

the subject. Some moments later, when he put his hand on my leg, I let myself be drawn into sex because I could not face the idea that if I said no, things might get ugly. I don't think he had any idea of how unwilling I was—the cultural unfamiliarity cut both ways—and I suppose he may have thought that white girls just kind of lie there and don't do or say much. My bad time was made worse by his extreme gentleness; he was obviously trying very hard to turn me on, which, for reasons I didn't understand, broke my heart. Even as inexperienced as I was, I could see that he wanted a sweet time.

For some time after, I described this event as “the time I was raped.” I knew when I said it that the description wasn't accurate, that I had not said no, and that I had not been physically forced. Yet it *felt* accurate to me. In spite of my ambiguous, even empathic feelings for my unchosen partner, unwanted sex on acid is a nightmare, and I did feel violated by the experience. At times I even *elaborately* lied about what had happened, grossly exaggerating the threatening words, adding violence—not out of shame or guilt, but because the pumped-up version was more congruent with my feelings of violation than the confusing facts. Every now and then, in the middle of telling an exaggerated version of the story, I would remember the actual man and internally pause, uncertain why I was saying these things or why they felt true—and then I would continue with the story. I am ashamed to admit this, because it is embarrassing and because it conforms to the worst stereotypes of white women. I am also afraid the admission could be taken as evidence that women lie “to get revenge.” My lies were told far from the event (I'd left Detroit), and not for revenge, but in service of what I felt to be the metaphorical truth—although what that truth was is not at all clear to me, then or even now.

THE TROUBLE WITH FOLLOWING THE RULES

ON “DATE RAPE,” “VICTIM CULTURE,” AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

In the early 1970s, I had an experience that could be described as “date rape,” even if it didn't happen when I was on a date. I was sixteen and staying in the apartment of a slightly older girl I'd just met in a seedy community center in Detroit, where I was just passing through. I'd been in her apartment for a few days when an older guy (he was probably in his mid-twenties) came over and asked us if we wanted to drop some acid. In those years, doing acid with strangers was consistent with my idea of a possible good time, so I shared a tab with them. When I started peaking, my hostess decided she had to go see her boyfriend, and there I was, alone with this guy, who, suddenly, was in my face.

He seemed to be coming on to me, but I wasn't sure. LSD is a potent drug, and on it, my perception was just short of hallucinatory. On top of that, he was black and urban-poor, which meant that I, being very inexperienced and suburban-white, did not know how to read him the way I might have read another white kid from my own milieu. I tried to distract him with conversation, but it was hard, considering that I was having trouble with logical sentences, let alone repartee. During one long silence, I asked him what he was thinking. Avoiding my eyes, he replied, “That if I wasn't such a nice guy, you could really be getting screwed.” This sounded to me like a threat, albeit a low-key one. But instead of asking him to explain himself or leave, I changed