

The Rape - by Nita DeWeese

The night was as black as the inside of a closed coffin. Amy sat in her stranded car on the edge of a lonely road. The raspy cricket chatter filled her ears. Her interview with Mrs. Perkins, Human Resource Manager for HyTech Printing, had not gone well. So what else was new? It was the same old 'don't call us, we'll call you' routine. And, they never did.

Then the drive to Jones Falls for her best friend's baby shower. Why, even there did she feel inadequate? Everyone else had purchased nicer, more thoughtful gifts than she had brought. What was she thinking when she bought three baby kimonos? It seemed everyone knew kimonos were always purchased by the grandmother-to-be. Except Amy.

Then the car conked out. Was she really just having a bad day or was she the loser she felt like? Suddenly, bright beams on a car whizzed by. She did not try to flag it down, nor did she have her flashers on to signal trouble. Even though it was almost midnight, the advice her father had given her when she started driving echoed in her head. Never, never leave your car. Wait for daylight or help to arrive, whichever comes first. So, she waited.

In the rear view mirror, she saw the car brake, turn around and drive toward her. Please, Lord, let it be help, not trouble! Heart hammering her ribs, she could taste bile in her throat. The car pulled up so close behind that its headlights flooded the inside of her car. She punched the automatic door lock and made sure all four windows were closed. She waited. Unconsciously holding her breath, she watched a tall man-shape approach her car. Cranking the driver-side window down just enough to talk, she figured if he tried to reach in she could close the window on his fingers or hand. The stranger turned a spotlight on her face.

Blinded, she yelled, "Hey!"

The man's voice, deep and controlled, asked, "Trouble?" and lowered his flashlight. He bent down to peer into the car and she

recognized the familiar “Mountie” Highway Patrol hat. With an audible sigh of relief and as her heart beat slowed, she wound the window all the way down.

“You scared the shit out of me! Why didn’t you use your bubble light? Or at least shine that stupid spotlight on yourself? You could have been a rapist for all I knew!”

“Sorry, Ma’am. You could have had a gun, for all I knew.”

A nervous giggle escaped her. “You’re right! But I, for one, am glad you’re the good guy!”

“Out of gas or broken down?” the patrolman asked.

“Broken down. And, I had it serviced before I left town. Boy, is that guy gonna hear from me!

“Why don’t you come on back to my car where I can get your information?”

She collected her purse, pocketed the ignition key and slipped through the door the cop held open for her. When she was settled in the patrol car with the interior light on, she could see the face of her rescuer. He had removed his hat and his head almost touched the car’s head liner. He was much larger than she had first thought. Bleached blonde crewcut, brilliant, almost artificially blue eyes, strong jaw, clean-shaven. Like a snail’s slime, a shiny scar trailed from his left ear to the corner of his mouth.

“Name?”

“Amy Jenkins.”

“Date of birth?”

“10 22 76.”

“Address?”

“946 Hickory Lane, Mansberg.”

“Is that where you’re headed?”

“Yeah. I went to a shower in Jones Falls.”

“That’s a long way for a shower. About a hundred and fifty miles, isn’t it?”

“Yes, but she’s a very special friend. Having her first baby next month.”

“How about you? Married?”

“Well . . . engaged, but no date for a wedding, yet. Is all this necessary?”

The patrolman kept writing in his little notebook.

“Can you call a tow truck for me? My cell shows no service here.”

“You have a cell?”

“Yeah, that’s what I said.”

“Call anyone else about being stuck?”

“No, didn’t you hear me? No service. That’s why I’m still here.” A small weight formed in Amy’s stomach. Does this guy have ADD or what?

“Why didn’t you take the freeway home? You like lonely country roads?”

“Look, either call me a tow truck or take me to a phone.”

“Oh, I’ll take you to a phone, all right.”

The weight jumped up to Amy's chest. Of all the State Highway Patrolmen on the graveyard shift, she had to get one with an attitude. She wished she'd stayed in her own car. They sat in silence for several minutes as he continued scribbling in his notebook. What on earth is he writing? Finally, the notebook back in his pocket, the cop started the car. The interior light went out as he backed up to go around Amy's car. He made a lazy U turn and headed the other way.

"Where are we going? I think I was closer to Mt. Pearlman than Sugar Grove."

"I'm taking you to a phone. Isn't that what you want?"

"Yes, of course. I just thought . . ." Amy tried to relax. "What is your name?"

"Keith Webster. Friends call me lover boy."

"Patrolman Webster, I really appreciate your help. I'll call a tow service and then my fiancé. He'll come and get me."

"He'll come after you at this hour?"

"Of course." That's an odd question. The car hurtled down the highway, traffic signs and trees and fields flashed by at an alarming speed. Amy tried to see the speedometer but Webster had turned the dash lights down too low. How could you tell a cop he was speeding anyhow? After what seemed like an hour of silence, Amy couldn't stand it.

"How far is Sugar Grove?"

"We're not goin' there."

"Oh? Is there a town closer?"

"Nope."

Amy felt her scalp tighten as some of her hairs became rigid. She couldn't think of anything else to say. Then where are we going?

The car slowed and Amy could see an intersection. Webster hung a right and then a fast left which put them on a gravel road. Although at first it seemed deserted, Amy saw a large shape materialize on her right. A barn. Great. Her eyes searched for the house. Ah, there it was. Dark, but definitely a house. Webster's perhaps?

"Is this your house?"

"Yep."

But Webster turned into the lane leading toward the barn. He stopped the car, got out and opened the barn door. Amy's thoughts jumbled crazily. Does he keep the car here? Why not drive up to the house? Did the barn have a phone? All the while, her heart knocked at her ribs. After driving into the barn, Webster got out, closed the door and flicked a switch. A feeble light struggled to illuminate but only cast shadows. He ordered Amy out. When she hesitated, he reached in and yanked her arm, pulling her into the barn.

"What are you doing? Why are we here? Where's the phone?" Keep talking, Amy thought, nothing bad can happen if we're talking.

"Shut up." Webster dragged Amy into an empty horse stall. He cuffed her hands behind her.

"Why are you doing this?" Amy's voice sounded far away to her own ears, which roared with the rush of her blood. She tried hard not to let him see her fear.

"Because I can. Now, Sweet Lips, we're gonna have a little party." Webster shoved Amy down on the straw and unbuckled his belt.

"Please, let me go. I won't tell anyone, I promise. But, don't do this. Please."

"Please," Webster said, mimicking Amy. "You're pathetic. I can do anything I want, to whoever I want, and there's nothin' you or anyone else can do about it." By now he had removed his trousers,

folded them neatly and hung them over the stall door. "I'm a cop and cops have all the power."

Amy surrendered her fear to uncontrollable sobs. Her entire body convulsed like an epileptic in the throes of a seizure. Don't fight, don't fight. Maybe he'll let me live. Oh, God, don't let him kill me!

Webster flipped her over, took her from behind. The scent of straw filled her nose. With each thrust Amy's cheek burrowed deeper in the bedding. Well into eternity, he climaxed. Her nostrils filled with his smell. A dirty, clinging odor that brought queasiness to her throat. Afraid to move, Amy lay still. She heard the sounds of Webster dressing. He roughly pulled her to her feet by the cuffs, which dug into her flesh. He opened them, releasing her hands.

"Straighten yourself for God's sake!" he said. "You're a mess!"

Greyness edged Amy's vision. Afraid she might pass out, she adjusted her panties and her skirt, pulled straw from her hair. Cowed and still very much afraid, she stood still, waiting.

"Well, get into the car! Do I have to tell you everything?"

Amy scrambled into the car and moved as close as possible to the passenger door. Now what? Is he going to kill me someplace else? Webster climbed behind the wheel, started the engine and backed out of the barn. He got out, and shut off the barn light and closed the door. He appeared to be in no hurry. Back in the car he drove the short distance to the door of the house that Webster had admitted was his.

"Don't just sit there! Get out!"

"W-where are we going?" Amy heard the fear in her voice but couldn't hide it.

"To a telephone. Isn't that what you wanted? You aren't as bright as you look, Sweet Lips." The patrolman helped Amy up the four steps to his porch, opened the door and gestured her in. He pointed to the

phone and left her alone. Sure he would be back to hurt her, Amy froze. What kind of game was this guy playing?

“I don’t hear you dialin,” Webster called from another room. Amy lunged for the phone. She dialed her fiancé’s number with shaky fingers. Please, please be home, Bill, she prayed. William Starke, a recovering alcoholic, often stayed and talked after an AA meeting, especially when he knew Amy would be late. After the fifth ring, the answering machine picked up. Amy whispered her message . . . car trouble, pick me up, Route 10, about fifteen miles north of Mt. Pearlman, hurry.”

Webster came around the corner carrying a tray with two cups of coffee and a plate of cookies. “Did you reach him? Your fiancé?” He put the tray down on the coffee table and sat on the couch as if nothing bad had happened.

In Amy’s mind, Webster’s current behavior was almost scarier than the rape. It confused her, tilted her off-balance, made her question what had happened in the barn.

“Sit down, Sweet Lips, have a cookie. Is your friend picking you up here or back at your car?” He nibbled on a cookie, spoke through his chewing.

“Back at my car. I-I didn’t know where else to tell him.”

“That’s fine. It’ll take him awhile, so we can get acquainted. Come on, sit down.” He patted the cushion next to him.

“Patrolman Webster, I’d rather go to my car now and wait for him, please.

“Nonsense, we have some things to talk about, remember? Like you’re gonna forget about what happened in the barn, right?”

“R-right.”

“I’m the law, after all, and you’re what, a nobody?”

Amy nodded.

“No one would believe you anyhow, right?”

Another nod.

“That’s good, Sweet Lips, ‘cause I’d hate to have to kill you and whoever you told. We live in different counties, different towns, have different lives. But, make no mistake, I will kill you if you try to make trouble.”

Amy moved toward the door. “Please take me to my car.” She held herself in, stopped the waves of nausea trying to rise into her mouth. Afraid to shiver even, in case she couldn’t stop. “Please.”

“Okay, if you insist. I think you’d be more comfortable waiting here, but, whatever you want.”

After Webster dropped her at her car and left, she slumped behind the wheel. She sobbed, she shook, she had to open the door and vomit. Several times. It occurred to her she might be in shock. By the time Bill found her, Amy was almost catatonic.

The next two weeks dragged by. Amy’s excuse of I-must-have-picked-up-a-virus wore thin. At night she went through the motions of going to bed but whenever she closed her eyes she saw Webster, felt him, smelled him. I can’t live like this! Amy was afraid not only for Bill’s life if she confided in him, but for his sobriety. They had met in a bar last March and began dating. When Amy realized Bill was an alcoholic, she backed off and became very busy every time he called. Then, over Memorial Day weekend, he showed up at her studio apartment.

“Can I come in?”

Bill’s crooked smile and bottomless brown eyes melted her heart. She opened the door and led him into her tiny living room. Bill sat on the loveseat. Amy remained standing, determined to be strong.

“Bill, I’d rather we stop dating. I don’t need any more . . . stress in my life.”

“And I’m the stress?”

Amy focused on her hands which she was twisting in her lap.

“I stopped to tell you what I hope will change your mind.”

Raising her head, Amy’s eyes searched Bill’s face.

“I know I have a problem with booze. I’ve been going to AA meetings every night. I even have a sponsor.”

Several minutes passed. Finally, she said, “If you’re doing this for me, it—

“No, Amy. It’s for me. I only ask that you don’t shut me out. If our relationship doesn’t work out, that’s okay. But, I really like you and I want to give it a chance. Deal?” Bill grinned his crooked grin.

Amy felt her resolve evaporating.

“There is one thing, though,” Bill added. “We won’t be able to celebrate our anniversaries at the bar where we met.” His tone was serious but his eyes were dancing.

Unable to help herself, Amy giggled. That had been six months ago.

It was now the anniversary of his six month without a drink. Amy had promised to attend his AA meeting with him.

“I wish you’d see a doctor, Ames. You’re losing weight and those circles under your eyes are getting darker,” Bill said as he tucked her into the car. “I’m worried about you.”

“I’m fine, really. Just can’t seem to catch up on my sleep.” Amy hadn’t told anyone about the rape and keeping it in was killing her.

At St. Ann's church, where the Wednesday night Alcoholic Anonymous meetings were held, Bill introduced Amy to several people. Coffee and doughnuts were in abundance. Then it was time for the meeting to start.

"Good evening. I'm George and I'm an alcoholic."

"Hi George," came the unanimous greeting. George proceeded to lead the gathering in the Serenity Prayer. Amy had heard that prayer on several occasions, but tonight the words hit home. ". . .accept the things I cannot change. . ." I certainly can't change what happened, Amy thought. "Change the things I can . . ." What can I change? I'm a loser, a victim, and I'll be a dead one if I tell. ". . . and the wisdom to know the difference." Oh, I know the difference, all right. Accept or die! Some choice!

Bill went to the podium to tell his story. How things used to be, how he found AA and how things were now. Amy couldn't concentrate on Bill's words. But she knew the premise. What about her own life? How did things used to be for her? Dad told me over and over again that I had choices. I just made a lot of bad ones. And, bad choices, like alcohol, became a habit. Bill's voice droned on, but Amy tuned in to the voice in her head. It occurred to her that she "chose" to be a victim time and time again. Then I can choose not to be one, right? The head voice answered 'right!' But, what if Webster does kill me? And, Bill? Or, Bill drinks? The thought that she had tried to ignore for the last two weeks surfaced. How many other women will that man rape? And get away with it? A shiver passed through her. Applause startled her out of her thoughts.

Bill, smiling and confident, sat down beside her. "What did you think?" he asked.

"I think you did fine." Amy searched the face of the man she intended to marry someday and found love staring back at her. She leaned in close, her lips brushing his cheek. Finally, Amy realized she had only one choice. The right one. She would never be a victim again.