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Having my rapist's baby is the best thing I ever did: After being date raped, Miriam was horrified to fall pregnant, but her little girl is proof good can come of evil

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The party was a rare night out. Raised in a devout, Christian family in Reading, Berks, I was more used to going to choir practice than clubs with friends.

But I had just landed a job with a telemarketing company and, when the new director announced he was taking us all out for a drink, I didn't want to seem unfriendly, so I agreed to go along.

I arrived quite late and a guy called Rob*, who I recognised from another group of friends, came over to chat. I was drinking lemonade - I'd wanted to remain clear-headed with my work colleagues - but when he handed me a glass of wine I accepted.



Ordeal: Miriam considered an abortion when she fell pregnant after being raped but she has no regrets about having her daughter, now aged seven

I was only 19 and desperate not to appear rude. Still, I took only a couple of sips and then, when he wasn't looking, left the glass on the bar. The next few minutes are a blur.

I vaguely remember feeling woozy and falling to the floor, and I recall a friend helping me outside and then going to find us a taxi. Then I have a hazy memory of Rob pushing me against a wall. But that's all I can recall.

I know I wasn't drunk, but I have no memory of how I got home or what happened after 11pm.

The next thing I remember is waking up the next morning at my friend Laurel's house.

'What happened last night?' he asked. 'I got a call from a taxi driver, who said you'd been left by the road with no money.'

Thankfully, the taxi driver had seen the state I was in and gone through my phone, dialling the most recently called numbers to try

to find someone who would help me.

Laurel had answered, directed the taxi to his house and paid the driver. He told me I'd been crying and unintelligible when I arrived, so he'd assumed I was drunk. He put me to bed on the sofa to sleep it off.

My mind was in a turmoil. I couldn't tell Laurel what had happened because I didn't know myself and that was terrifying.

I kept getting flashbacks of being on the ground outside the club and someone being on top of me

My head was pounding as if I had a hangover and I kept getting flashbacks of being on the ground outside the club and someone being on top of me.

But I didn't have any bruises or ripped clothes and, apart from feeling sick, there was nothing physically wrong with me.

The thought that something sexual might have happened did flash through my mind, but I quickly dismissed it. I felt sure that I'd have known if I'd had sex.

Not being able to remember what had happened was the worst part of the ordeal - it was like a black hole in my brain.

I've drunk alcohol in the past and knew it could make you forget, but this was a complete blackout. As I hadn't been drinking, I just could not work it out.



Good can come of evil: Miriam has developed a close bond with her daughter and will one day tell her how she was conceived

I thought about going to the police, but what would I say? They'd think I was an idiot - after all, I had no idea what had happened. As the feelings of nausea and tiredness wore off over the weekend, I decided to put the whole thing out of my mind.

But at work on Monday, I overheard someone gossiping that I'd slept with Rob at the party.

Apparently, his girlfriend had seen him pushing me against the wall outside as she stormed off in a taxi.

Angry and confused, I emailed him and demanded to know what had happened. He admitted he'd tried to kiss me, but reassured me that I'd rejected his advances and nothing had happened.

I wasn't sure if I trusted him, but I had nothing else to go on. Wanting to forget about the whole night, I tried to get on with my life.

I was relieved when, a few weeks later, I was made redundant. It would be a chance to start again.

A few weeks later, I started dating my friend Laurel and life seemed really good. So good, in fact, that I ignored the fact I was feeling dizzy and tired all the time.

But then one day I fainted in the supermarket. Coming round on the floor, surrounded by people, I had no idea what was wrong. Frightened, I went straight to my doctor.

He asked if there was any possibility that I could be pregnant, but Laurel and I hadn't slept together, so I said 'No'.

He took some blood to send off for tests. On the way home, I visited a friend, who was six months pregnant. Describing my symptoms to her, she said it sounded as if I could be pregnant and insisted I take a test.

Wanting to prove her wrong, I did a test straight away in her bathroom. It's hard to describe the shock I felt when I saw it was positive.

I sat staring at the blue line for ages, shaking my head and saying: 'No, no, this can't be true.'

Finally, I managed to get myself together and went straight to a local family planning clinic.

They confirmed I was 16 weeks pregnant, telling me that the baby had been conceived in April. Something clicked. Rob's face appeared in my mind and I instinctively knew he'd raped me.

I was so angry and confused: how could this be happening to me? I never thought I'd end up a young, unmarried mother

It sounds like a cliché, but my body went numb. It was as if I was floating - looking at my life from outside and wondering what was going on. I told Laurel later that night.

I knew he wouldn't be angry with me because he's such a lovely guy, but he was furious with Rob.

He remembered the night it had happened and how out of control I'd been. He encouraged me to go to the police.

I was furious, too, so I agreed, but first I wanted to confront Rob. I called him and told him about the baby. He went quiet.

Then he said: 'Look, I apologise for what I did to you that night - but I didn't think it would come to this.'

He was at work, so couldn't talk much, but I was shaking with fury. He said he'd call me back later, but didn't. When I called him again, he'd changed his tone.

'What's this got to do with me? How do I know this baby is even mine?' he asked. 'You've got to get rid of it.'

Until then, I'd been too scared to tell my parents. I knew they'd be disappointed about me having a baby outside marriage. But, distraught at Rob's reaction, I went straight to their house and told them everything.

They were incredibly upset, but after the initial shock, they were supportive.

Dad insisted I go to the police. At the station, the female officer took down my story and asked if I thought I'd been drugged. When

she described the effects of date rape drugs, it fell into place.

I'd had only a sip of wine and was unable to remember anything. I was convinced that's what had happened, so they started an investigation. I was so angry and confused: how could this be happening to me?

I never thought I'd end up a young, unmarried mother, but here I was doing exactly that.

At a glance



Coming from such a Christian family, I've never believed in abortion, but suddenly finding myself pregnant with a rapist's baby, I looked at it differently.

I just couldn't face the thought of the baby being born and looking like Rob - it would be a constant reminder of what had happened. I didn't have long to decide what to do - 24 weeks is the latest you can have an abortion.

Laurel was incredibly supportive and put no pressure on me to have a termination, but despite everyone's assurances I just couldn't stop feeling that I had an alien growing inside me.

After seeking counselling, I decided to go ahead with the termination. I thought: 'If I don't have this baby inside me, all my problems will be over and I can move on with my life.'

I arrived at the clinic a week later, still struggling with my decision because it went against everything I'd been brought up to believe in. I told myself that what had happened to me wasn't my fault.

As I walked down the corridor in a hospital gown to the operating theatre, I asked myself over and over: 'Am I doing the right thing?'

Suddenly, I was overcome by a rush of love for the child inside me. I didn't understand why, but in that moment what had felt like an alien suddenly felt like a child.

I realised I couldn't go through with the termination. I collapsed in tears and a nurse took me into a waiting room and said I should take a few minutes to make my final decision.

My baby looked so like Rob, I didn't want anything to do with her at first

They told me there was a policeman waiting to take away the foetus for DNA analysis as part of the rape case, but I told them to send him away. I told the nurse: 'I can't do this.'

Then, smoothing my hand over my small bump, I said: 'It's you and me now, kid.'

The months that followed were tough. People who knew Rob came up to me in the street and accused me of inventing the rape.

A friend of his even threatened to kick the baby out of my stomach. I was too scared to go out and spent hours trying to piece together what had happened that night, desperately trying to convince myself I wasn't going mad.

In December 2001, the police told me they couldn't bring charges against Rob because he had claimed I'd consented to sex. It was my word against his.

I had hoped he would be convicted, so I would have some sort of closure and be able to move on.

Discovering that he was going to get away with what had happened was hard to take. There were weeks when I simply didn't stop crying.

By the eighth month of the pregnancy, I realised I was going to have to get to grips with what had happened or be destroyed by it. With Laurel and my family supporting me, I slowly started to feel philosophical about it.

My baby was due in a month - I had to focus on a new life. On January 4, 2002, Kayleigh* was born.

When they handed her to me, I was gripped by panic. I knew it had been my choice to have her, but suddenly I wished I'd chosen differently.

She looked so like Rob I didn't want anything to do with her. I looked after her well enough, but I won't pretend I was affectionate or loving.

I could barely bring myself to hold her. Friends started commenting that she was always in her crib.

When she's old enough, I will tell Kayleigh about how she was conceived. But I'll also tell her about the moment I decided to keep her

Life fell into a routine - raising a baby fills your day - but looking back I can see I hadn't dealt properly with the rape and my baby was a constant reminder of it.

When she was three months old, Laurel and I broke up. In a gallant effort to protect me, he'd told people Kayleigh was his, but I couldn't cope with the strain.

It was as if I was ruining his life, too. With great regret, I ended the relationship - it seemed the only fair thing to do.

Moving out with Kayleigh was the making of us. Alone as mother and daughter, I slowly began to bond with her. After all, none of this was her fault. I wanted her to have a good life and so started working part-time for catering companies or in telesales to fit in with childcare.

But as the months passed, I felt I was worth more. Having Kayleigh made me realise I could do anything, that it was up to me to make what had happened a positive thing in my life.

So, a year after she was born, I applied to join the police force. I wanted a better life for Kayleigh, but I also wanted to reach out to anyone else who had been through what I had.

I was overjoyed to be accepted and completed my training in 2003. I felt invincible - that nothing could hold Kayleigh and me back.

Who knew?

40 per cent of rape victims tell no one about it and only 15 per cent of serious sexual offences are reported, according to www.rapecrisis.org.uk

I'm still bubbly and outgoing, but what happened has changed me. I'm single and cautious about meeting new people. I never accept drinks from strangers. When she's old enough, I will tell Kayleigh about how she was conceived.

I don't believe in keeping secrets and I want her to know that there are people out there who will lie to you and try to mistreat you.

But I'll also tell her about the moment I decided to keep her, and how I felt all this love for her, love that is even stronger now.

Watching her grow up, I feel lucky to have her in my life: I love her with all my heart. I also feel that by speaking out about what happened to me I will empower other women.

For a long time I felt as if it was my fault. But now I realise I'm not to blame. Other women who have been raped have come up to me to tell me about their experiences and are relieved that they can talk to someone who really understands what they have been through.

My life is proof that something good can come from something so terrible. And I don't regret my last minute change of heart one bit.

* Some names have been changed. Read Miriam's life story in her book, *The Naked Truth*, from her website www.miriamvirgo.info

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