

Why I didn't go home with the guy from the bar

January 7, 2017

To Ricky from New York,

You may not remember me, but I remember you.

You were a painting student. Fine arts you called it, maybe, but you were a painter, I remember. Your name really is Ricky, and you really studied painting, and I haven't changed a word of it and won't.

It was fall in 2013, October maybe. I don't remember exactly now. I was living in Little Italy. I was graduating soon.

We met on OKCupid. We met for the first time in Washington Square Park, and you only had half an hour before you had to go somewhere, but you wanted to meet up anyway. We met in the park and we danced to the buskers who were playing jazz. We danced and laughed and liked each other. We ran through the sprinklers in the grass. We kissed, and it was a good kiss. I left feeling happy and excited.

The second time we met, we were supposed to go out. I was tired and sore from the gym, and I wanted to stay in, but I wanted to see you too. I asked you to come over to watch movies and chill. I said, Netflix and chill, but *actual* Netflix and chill. Maybe that was before we all said 'Netflix and chill' like a thing, but I remember saying something like, to *actually* just watch movies.

You said sure. You just wanted to see me.

We watched The Truman Show. We watched maybe 15 minutes before we kissed. Then we made out. Then clothes came off. And I told you, I don't want to have sex. We can fool around a bit, sure, but no sex. Then more clothes came off. Then we fooled around a bit, and I said, again, No sex.

It was shortly after that when you put your dick inside me.

And I laughed, I think. I don't know. This was over 3 years ago now, and I don't remember it perfectly. I said something like, Dude, I said No. What are you doing? I pushed you off me, I think. I didn't push you hard. But it was enough, and you weren't inside me anymore.

I said No, I said it clearly, we both spoke English, and you heard me. Even if I had been drunk, even if you had. I wasn't, you weren't, and you still didn't listen.

We kissed again, I think. We made out again. And again, and this I know, a second time, your dick was inside me. I hadn't said Yes between the first and second times. This I know too.

I don't remember it perfectly now, but I think I let you do it for a bit, the thrusting thing. I let you thrust for a bit. I'd said No, I'd said No three times now, but still I let it happen.

At some point I told you to stop, and at some point you did. At some point I got up, went to the bathroom, came back and sat on the bed. I was still naked. So were you. I said I didn't want it to be like this, that I didn't feel good about it, or something like that.

I tried to relax. I think we kissed again. Kissed and cuddled, maybe. It was then, after the second time, that I remember going back and forth a bit. Maybe I would have sex with you tonight. I felt pressured to perform. I felt like what you'd just done was my mistake. I'd forgotten my line. I was supposed to say Yes, and now we were here and it had all gone terribly wrong. But I didn't change my mind in the end. No was the answer I wanted, No was the answer I gave, and No was the answer I stuck with. Even if I'd said Yes after the second time, I still said No to the first two. In case you were wondering, the Yes has to come first for it to count.

At some point I said I was tired, I implied that you should go. I remember you got weird about it, flustered and dismissive. Like you didn't like that the idea of having you leave came from my lips before it came from yours. You left. I think I was wearing a sweatshirt by that point, just a sweatshirt. I think we kissed goodbye. I don't remember now.

You left, and I sat in bed, thinking. Thinking that we were naked. That we were in my bed. That it was literally Netflix and Chill. Thinking that it was my fault. You might have thought so too. You might still think so. I don't know.

But here's the thing – It wasn't my fault. I'd said No. I'd said No clearly. I'd said No multiple times. You put your dick inside me after I said No, and that, Ricky, is rape.

For years, if it ever came up, which it rarely ever did, I said, I've 'technically' been raped. I clarified it always. I always said, It wasn't violent or traumatic. I actually used the phrase 'unconsensual sex.' I still clarify the situation. I tell everyone, it wasn't violent or traumatic. I want them to know that. That I wasn't *really* raped, that it doesn't *really* count.

Even though I said No. I said No more than once. Even though you put your dick inside my vagina on two different occasions after I'd clearly said No and I hadn't once said Yes.

That being naked isn't a Yes. That kissing you isn't a Yes. That touching your dick with my hand or my mouth or whatever it was I did, if I did any of that, *still* wasn't a Yes to putting it inside me. I said, No sex. I said No. Two letters. One sound. No. It's a word that sounds nothing like Yes. I said No, and I said No again. I said it at least once more after that. I made myself clear, and you chose not to listen.

But I didn't punch you or scratch you or think I was going to die, so it wasn't *really* rape. You only thrust into me for at most thirty seconds, so it wasn't *really* rape. Raping me didn't make you cum, so it wasn't *really* rape.

I said this and I said this and I still say this now, if ever it comes up, which it rarely does. Right now, writing this, I still feel the need to clarify it. I still want to say, I wasn't *really* raped. "Technically" rape. Not violent. Not traumatic.

I still say it now.

I texted you the day after it happened, after I'd cried in the shower not sure what I was crying about. I don't have the text saved anymore, but I remember writing, "You violated me." I remember telling you not to reply, that I didn't want to hear from you again.

I don't even remember now if you texted back. If you obeyed my wish to not hear from you, or said something to your own defense anyway and I deleted it immediately. I don't remember reading a word from you after that. If you had offered an apology, I think I would remember. An admission of culpability, of wrongdoing, a shred of remorse, I would remember.

You didn't, and I don't. Dear Ricky from New York,

I want you to know that I thought of you tonight, for the first time in a long time. I want to tell you that I met a guy in a bar in Galway. A nice guy, I think, but his niceness wasn't the point. We talked about traveling and Guinness and Fight Club. He looked like one of my best friends, and that was weird, but I felt like getting laid, so whatever. He was a bad kisser, but I felt like getting laid, so whatever.

But he was drunk. Very drunk. I wasn't sober either, but I wasn't *that* drunk. And as we were about to leave I told him, "You're too drunk." He didn't get what I meant.

I told his friend in so many words, "I think your friend is too drunk. I'd have sex with him, but I don't want to be a bad person. What do I do?"

He said his friend was a good guy, he had his own place, that I'd be safe with him. He didn't get what I meant. I said, more clearly, "I think he's too drunk to give consent, but I don't know him or how to tell. Is he too drunk? Should I fuck him?"

Again, he didn't get what I meant. So I asked the girls next to us, and they didn't get what I meant. So I asked the bartender, and he didn't get what I meant. I went to the toilet, and I asked a girl in the toilet, and she said, "If you're doubting it, then..."

At this point I just wanted someone to get it. To ask anyone and have them tell me I was wrong for even considering it. I told them all again and again, "If he was a girl and I was a guy, this would all be fucked up." They all agreed that it would be.

"So I definitely shouldn't go home with him?" "Well..."

I left him at the door to my hostel, after he insisted on walking me home. The guys downstairs thought it had gone the other way, that he wouldn't leave me alone after I'd said No. In some ways, that was true. He wouldn't for a bit, and I did say No. But not because I didn't want to. Because he was, in my eyes, too drunk to give consent. And whether or not he would have said Yes sober, he was still too drunk to give consent.

I just wanted someone to understand. Not to give me karma brownie points, not to pat me on the head and call me a good girl. I wanted someone, at least one person, to get why this was important. That rape culture is rape culture no matter who the aggressor is. That consent is consent no matter how tall you are, how strong you are, how male you are. That if you're too drunk to consent, you're too drunk to consent.

No one I spoke to tonight got it, not really. Maybe the girl in the bathroom, but she seemed more worried about my discomfort than any idea of consent.

Instead, he left, and I went to drink with the guys downstairs at the hostel. I told them the story. The one I made friends with the fastest, who sounded Italian but swore he wasn't, he laughed at me when I told him. And I told him, for me, this isn't really a laughing matter.

Because of you, Ricky. Because of you and all the people like you, not just the ones who were certain they were doing something wrong.

I told him about you, Ricky. I tried to tell him the story.

And you know what he did? He rolled his eyes. He said something like, Oh shut up, that didn't happen to you. Every girl says things like that. You all use it all the time.

That was what he said.

I left and cried and smoked a cigarette, and then came back because I had nowhere else to go. I told this guy, the one who sounded Italian but swore he wasn't, that if he ever spoke to me again, I would hit him. That I didn't care if I'd get kicked out of the hostel, I would hit him.

That was what I said, and I said it for you. He didn't believe I'd been raped. Maybe it's because I still don't believe I have been. Not *really*. Maybe it's my fault, my fault, my fault.

You raped me, Ricky from New York. That happened. It's real. And it was your fault and not mine. And it was his fault and not mine for not believing me.

And that is rape culture.

Don't tell me not to be violent. What you did was violent. You didn't just 'violate me,' you raped me. You didn't choke me or pin me down or punch me or threaten me. You still raped me. That alone *is* violent. It didn't feel traumatic then, but it does a bit now. It does when people tell me it didn't happen, that I'm making a scene, that I'm just looking for attention, that I'm full of shit.

I wasn't making a scene. Even if I had been, I was still raped. How and when and why I speak about it now doesn't change the fact that it happened. Like any trauma, like all experience, it happened to me and it is mine now to do with as I see fit.

I wasn't looking for attention, I just wanted someone to understand. To get it, for a second, why I didn't go home with the guy from the bar. Why not doing so was important. Why thinking I was being silly was wrong. I wanted someone to understand so I told him about you. About why this affected me. Not because being raped is the only thing that can make you understand that rape is wrong and consent is important. I told him about you because I thought it might help him to understand.

At the bar, I didn't tell them about you. I just said it was wrong, and they didn't understand. So I thought, if I brought you up, he might believe I knew what I was talking about.

Instead, he rolled his eyes.

I wonder now, Ricky, if you think about this ever. If you remember me. If you've tricked yourself into thinking it happened differently. If I told you now, would you care? Would you apologize? Feel bad at all? Would you tell me I remembered it wrong? That it was my fault? My fault, my fault. That you were innocent all along?

I don't think you came to my apartment that night intending to hurt me. I don't think that was the point. The point was, I said No, and you didn't listen. I made myself clear, and you didn't listen. Because of that, you did hurt me. The intention doesn't matter, and however good it started out, it changed the second you ignored my No.

The thing about Facebook is, privacy is dead. Tonight I looked up your first name, the school you went to, New York. I found you. I know your last name now. I looked at your face. I looked at your Instagram. I like the picture of the moon and the tree. I like the Bukowski poem.

I know your email now. Maybe I'll email this to you, maybe I won't.

What matters is, I know I don't remember it all perfectly now, but I will never forget saying No. I am certain of that. I am certain I said it more than once. I am certain your dick entered my vagina after I'd said No, when I had never once said Yes.

That, Ricky, is rape.

You, Ricky, are a rapist.

In case you had any doubt about that, that is a thing that you are. You have to live with that now, and so do I.

Maybe you'll understand now, why I didn't go home with the guy from the bar.