

# THE SECOND RAPE

SOCIETY'S  
CONTINUED  
BETRAYAL  
OF THE  
VICTIM



Lee Madigan &  
Nancy Gamble

# The Second Rape

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*Society's Continued Betrayal  
of the Victim*

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# The Second Rape

*This book is dedicated to  
the courageous men and women everywhere  
who speak of their crimes.*

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## Preface

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In 1958, the term *sexual* was whispered. Sexual assault was not even acknowledged. A fearful eighth-grader in a large high school stood at her locker one day when a black male seemed to come out of nowhere. He put his hand up her skirt and felt between her legs and buttocks. She later learned that the slang term for this act was *goosing*. He undoubtedly saw the look of shock on her face. She told no one. She might never have told anyone, but he kept stalking her for days. The same act occurred eight to ten times more. Each time it seemed as if he appeared from nowhere, and each time he wore a sadistic smile. The look on his face was imprinted on her mind forever. Her heart would beat in her throat the moment she got on the bus to go to school.

The young girl wondered why he was doing this to her. The shame was immense. She thought that maybe her skirt was too tight or provocative, so she started wearing full skirts. This only made it easier for him to attack. The only reason she was brave enough to tell was that her fear mounted to the point where she was afraid he would follow her home and rape her. She told her mother, who kept very quiet. After all, those kinds of things didn't happen to middle-class families in Kansas.

Finally she told the principal of the high school. He said that the boy had been suspended because of similar complaints from others over the past year. So it wasn't just her! For months after his suspension, the young girl was hypervigilant and frightened of all black males. Because of the principal's casual attitude, she was sure his suspension would be short, so she lived in fear until she finally requested a transfer out of that school. She had to leave her friends and all that was familiar to her, but her fear was immense. Suspension was only a slap on the hand, for the boy's behavior may well have escalated to rape. This girl was not actually raped, but she

experienced the second rape—apathy from those she told and the need to flee for her own sense of safety.

The late 1960s brought social unrest and with it gang violence. A young woman was driving to the Laundromat at dusk on what was a main thoroughfare through town. This particular evening, the street was eerily void of all cars. She came upon a car on fire blocking the road, and a group of fifteen to twenty high-school-age boys and girls descended on her car and beckoned her to help. Trusting their intentions, she opened the car door. Instead, they took her purse and dragged her out into the street. They proceeded to rip off her clothes and hit her over the head with a brick. They said they were going to rape and kill her.

The young woman watched this violent frenzy as if from a distance. This couldn't be happening. Surely she would awaken from the nightmare soon. If not, she prayed that she would faint. As they were arguing over their plan, she saw a tow truck coming toward her. She broke from the group and ran in front of the truck to get it to stop. The driver almost didn't take her in, but she managed to fling herself into the cab, bloody and unclothed.

The worst was yet to come. She told the police officer at the emergency room that she could identify some of her assaulters. He just nodded. Later her telephone calls to the police were never returned. She looked for some mention of the attack in the newspaper, but there was none. After all, it was explained, to acknowledge gang violence would hurt the city's tourism economy. Her husband said, "Just be glad you're alive and okay. We don't want them coming after you."

Disillusionment set in. Where was the posse that was supposed to rescue the damsel in distress? Several weeks later, she started to relate the story to another couple over martinis. She felt a kick under the table, and her husband said, "Not at dinner, dear." So this incident in which she had almost lost her life was pushed far into the back of her mind. This young woman had survived a second rape.

We know what it feels like to be the target of sexually aggressive acts. We lived through the above experiences. We also know firsthand that reporting these acts can lead to even greater feelings of violation and trauma. It is ironic, however, that we made our identifications as survivors rather belatedly—well into the writing of

this book. This attests to the great lengths to which women will go to make sure that rape or sexual violation is “not me.” It underscores the depth of repression that is necessary to carry on with the sometimes frightening experience of being female in our society.

Despite our years of experience and the book knowledge we had in the area of sexual assault, we were ignorant about some aspects of it. It wasn't until we had walked in a survivor's shoes by attending rape trials, interviewing police, and networking with prosecuting attorneys that we could truly empathize. Unfortunately, many therapists working with survivors may be poorly trained to understand the rape that society perpetrates after a woman reports. Therapists can be second rapists, too, if they are ignorant and unwilling to accept the woman's reality once she tells. We have all been so brainwashed by certain ideas about men, women, and rape that even the most educated and sophisticated among us do harm. We can no longer sit in our ivory towers pretending that all is right with the world but wrong with our clients.

We are writing this book with the hope that *all* people can benefit from our investigation. It is unfortunate that it takes living through a rape or having a loved one raped to understand what it's all about.



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## Acknowledgments

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**W**e are indebted to all the people who sacrificed hours of their valuable time to be interviewed by us. We appreciated the candor and interest of many attorneys, doctors, and police officers. This book was made possible by their knowledge and generous contributions. Special thanks to Laurie McKenzie and Jean Wright and her coworkers, who were particularly helpful in sharing their insights and leading us to resources that could deepen our understanding. To our assistant editor, Lyri Merrill, we are forever indebted for the names of wonderful books without which our history of rape would have been incomplete.

Over a period of ten years, we have listened to and felt with hundreds of rape survivors. It is impossible to do the work we do without feeling touched by these women's pain and awed by their courage. In retrospect, we feel honored that they trusted us. We are especially thankful for the four survivors who gave us countless hours of their time and emotional energy so that we could record their personal stories of violation. We are sure that their experience with us was sometimes excruciating and tedious. We thank these women and hope that their efforts in sharing help others.

Lastly, we want to thank the women in the survivors support group who in early 1989 brought to our attention the injustices that they had experienced after they reported. They were the real catalysts for the investigation that led to this book. Thank goodness we listened.

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**PART ONE**

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# Introduction



## After the Crime

**T**his is a story that needs to be told. It's not a pretty story. *Rape* itself is an ugly word, but this book carries the meaning of the word *rape* even further. There is a new, more disturbing twist to rape if one becomes aware that women who report a rape are again raped by a system composed of well-intentioned people who are nevertheless blinded by the myths of centuries.

It's impossible not to know that a second rape is occurring. The statistics speak for themselves. Based on reports to the police, sixteen rapes are attempted and ten women are raped every hour (U.S. House 1990). That's *reported*. How many occur and go unreported? According to Susan Estrich (1987), rape is the single most underreported major crime. Experts estimate that only 10 percent of sexual assaults are brought to the police (U.S. House 1990). Interpolating the above data, this means that sexual assault is occurring to 100 women an hour, or once every 36 seconds. Sexual assault is attempted on 160 women an hour, or once every 22.5 seconds. There must be some very serious rationale to explain this underreporting and why we as a society have tolerated these horrific statistics.

We can begin by stating that our society vehemently denies the frequent occurrence of rape. In fact, as you are reading this page, a woman somewhere has suddenly found herself in an unpredictable and dangerous situation. She will be forced to submit to the most private and intimate acts against her will. Making love has become twisted. It is no longer a sacred sharing but hate and power expressed by violence and brutality. The violation may occur with a

weapon present, or she may simply be caught off guard by someone she trusts. She may resist and struggle or remain passive in order to save her life. Regardless, the shock and inability to reason with her attacker make her situation terrifying.

It is obviously easier for women to deny that a sexual violation is rape, and so crime statistics don't reflect its true frequency. If the question "Have you ever been forced to have sex?" is posed rather than the question "Have you ever been raped?" a very serious picture emerges. An estimated 15 to 40 percent of women are victims of attempted or completed rapes during their lifetimes (U.S. House 1990). Three separate studies of college students released in 1985 indicated that one in five women in each study disclosed being "physically forced to have intercourse by her date" (Estrich 1987).

Many people also believe that rape can occur only to "women who live the wrong way": those that are sexually loose, foolhardy, uneducated, lower class, and above all mentally unstable. From our experience, rape survivors can be checkers at the local supermarket, attorneys, teachers, or even police investigators. They can be sisters, mothers, daughters, or next-door neighbors. Most importantly, if you are female, the victim could be you.

It is also commonly thought that rape can occur only in dangerous surroundings and be committed only by a stranger with a weapon. However, 50 to 70 percent of all rapes occur in the context of an ongoing relationship with varying degrees of trust existing (U.S. House 1990). In a survey of 3,187 college women, 478 reported having been raped. Of those raped, 10.6 percent were raped by strangers, 24.9 percent by nonromantic acquaintances, 21 percent by casual dates, 30 percent by steady dates, and 8.9 percent by family members (U.S. House 1990). A rapist can be a boyfriend, husband's friend, or colleague at work.

Many people assume that rapists have psychopathic personalities and are detectable at first glance. This is an erroneous notion. Rapists do have something in common, though. They use sex as a weapon. Rape is an aggressive act that gives the offender a sense of power and allows him to discharge anger. The act can be accompanied by brutal violence or verbal intimidation, but the motive is always dominance and control. Rapists are not usually people already identified as criminals, though it is typical for them to rape many times again if not apprehended (U.S. House 1990).

Perhaps you've heard these facts before. Rape is not a rare occurrence. It often happens to someone or is committed by someone we know. For some reason, however, the impact eludes us. The problem is that we say we believe the preceding statements, but at our very core, we do not. This book bears this out.

Before going any further, it is necessary to acknowledge some progress in the area of the "first rape"—the actual crime society has finally recognized as reportable to the police and prosecutable by the state. We and many others would like to think that progress has been made in the past decade toward instating a victim's rights. She may now be entitled to advocacy and financial restitution from the perpetrator. In many states, more services are available, especially in the form of crisis intervention and hot lines.

Particularly in the mental health professions, society also has gained an understanding of the emotional suffering a survivor endures because of the first rape. The mental health profession is familiar with the symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, which is the psychiatric diagnosis most commonly applied to rape victims. Posttraumatic stress disorder as a syndrome manifests itself most often by the victim's reexperiencing a traumatic event.

A rape survivor often fears her dreams because she relives the attack. She sees again the look of hatred in her attacker's face, smells his odor, hears his degradation. She is frozen in fear and awakes, drenched in a cold sweat, gasping for air. Sleep, with its vulnerability and loss of control, becomes something to be dreaded and feared. Recurrent daytime flashbacks also are common.

The victim may run in fear from any man on the street who resembles her attacker. She may search desperately for a rest room in which she can regurgitate. An unexpected touch on her shoulder prompts a startle reflex, and the woman braces for an assault and possibly death. The rape survivor cannot escape from her own mind, which is now, as in the event itself, under the control of the rapist. Once pleasurable activities are forgotten as though they existed in another lifetime. She withdraws from herself and is alone in a cell with no walls. She is held prisoner by someone unseen for months, maybe years. The terror may never leave. Certainly, she will never be the same.

The "second rape" is the act of violation, alienation, and disparagement a survivor receives when she turns to others for help and



support. It can occur only if she has been brave enough to tell someone of her assault. Keeping the rape a secret will prevent the second rape from occurring. Nevertheless, many survivors assume that friends and loved ones will be supportive. Instead, a possessive husband may become outraged by the spoiling of his property. He may condemn her for what she was wearing or where she went on the day of the assault. According to our sample of two hundred rape survivors, one-half to two-thirds of all intimate male-female relationships are severed by revelation of rape. Friends may withdraw from her due to their own discomfort, about not knowing what to say. They also may be reminded of their own vulnerability and therefore wish to believe that the rape never happened.

Lack of support also occurs with professional people who have contact with the survivor. Some physicians who treat the postrape survivor are insensitive to her. Even female physicians have been known to say, "How did you get yourself in this fix, honey?" One example of this nonsupport was Laura's experience following a rape by her landlord. Laura was devoutly religious. Several months following her assault, no amount of reassurance could penetrate the deepening guilt she felt for having been raped. Finally, she approached the pastor of her church and asked for forgiveness. Instead he replied, "You were raped by this man because you haven't been walking with God. You had already committed a sin by sleeping with your fiancé. You deserved your ill fate."

Fortunately, Laura and others have been able to shake off the hostility and condemnation of others. Unfortunately, it is these people who are in the best position to influence the survivor's well-being. Women like Laura have gone on to make much-needed changes in their lives. This is testimony to these women's will to endure despite the unfavorable odds.

The feelings of despondency and self-doubt that deepen in the survivor because of the treatment of those around her are not imagined. A woman's rage at her husband's lack of empathy is not displaced anger at the rapist. Her fear that she is not being taken seriously regarding the account of the rape is often accurate. Her perception that she is still in danger and will not be protected is not just a hysterical reaction to her assault. All of these feelings are very real but are not the result of the criminal act itself, the first rape. Instead, these feelings are the result of the second rape.