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### A Garden of Rape

What are the odds of my assisting the survivors of the serial rapist and then assisting the serial rapist himself?

The rapist was active during the time I was the Manager of a Sexual Assault Program in Northern Idaho. He gave our community anxiety for a period of almost three years. From the first “reported” assaults, he left a flood of fear and a trail of tears; the after effects of unimaginable stress and trauma for the survivors. The women he violated wanted closure but they had no one to name, no face to match, and they were never certain he wouldn’t come back to rape them again or kill them. He was a stranger.

Single adult women who had never been victimized suddenly became hyper vigilant and aware of their vulnerability. During his reign of terror, people banded together to learn how to protect themselves. Our little non-profit agency was deluged with calls from both young and elderly women asking for 911 cell phones and pepper spray. I heard a law enforcement officer state that he was getting his wife a gun and the training to use it. Talk of the terror was aired through the media and passed around from ear to ear. There didn’t seem to be a preference in regard to the woman’s age since he assaulted young and old. One of the victims was in her early eighties. We realized the possibly of more victims that didn’t report out of fear.

In April of 2004, (Sexual Assault Awareness Month) a group of concerned citizens and professional women from other human services agencies met together, planned, and pulled off a weeklong “Take back the Night”. They worked hard to provide free events and classes every

night. It was all meant to empower us, make us safer and more aware. Law Enforcement detectives were working overtime to find some commonalities with the survivors and combed neighborhoods to investigate any and all leads.

Then the rapist went silent like a sudden deafness and seemed to disappear for the last year. Many of us began to wonder if he'd moved on and was in action somewhere else. As sorry as it sounds, it was almost a relief to those of us who hadn't been his victim. If he wasn't captured, we didn't want him here. For those he wounded, there would be no relief until he was caught. None of the survivors knew this person. He did his evil in the dark, with surprise, often waking them from sleep or coming up to them from behind. He would tell them to keep quiet and do what he said or he would kill them.

I share some details but not the identities of those he victimized because of confidentiality.

He was described with some minor differences in height since most of the women were in bed and lying down. He appeared to have a British accent with one victim. He reeked of alcohol to one and to another, he smelled like diesel. He asked two of his victims to call him Jack and made one of them get into the shower after the assault. After raping one woman, he began to play a hideous game of cat and mouse with her, leading her to believe that he was gone from the house when he really wasn't. Then in a manner that was almost gentle, he covered her with a blanket when she told him she was cold. He asked an elderly woman what the medications were on top of her bureau while he was raping her and helped himself to her painkillers before he left. He beat one woman mercilessly when she fought back and she was hospitalized for several days. He told two of his victims how he enjoyed watching them in their gardens. He obviously stalked them, learned their habits and knew how to burglar a home, how to find the weak spots. He went after single women, women who didn't have dogs to alert them.

I trained and scheduled hotline advocates and we all took turns with the cell phone, the sexual assault hotline. We were familiar with the typologies of rapists and knew that most rapes were acquaintance or date rape; a small percentage of those being strangers. Of the calls we received, this was a proven statistic. If called to a hospital, the forte of the rape advocate was to assist the victim with understanding the rape kit process, get them clothing if they had to give theirs up for evidence, explain the court process if an arrest was made, give them information about crime victim's compensation, or simply allow the survivor to make whatever choice they needed to in order to heal. This often gave survivors back some of the dignity and power that had been taken from them. We assured them it wasn't their fault and they didn't ask for it. Advocates met often to debrief the horror stories we heard and to staff about complicated cases. We didn't have Hollywood style lunatics hiding out in the bushes or in the home of an unsuspecting victim. Not till now.

I assured almost every survivor I talked with that they'd acted in the way that was best for them. We were taught to be empathetic and use active listening skills. Empathy means an intellectual identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another person. So essentially, we experienced and witnessed in a secondary way the despicable deeds perpetrated upon those we listened to.

I began to hate this serial rapist I didn't know. I wanted him caught and I wanted him to suffer for as long as it took his victims to heal, if they ever could. I wanted someone to do to him what he'd perpetrated on others. It's ironic to think that way because often times they are acting out the violence that was perpetrated upon them.

I got to know the perpetrator, the stranger/serial rapist as the nameless and faceless monster of the victims.....

In May of 2005, there was a severe cut back on the grant that funded the Domestic and Sexual Violence Organization I worked with. A new director came in and positions were eliminated. I was out of work. I had a brief respite with the summer off and for the first time in years, I gave more thought to yard work and writing poetry than domestic and sexual violence.

In late September of 2005, I applied with a social service and homeless organization and was hired. I started as their volunteer coordinator and community outreach. A little later, I helped with their newsletter and when a young man who ran the youth program gave up hours, I took those hours and eventually became the full time youth program coordinator. My office is in the transitional housing center where the families reside and I get to know them on a more personal level. The organization I work for also has other housing, emergency shelters, and transitional housing for single adults without children.

It was in early May of 2006 when Paul Hawkins moved into one of the singles units. However, in early June he moved to our family housing when his daughter came to live with him. Paul's case manager, one of my co-workers, introduced me to him and his 11-year-old daughter. He came to my office so that I could explain the youth program and upcoming summer camps for his daughter. Paul was very polite and had beautiful blue eyes. He participated in all the required programs, Life Skills, Parenting classes, and other family events. A garden had been planted and he adopted a couple rows to care for. The staff, myself included, thought Paul was one of the functional tenants, the kind we call "low-maintenance." He was the type we feel will be successful in rebuilding their life in a positive way.

Paul was enthusiastic about his daughter going to one of the summer camps and I helped him in selecting a good one. She had part of the summer already planned with relatives elsewhere but would return in time for the camp in July.

Paul was employed; he settled into the routine here and blended well. Or so we thought.

I work a four-day week and on Friday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, I was at home. I'd rented an articulate ladder to finally finish painting an area above my staircase. While I was on the ladder, my husband turned on the TV to catch the news. I was preoccupied with my balance and the painting when I heard my husband say, "They've caught the serial rapist, there's his picture!" I turned around a little too quickly to look and almost lost my balance in the act. Then I felt myself getting lightheaded when I saw the face and heard the name of the one police had arrested on a tip and DNA evidence. I leaned toward the wall and sucked in my breath. I felt a strange disconnected sensation, surreal as I stared at the face on the TV. When another scene replaced it, I was still absorbing what my mind had just received. I was in shock.

My brain was desperately trying to connect the Paul Hawkins I knew at the transitional housing center to the cruel perpetrator I vicariously knew through the victims. I wondered if any of the survivors had been watching. The rest of the evening I spent sorting through a gamut of emotions.

I experienced anxiety that he'd been so close to me and especially the single women and children at the housing center. Yet, how can any of us really know the stranger sitting next to us, doing business with us, living across the street from us. Unless we're amazing mind readers, we don't have access to view the darkness inside of people like Paul Hawkins. Often times they cloak themselves in ordinariness and normality. Often they are good looking.

I hope and pray that his capture brings some closure to those he wounded. I wonder if Paul Hawkins has a conscience; if he wanted to put an end to his evil, and if he was looking for closure too. I'd always thought if someday they caught him, I'd see him for the first time in the courtroom while assisting one of his victims.

However, I got to know the perpetrator, the cruel monster and serial rapist, as the person, the father, the considerate blue-eyed Paul Hawkins.....

What a bizarre way for me to get closure as well.

On October 10, 2006, Paul Hawkins entered a plea of "not guilty." The Idaho crime lab matched his DNA to four of the victims.

Mr. Hawkins currently sits behind bars at the county detention facility awaiting justice.

I hope the survivors get the justice they desire and deserve!

***End note- I wrote this story before his sentencing. In 2007, Paul Hawkins was sentenced to five consecutive sentences of 20 years for each rape charge. That means Hawkins will serve a total of 100 years before he will be up for parole.***

For safety and prevention tips visit the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network at:

[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

If you have been raped or molested call the National Sexual Assault Hotline

1-800-656-HOPE

(This hotline will divert your call to the rape crisis agency nearest your location.)



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Paul Hawkins

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