

After Dark.

My name is Rachel Deschenes- Pegahmagabow. I am a young Aboriginal woman, and I have a fear of being out after dark because I am an Aboriginal woman.

There were two separate times that have created my own personal fear of being out late and being a young aboriginal woman out after dark.

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It was around 8p.m., and I was just going back inside the work from filling up a customer's car up with gas, and the man who owned the car was following me into the store. As I was just about to step up into the entryway is when he took his moment of opportunity and shoved me into the corner.

"You're pretty." He said with a smile
"Sir-."

He put his hand over my mouth, and stared at me with a look in his eyes that I will never forget. I stared back at his piercing blue eyes, and took in his features; the wrinkles on his face, the white face scruff, and the smell of alcohol and cologne mixed terribly.

"You're so beautiful, and your eyes are so pretty. I can look past you being native, I don't like that, but I love your eyes."

"mmpf!" I bit his pinky finger.
"Nice try, doll face." He said with a smirk as he kissed my cheek.

It was at the moment when my mother came out of the store and yelled at the man to get off me. I shoved passed him and went straight into the bathroom. I felt sick, I felt disgusting, and I felt violated. I slid down to the floor and let the tears roll down my cheeks. Why? Why did he do that? I'm not that pretty. I'm not pretty at all. If I wasn't native maybe this wouldn't have happened, maybe if I was a boy this wouldn't have happened. I hate my body. There was a knock at the door and I froze in fear until I heard my mother's voice telling me to come out.

"I called the cops, there at the bridge. They'll catch them." She said with a voice of certainty.

Hours later I remember being devastated that they had never found that man. They had never found that man who made me start to dislike my body, my heritage, and my eyes. It was after that day that I couldn't accept a compliment on my eyes or any of my features without tears starting to form. It was that night that I felt the man had taken something away from me and got away. But I still can't help but think, what if my mother hadn't come out?

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The second time something happened was quite a few years later, but it still stands out in my mind.

“Hey! Hey you! Nish! Goin’ back out to the island? It’s awfully late out, why don’t I help you get home?” A man approached loudly.
“No, thank you. I have a ride.” I replied politely.
“No, nish, I insist!”
“It’s fine.”
“You shouldn’t be out this late, something might happen to your pretty face.”

I told myself to walk away from this man who has forced himself upon me, just walk backwards and into the convince store.

“Hey! Where are you going!” He demanded as he firmly grabbed my arms.
“Let go!” I yelled.
“Why? I ‘m just trying to help.”
“I don’t need your help, I can get home just fine!”
“Come with me,” he insisted, “my car is right here.”

I pulled my arms out of his hold and ran inside the store.

“Please, help.” I managed to get out, “that man out there, he won’t leave me alone.”
“Do you know him?” The woman behind the counter asked.
“No, and I’m waiting for a taxi. If you see it, can you tell me?”
“Of course, Sweetheart. Just wait behind here. I won’t let him inside.”

I sighed a breath of relief as I sat down behind the counter with the woman.

“Are you okay?” She asked with a look of concern, “do you want to call the cops?”
I shook my head, “I just want to go home.”

About ten minutes had past, and the man had never come in, but the woman had told me that he had never left, but instead was sitting in his car.

“Your cab’s here. Come, I’ll walk you out, and make sure he doesn’t follow you home.”
“Thank you, thank you so much.”

She walked me out to my taxi, and I asked the driver if the car started following us if we could re-route. The driver was more than okay with that, but as we started to drive towards my home, the guy never followed.

Once I got home, and calmed down I once again realized how unfair it is that people will take advantage of others, especially women once the darkness overcomes the skies. This man tried to get me into his car, and who knows what would've happened. I thought back to the time when the old man who got away, and all I could think was that I let this guy get away too. I let this one get away to find a new victim. I got away safe, but will the next person?

In today's society being out after dark is not safe for women, and we're repetitively told that. Being an Aboriginal woman, I feel that being out after dark are that much more riskier because who really cares about us? So many of us have gone missing, and it gets swept under the rug because it's not a "big" issue, but if a dog rescues a cat it's all over the news. When will it be safe for us Aboriginal women to walk home? When can we walk without the fear of being harassed or worse? When can we walk with our head held high instead of our head down? When?