

Matthew Muller invaded my home in the middle of the night, attacked me in my bed and smothered me with a pillow till I began to suffocate. He tied me up and blindfolded me, forced me to drink a liquid he said would make me passive. Then he forced me, as he typed it all up on a computer, to give him all my personal identifying and financial information – email addresses and passwords, credit and debit cards and pin numbers, passport number and travel history, social security number, university ID numbers, family members names, birthdays and addresses, including detailed information about my parents, my sister and her young children. He stated that there were other men in my house and I would be harmed if I did not comply. Still tied up, he moved me to another room as he began to go through all my files.

Then he came back into the room where I was, attacked me again, and attempted to rape me. I fought him off for a long time, with every ounce of strength I had. He seemed to take pleasure in feeling powerful and tormenting me, at one point telling me that he could do this all night long since he could always hurt me more than I could hurt him. He had me pinned on my stomach on my roommate's bed and was about to rape me, but became obsessed with finding the zipties he had bound my hands with that I had managed to get free from. As this was happening I was talking to him, trying to understand what he wanted and why he was doing this to me, trying to buy myself time. It became clear that I was dealing with a very sick person, who was taking pleasure in terrifying me. The entire time his head and face were covered with some kind of black mask, and he was talking in a gravelly way as if to disguise his voice. I managed to convince him that I had been raped before, because I sensed that it would take some of the pleasure out of dominating and hurting me.

Eventually he did lose interest, and then he became obsessed with the details of the crime. He blindfolded me again and made me lie back down in my bed. As I laid there he unzipped a bag and detailed to me all the things he was doing to throw law enforcement off his trail—planting evidence, wiping other peoples' DNA on surfaces of my room. He had planned carefully in advance the things he would do to evade law enforcement, and he had come prepared with everything he believed he needed. He explained to me things I should do to avoid things like this not happening to me again, such as the kinds of locks I should use on my doors and windows. He told me he and his accomplices would hunt down all my family members and hurt them if I ever told the police. All of this took place over a very long period of time. By the time he finally left my house, daylight had broken.

The impact of this assault on my life was immediate and profound. I was advised by the police not to return to my house and had to find immediate alternate housing. I lived and worked in the area where I was assaulted, and after the assault I was terrified constantly that I was being watched or followed by someone whose face I had not seen and could not identify. I felt exposed and unable to protect myself. I also feared for my family members' safety, especially my sister's young children who Mr. Muller had specifically threatened to hunt down and harm if I reported the assault to the police. In addition to persistent fear and anxiety, I experienced PTSD and spent two years in therapy. I had been at the very start of a predoctoral dissertation fellowship at Stanford and my ability to continue my dissertation research and writing was disrupted by the physical and

emotional upheaval which followed the assault. I did eventually complete my doctorate, but the assault had a direct impact on my career path.

Because the attack happened during the night, in my bed, my sense of a bedroom as a place of safety and rest was permanently shattered. Every single night for five years, as I lay down to go to sleep and closed my eyes, I would involuntarily relive the assault. It would come back to me in my mind, my body would curl up and freeze in position, my heart would race and scenes or moments from the assault would replay in my mind like a nightmare I was awake for. Mr. Muller's voice, his gloved hand grinding my face into the bed, him straddling me, suffocating me with my own pillow. It was as if my body was preparing me for it to happen again, each night. I learned to recognize that it would happen, no matter what I did, where I was, or what was happening in my life. Eventually I learned to breathe through it, try to detach myself emotionally from my body's physiological process. The intensity lessened a little. After five years, every now and then there would be a night that I could fall asleep without it happening. And gradually, it happened less and less. Now, fifteen years later, it still happens once every few months or so. It is hard to specify the cumulative impact this kind of trauma has had on me. But the impact has been sustained and profound, on my sleep, on my physical and mental health, on my intimate and family relationships.

At a very deep level, the assault shook my basic sense of well-being. The total unconcern Mr. Muller had for me as a human being, the premeditation he used to carry out the assault, the sick excitement he seemed to derive from hurting and terrifying me, all shattered my fundamental sense that things would be ok in my life. The assault rendered meaningless those little things we tell ourselves to keep going in life – like, good things happen to good people, things happen for a reason, trust the universe. This erosion of my basic sense of well-being has had a sustained impact on my life in large and small ways. When I learned that Mr. Muller had been sentenced to serve time in federal prison after his assault on Denise Hutchins, I was holding my infant child. I was overcome by the feeling that I would never be able to fully protect the baby in my arms and I suffered a panic attack.

It was a good thing that Mr. Muller was behind bars. But the weight of all the damage that Mr. Muller had done to me, to other women before me and to other women after me, was crushing as I held my own innocent child.

No one should suffer, or fear suffering, at his hands ever again.