

## *do you remember me?*

*(This post is deeply personal and uses some extremely explicit language - not suitable for young readers - to describe my horrific rape that took place on May 4, 1987. Reader discretion is advised.)*



*(Tonia Collins, circa 1987 - BEFORE I was raped.)*

Dear D.,

*Do you remember me?*

I'm not sure why you re-entered my life yesterday, but you did, albeit via social media. And in a way, I'm glad. Something in me - dead, rotten, corpse like - became alive.

I sent you a private message with my picture of how I looked 33 years ago with a simple question, "do you remember me?"

First thing this morning, you answered, "How are you doing?" I replied to you, "So you do remember me. Do you remember what you and your roommates did to me?" You replied with a "?" Then I began to explain a horror that I have tried to let remain dormant in my mind for decades.

You read my message "reminding" you of what I think you quickly remembered before blocking me from your social media accounts, but not before I was able to screenshot every detail I needed to find you. Since you wouldn't communicate with me - I am forced to use the platforms given to me to remind you what you did to me and to break my silence finally and publicly after 33 years, 1 month and 26 days.

You see D., long ago amid my innocence, I thought the world was fun. I was 18. A freshmen in college. I had the whole world ahead of me. I had dreams, goals, mountains to climb, but you quickly took that all away from me in one night, May 7, 1987. I have taken the hard road; never really complaining, but wondering why me? Why would you do this to me?

I wrote this in 1993 and never released or published it. But when I saw your face yesterday on Facebook - smiling with your children and friends - I knew I had it in me to tell the world what you did to me, D. You and your three roommates - all football players – on May 4, 1987.

\* \* \*

I was walking home one late evening – must have been about 9 or 10pm – from the library. It was across the University's campus from my dorm room, and I remember calling my friend to come walk me home, but he didn't answer. So, I began walking alone.

You came up to me during the walk, near your apartment complex where all football players lived. "Hey Toni, where are you going?" You were a friend, so I stopped and began small talk with you.

But the talk turned ugly quickly when you grabbed me by the back of my neck and squeezed really hard. "Come with me, Toni, I have something to show you."

"I can't. I have to get back to my room. Another time, okay?" I felt as though I was becoming wrapped up in my insecurities for no apparent reason and tried to reason with you.

"No, Toni, just come on. It will only take a minute." I didn't move. "Toni, what are you afraid of? Come on, now, I said it would only take a minute."

"Please, let me go."

"I can't, Toni, it's too late. If you don't come with me, it may just get worse."

"D. please, please don't, please!" I began to shake, and tears ran down my face. I wanted to scream but nothing would come out. I was going to be killed or die trying to save my life.

We got to a door unfamiliar to me. If I died, they wouldn't know where to look for me. I thought of my mother, and how she would cry. And I cried, and cried, and cried, and cried.

And cried, and cried, and cried, and cried...

You stopped me at the door. "Toni, stop crying. It won't change anything. Come on." And you pushed me through the door.

I stumbled in the apartment and saw three other football players sitting on a couch, laughing, and drinking. You brought me to your room. You took my bag and placed it on the chair, then sat next to me on the bed. I settled down and stopped crying. You explained to me that you wanted to move out of this apartment, away from these three football players, but you couldn't move until you could prove something was wrong and you couldn't live with them anymore. I perked up and relaxed thinking and trusting you were simply soliciting some help to concoct some story that would allow you to have your own space.

*Do you remember this conversation, D.?*

"The only way for me to get my own room is if I say they all had sex with you, and I couldn't live with them anymore. Will you do that for me?"

The crying returned. Only harder and louder than before. I couldn't breathe. "Take off your clothes and I will be back." You stopped and looked at me for a moment. I thought you were going to change your mind.

"Toni, take off your clothes. Do you hear me, God dammit!" You turned and slammed the door behind you.

I sat on the bed and continued to cry. I looked for a window and there was none. I looked for a phone to call Derek, Maurice, Wanda, my mom, but no phone. If I screamed, would anybody hear me? Or would they kill me to keep me silent? This was not my fairy tale. I was about to die, and no one, no one could save me.

You walked back into the room, this friend I trusted. "Toni, shit, come here!" You took off my clothes and I just sat there, crying, and begging you to let me go.

*How about this, D. ...do you remember me begging you to let me go?*

"You're just going to make it worse," you yelled. "None of those guys out there are going to let you leave here. I had to do this. Now come on, Toni. Shit! Grow up! After, we'll let you go home."

I begged and cried, and begged and cried, and cried, and cried; and then I died.

You laid me flat on the floor and pried my legs open. I fought, but with one blow to the side of my head and I know I had lost the battle.

You held my legs tight, but I could still feel them trembling. You tried to kiss me, and I turned away from you. I told you it was going to hurt and begged that you wouldn't hurt me, but with one final plea came the first thrust. The one that completely killed me.

*Anything?*

Another thrust, and I closed my eyes. You pushed further and further, harder, and harder, and it hurt more and more. I didn't cry, and I didn't beg anymore I simply curled up inside and died.

You went deeper and deeper, possibly to kill my soul. I just laid there and prayed you would do whatever it was men did to make it stop. You grabbed my breast and hurt me once again. All along, feeling the blood running out of me, the throbbing from the one blow I got to the head, and a burning on my back from the cheap rug on the floor.

You clasped my jaw tight and forced me to open my mouth, all along moving harder and harder and then you pulled out and for an instant, I thought I was free, but you took what was once inside of me and put it in my mouth with all its contents. Then you put your hand over my mouth and made me swallow – and I couldn't breathe.

*Do you remember suffocating me with your hand over my mouth?*

You got up and I just laid there, blood between my legs and semen in my mouth. I wanted to vomit, but my body wouldn't allow it. You left the room, and another came in. He was going to kill me like you tried to, but my friend, the one that I trusted, told him it was alright, and he conquered.

#2 stayed as long as you did. He, too, kept trying to kiss me and would smack me if I refused. It didn't matter that I wasn't there anymore. It hurt, but I didn't cry. I just wanted to die.

#2 finished. My back burnt; my insides stung. I couldn't move my legs, and my arms laid across my chest, but had been moved again and again by you and #2. Then came #3. I took what little I had left and asked him to stop. I told him I was in pain, and he only responded by answering that he would make me feel better. Then he forced his way in me; again.

#3, and I became numb. I no longer felt the pain in my back or inside my body. I no longer felt the pressure of 250+ men on top of me. It's like I wasn't there. #3 pulled out and spread semen all over me. He took his hands and rubbed it into my hair and face and then began smacking me. He then stood above me and spit on me. Spit on me like I had humiliated him. And then came #4.

I don't quite remember much about #4, except I knew his name, J., and he was bigger, much bigger than you and the other two. He picked me up and placed me on top of him, and like a rag doll, bounced me up and down seeking his pleasure. I don't remember how long it took for him to complete his need. I was already dead.

J. lifted me off him and body slammed me back onto the floor. He walked out the door and I laid there in a pool of blood waiting for God to just take my soul; but He didn't come. He never came, and He never helped me. What kind of God would let me live through this? These thoughts continued to go through my head. I looked around the room for something to kill myself with: a knife, anything. There was nothing.

I laid still for a while, listening to the sounds of laughter outside of the door. I thought for an instant that it was all over, and I could get up, but you came back. You came back and went inside me. You pushed inside faster and faster, and once again, pulled out quick enough to put your penis in my mouth.

*Do you remember killing me twice, D.?*

You pulled it out of my mouth, and I didn't move assuming the cycle was only starting again. You pulled me off the floor and put my shirt and jeans on, stuffing my underwear in my bag. You wiped my mouth that had been smeared with blood and asked me if I had a good time.

*Did you remember thinking I had a good time, D.?*

I didn't look at you. I stood there, blood still flowing down my leg, just wanting to die. The four of you all walked me to the door; D., J. and #3 & 4 and asked me if I was alright. They took my heart, mind, and soul and all I could do was nod my head yes so I could get the hell out of there and into the next hell I was about to live through for the rest of my life.

You pushed me outside, and I don't know how, but I started running, yet I never felt a foot touch the ground. I saw a car, a security guard. I ran up to him and stood in his face. A face I didn't know and didn't care about, and to this day, would never see again. But it was a face that saved my body. No one could save my life.

*I remember him.*

I laid in the hospital bed staring at the white walls while doctors and nurses dug in me, took my blood pressure, and asked me questions I wasn't prepared to answer. They wanted to know my blood type, if I had been drinking, if I was pregnant, and who did this to me. I couldn't respond, and just laid there, hopelessly wanting the pain and prodding to stop.

*I remember the pain and prodding never stopping.*

Two police officers came in to take my statement. The nurse asked if I was raped, and I nodded my head yes, and she called the University's finest to help me. They walked in and talked to me, not as a victim, but as a nuisance to them.

"Those crazy Miami Hurricanes!" I heard one of them say.

"Yeah, they're always up to something." the other agreed.

Two of the University's finest here to help me, were standing beside me belittling my experience only to commend the humor of football players. Fucking Bastards!

*I remember all of them, too.*

The police officers, after their idle discussion, looked at me and told me that if I wanted to press charges, I would be making a taking a huge risk, and nothing would probably happen to the guys, so to go home and concentrate on getting well. I just had four disgusting men raping and ripping my insides out of me, and my only recourse was to go home and concentrate on getting well.

*I don't remember getting well.*

I left the hospital; it was about three o'clock in the morning. The police officers gave me a ride back to my dorm and gave me a business card to call if I wanted to do anything.

I walked into my room, and thanked God my roommate Wanda wasn't there. I wanted to run upstairs to the 4th floor and tell Derek and Maurice what happened, but instead I went into the bathroom and turned on the shower. I went in with all my clothes on and sat on the floor of the shower for what felt like the rest of my life. It is there I left my dreams, my fantasies, my moon, and my stars, never to be retrieved, never to be resurfaced. I was dead, and all that I ever had was being washed down the drain of the bathroom in dorm room #2228.

*I remember it all.*

\* \* \*

Do you remember any of this D.?

Do you remember the fear and pain and sadness and blood and tears and screams and moans of agony while you and your three roommates raped me – one after the next?

Do you remember anything?

I do.

You see, because of your darkness, I was able to see the light.

Because of your evil and hate for me, I've been able to experience real joy and love.

Because of what you tried to take away from me, I was able to give birth to a new me.

But you and your roommates will have to answer for raping me – on this side or the other.

God tells us we need to forgive, and I have, but I haven't been able to forget.

I forgive you because God tells me I must, and in my heart – through prayer, I have.

But I will never forget what you and your three roommates did to me the night of May 4, 1987, when you viciously raped and almost killed me.

Do you remember me now?

D.?

Do you?