

WHAT'S HOT

Inside The Secret New ICE Deportation Plan Called 'Operation Irish Goodbye'

Supreme Court Seems Ready To Blow Up A 90-Year-Old Precedent

U.S. Military Social Media Post F
Questions With Unsettling Detail



Make A Year-End Contribution

SUPPORT THE FREE PRESS

Log In

HUFFPOST

WRAP UP THE YEAR WITH PURPOSE

This newsroom tells stories that reflect real lives and real stakes. Your support ensures that work continues. Join as a member today and close the year by strengthening independent reporting for all.

JOIN HUFFPOST

Already a member? [Log in to hide these messages.](#)

HUFFPOST PERSONAL

This Is What Happens When Your Rapist Dies In Prison

"As a child, you practiced hiding in your attic for when the rapist comes back, because you've always been sure he would come back. He said so."

By Jenna Glatzer

Oct 15, 2021, 09:00 AM EDT

Updated Oct 18, 2021

103 COMMENTS







The author at age 10. PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNA GLATZER

[Note: This piece includes descriptions of sexual assault that may be upsetting to some readers.]

“This e-mail is to inform you that there has been a change in the custody status of the offender Scott Carroll with department identification number 89A0362,” the message began, and bile rose in my throat.

The man who raped me when I was a child was up for parole this week — again — and this first line was so terrifying that I almost didn’t register the next sentence:

ADVERTISEMENT

“This offender has died in custody.”

There are things you think will happen when your rapist dies in prison.

For one, you think “It’ll finally be over!” Because when you are 10 years old, asleep in a pink nightgown in bed, and a stranger in a ski mask awakens you with a hand over your mouth and says “Don’t speak,” and then he kidnaps you and rapes you, first in a neighbor’s yard and then in an empty lot down the road, your world develops a fault line and you spend much of your energy trying to keep your balance. You don’t always succeed.

It was 1986, and a criminal known as the “[South Shore Rapist](#)” was stalking his victims and breaking into their homes. Your parents had been at a neighborhood watch meeting earlier that night to discuss how he was getting closer to your area. Later, when you come to wake them, they think at first that you just had a nightmare.

You tell your story to the police officers who come when you call, but the man isn’t caught for another year. He commits many more rapes, robberies and attempted murders across New York and Florida.

ADVERTISEMENT

You develop hypervigilance. When you’re a teenager learning to drive, every shadow in your rearview mirror becomes him. Every guy

with a mustache at the movie theater. Every creak in the house, every wind chime, every raccoon getting into the garbage outside, they're all him coming back like he promised he would. Even if you know he was convicted and is supposed to be in prison for 650 years.

"What does that mean?" you asked at the time.

"It means you'll never have to worry about him again," the prosecutor told you. But that wasn't true. Part of you always believes he has escaped and no one has notified you.

So when he dies, you think, "I'll finally get some sleep!" Because you've spent the entirety of your adult life waiting until dawn to go to bed, as if keeping the lights on and keeping watch over the house all night will mean he can never come in and kidnap and rape your daughter.

ADVERTISEMENT

He raped you at 4 a.m., so that becomes the time to beat. Past that, you find an uncertain truce with the danger, and you let yourself sleep for a few hours. You develop permanently bloodshot eyes.

When he dies, you think, “I’ll never have to think about him again!” For 35 years, so many habits were built in response to him. You’ve slept on your stomach all this time because any other position feels too vulnerable. You started smoking at 12 years old because you went through a trial where you had to describe, in front of him, exactly what he did to your body.

You missed chunks of the eighth grade to attend the weeks of trial and sentencing, and no one explained this to your teachers, who commented on your report card that you were distracted and not living up to your potential. There was a record-setting 10-day deadlocked jury, until your testimony was reread to the single holdout who wanted to forgive your rapist because he believed Jesus would.

ADVERTISEMENT

As a child, you practiced hiding in your attic for when the rapist comes back, because you’ve always been sure he would come back. He said so.

You think about the celebration you’ll have when he dies. The people who’ve mattered to you, who will show up and eat and drink and laugh and dance and help you forget that this ever happened.

Someone will arrive like the Men in Black with their flashy memory eraser, and your world will be restored to colorful splendor.

But then he dies, and you don't sleep at all.

He dies and it dredges up every hard memory. His picture is in the newspaper again. And some of the right people are celebrating with you by phone and by text, and even in person, even in a pandemic. But some of the wrong ones show up, too — the people who weren't there, who abandoned you years ago, who now pop up as if they've earned a right to take a piece of your joy with them. As if they were secretly in your corner all along. They weren't.

ADVERTISEMENT

You feel angry about all the wasted years and the re-traumatization of parole hearings. Every time you had to beg a parole board to please, oh, please keep a serial rapist and attempted murderer behind bars for another two years. When your safety, and your young daughter's safety, hinged on whether you and your friends could write convincing enough letters to counter the fact that he'd done some sexual offender program in prison and gotten someone to write him a letter saying he was cured now.

He promised he would try very hard not to break into any more homes, put pillowcases over any more girls' or women's heads, put screwdrivers to their necks, and rape and sodomize them.

"I don't look at myself as a sex offender, but I have committed sexual crimes," he said in his latest parole hearing. He never used the word "rape."

ADVERTISEMENT

You'd heard that pedophiles have a very hard time in prison, but in his parole interviews, he explained that he believes "everyone here genuinely likes me" and that they come to him for advice. A parole board came unthinkably close to freeing him in 2017. Good behavior.

He had shown such *good behavior* toward the *men* in the prison. They liked him very much.

When he dies, you feel everything at once. Relief, anguish, anger, confusion, sadness, joy. Your adrenaline won't let up. You want to work, but for three days straight you can't focus at all. You play games on your phone and drink to tamp down the noise in your mind.

The coroner won't tell you how he died. "Natural causes" is all you find out.

And you wonder how long it'll be until you find your footing, until it feels real and permanent. You search for peace. You take your friends up on it when they say they'll call or visit. You shower. You take out the recycling. You take any steps you can toward normalcy, while trying to patch that fault line.

ADVERTISEMENT

Concrete takes time to set. But in time, you're sure it will. You will fix it and you will learn to sleep.

Because despite everything, you understand that you are one of the "lucky" ones. For every 1,000 sexual assaults, only [25 perpetrators](#) do any time in prison at all.

The system that allowed this man the chance of parole every two years needs to be fixed. You can be a reminder that the mental health of felons should never supersede that of their victims. You can fight against the system that has allowed a backlog of rape kits to sit untested and unprocessed for years — proof of how little our leaders care about sexual offenses.

There is work to be done, so that there won't be another little girl who has to practice hiding in her attic, watching the clock for 4 a.m.

Trauma stays in your bones. It reverberates all through your life, even after the perpetrator is gone. It grows larger than one person.

But you outlived him.

You outlasted him.

And for today, that's enough.

Need help? Visit RAINN's [National Sexual Assault Online Hotline](#) or the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center's website](#).