider doing or saying anything publicly, I have to consider whether Mr. Drill-Mellum's legal team will use my action to say that I deserved it, or that I lied, or that I'm crazy. I still remember the screenshots of my tweets that his team tried to use against me during the University of Minnesota's legal process, as if an imperfect or overly blunt person cannot truly be raped. Every time I feel frozen with a panic attack, I'm reminded of how terrified I was while he was raping me to the point that I could barely move. I still wish I would've fought harder. I will never be able to wipe the image from my brain of his face, smirking at me in court during the only other time I was in the same room with him since he had raped me. I will never be

able to shake the feeling of absolute emptiness that constantly haunts me as I slowly grew to realize that this experience emotionally isolated me from many of the people in my life.

All of this is permanent for me. I wonder how permanent it is for Mr. Drill-Mellum. His family clearly supports him through his actions, and he was able to negotiate a lower sentence on his own behalf. But me? I never chose any part of this. I had to fight just to make sure that someone actually paid attention to what he did. An endless burden was placed upon me, as well as on other girls who have come forward to me and told me what he has done to them. I became a one-stop resource for victims and potential victims of Mr. Drill-Mellum. Girls came to me and told me their experiences with him, and yet I was helpless to make a difference with my case until it was reopened. I had to struggle uphill, without the many financial resources that he has been blessed with, just to finally see this moment. And now he's receiving 74 months, almost two years after the crime that he committed. I received a life sentence the day it happened, while afterwards I heard news of Mr. Drill-Mellum out partying in Dinkytown and studying abroad. Luckily, unlike many people on the opposite side of this situation, I was also left with a clean conscience. I know that what I did afterwards made the world a better place, despite the fact that it hurt me to bring him to justice. I wish that I could stop this from happening to anyone else, but I know I can't do that. However, I am grateful that I will look back on this time in my life as an opportunity to gain strength and character. To learn to take care of myself, and do what's right. It wasn't a lesson I asked for, but I grew all the same. I might feel 10 years older than most of my peers, but I feel accomplished. I survived, and lived to see him admit his guilt.

I have to express my gratitude for every person who fought for me, listened to me, and cared for me during the past two years. Each one of them helped me be strong and survive through this process. Each one of them helped me realize that I was not the cause of this, despite my now-constant anxiety over how I come across to others. I wish that I could stop this from happening to anyone else, but I know I can't do that. There are so many things I left out of this statement. So many emotions, so many hurtful moments, so much pain that this whole experience has caused me, but I will continue to refuse to let this experience break me completely. I've come close to giving up many times, but I have a responsibility to speak out and hope that my experience can help promote positive change.