

The survivor in today's story was referred to Bay Area Women's Center's Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program by an emergency room doctor at McLaren Bay Region Hospital. The survivor was connected with an advocate who was with them during the rape exam and provided legal advocacy support. The survivor was also set up with a counselor who provided individual sessions and recommended group therapy.

"One night, two years ago, my roommate drove me to the emergency room because Beanie felt I was acting disoriented. I explained to the doctor that I went out after work with friends, but only drank club soda. I also told the doctor that a friend and I left early and ended up hanging out in my apartment after they drove us three different bars trying to get me to drink alcohol. Her examination revealed I presented with symptoms of drowsiness, dizziness, slurred speech, lack of coordination, and confusion; she did a blood panel to test for alcohol and drugs. After also noticing my torn clothing, bruising on my arms and legs, and signs of personal trauma, she called the Bay Area Women's Center.

One Friday night, friends and I went out. I didn't drink alcohol; it was important to be aware of my surroundings. Suddenly, I caught a guy staring at me from across the room. It made me uneasy, but I dismissed the feeling. I thought I was overreacting because being raised by an overprotective mother made me afraid of my own shadow. Also, I still wasn't dating. I didn't believe in casual dating, and I still wasn't ready for a serious relationship. He approached abruptly, aggressively pulling me close to dance.

My friend, E.B., could see I felt shaken and grabbed my hand; out we bolted. I said, "Thank You! I was frightened but didn't know what to do." I was grateful E.B. looked out for me. As we drove toward our apartment building, we talked more personally than in prior weeks, sharing coming-of-age stories; it felt as if we were bonding. I shared more about my insecurities and lack of experience with E.B. than with anyone. Since we lived in the same apartment building and worked in the same office, we drove together. Besides, I didn't own a car.

E.B. drove us across the Bay Area from one bar to another without even asking me what I wanted. At the first bar, E.B. accepted that I would only order club soda, but at the second bar argued with me about ordering a shot of whiskey. At the third bar, E.B. ordered me a Vodka, but I refused to drink it. At this point, I was feeling tense and uneasy, but I really was at E.B.'s mercy so I treaded carefully to get home safe. We entered and exited three bars in total, E.B. drinking more alcohol at each one. On the ride home, E.B. apologized, saying, "We're friends. I would never hurt you." E.B. worked really hard to put me at ease and I did let my defenses down. We ended up back at my apartment, talking and listening to music. At one point, E.B. started to dance with me. I felt comfortable. Since E.B. and I were always attracted to each other, I kissed E.B. E.B. kissed me back. The more we kissed, the more E.B. was getting intense; things were moving fast. I said, "I feel uncomfortable." E.B., who I knew sometimes experimented with drugs, went to the kitchen, returning with two bottled sodas.

Suddenly, I felt extremely tired and had a slight dizzy spell. E.B. helped me lay down, saying I shouldn't be alone and stayed with me on the end of my bed. I must have passed out for a moment. The next thing I remember is E.B. pushing up on me. The more E.B. insisted we be intimate, the more I started to feel afraid. I continually repeated, "I am not having sex with you!" E.B. refusing to listen, pressed the issue. The more I insisted, "I am not having sex with you!", the more aggressive E.B. behaved. E.B. was not much bigger than me but was much stronger than I was, and no matter how hard I tried, I could not pull myself free from E.B.'s grip; it was too overpowering. E.B. was full of rage and I was becoming infuriated; fighting was exhausting. I dozed in and out of consciousness.

I remember waking up from being asleep. E.B. was on top of me. My arms and legs were pinned down. I couldn't move or breathe. I attempted to pull myself free from under E.B. who abruptly yanked me back with a resounding, "Wait, I'm not finished." This went on two or three times. When it was over, E.B. flew out my apartment. I just sat there on my bed, rocking back and forth. I was in shock and didn't know what to do.

What seemed like weeks later, my roommate, Beanie, came home. Beanie noticed that I was acting disoriented, my clothes were torn, and my appearance was otherwise disheveled. Beanie also noticed by bed was a mess and there were stains on the sheets, and two opened bottles of soda in the living room. Beanie knew something wasn't right.

Though no one witnessed the assault, and the disabling effects of Rohypnol caused a fragmented memory, the supportive team at Bay Area Women's Center helped me receive justice for myself and my community when I prosecuted my rapist. There were gaps in my memory until the counselor broke down the barriers of the fear and shame I felt because my assault was also my first sexual experience. I understood enough to know that nothing I did caused E.B. to assault me, but I felt that old Catholic shame. I felt dirty because I kept hearing the voice of my grandmother in my head, "Good people never have sex before marriage." It was a feeling I just couldn't shake. Even though my family didn't know what happened to me that night, it was like they were telling me I did something wrong. The truth is, and I understand this now, they did by not talking to me about sex or dating. My family did not teach me to be able to identify threatening situations or empower me to feel I could remove myself from those situations.

I did not realize until months into therapy: Evan was intending to get me drunk and lower my defenses; it was his predictor. "Understanding that what happened to me had nothing to do with me, or being a bisexual male, but the person who assaulted me was a breaking point in my therapy." Bay Area Women's Center staff provide their clients with assertion, independence, and confidence. They made me realize I am not alone. I have support and guidance. They are a real God Send."

"I'm a twenty-year-old, bisexual, male, and my assault was not my fault."

Evan no longer holds no power over Ben.