

nothing legally I could do against him and that I was not trying to ruin him professionally. He said I should tell him, "The only thing I can do is forgive you, but you would need to ask for forgiveness." I know asking for forgiveness and being forgiven can be powerful for the healing process, but I don't recall bringing the subject of forgiveness up at our meeting and know for certain the Wrestler didn't ask for forgiveness. All he did was sit there with his head down making notes in his BlackBerry. He never made eye contact. He just sat there like a guilty, pathetic fool.

The conference table was large and the Wrestler was sitting directly opposite me, several feet away. Debby and her boss sat at the end of the table separating the two of us. Debby began the meeting by thanking us for coming and then turned to me to begin. I too thanked the Wrestler for coming and told him that I was not out to destroy him but out to recover from what he did to me and also help others to recover. I took a deep breath and, in my authoritative voice, began reading the letter.

*April 2006*

*It has been almost twenty years since you savagely raped me and I wonder if you ever think about it. I still do. Do you ever wake up in cold sweats screaming for help? I do. Do you ever have nightmares of someone chasing you and holding you against your will? I do. Do you ever think about what it's like to be held down and choked? I do. Do you know what it's like to gasp for air as you feel the oxygen leave your brain? I do. Do you know what it feels like to have a man twice your age and size beat you up? I do. Do you know what it's like to have your clothes torn off of you? I do. Do you know what it's like to be forced into sexual acts against your will? I do. Do you know what it's like to have someone bite you with all his might, breaking your skin open? I do. Do you know*

*what it's like to have a penis forced into your rectum, ripping it open and leaving you to bleed?*

*I do.*

*Do you know what it's like to hate yourself so much because you have been raped and because you lacked the confidence and strength to defend yourself? I do. Do you know what it's like to have your young adult life stolen from you? I do. Do you remember the night you raped me? I do. It was the night you took my dignity, self-confidence, and self-worth away. It was the night you almost broke my spirit.*

*I've often wondered if you ever felt guilty about your attack on me, but I was too afraid to confront you. I remember your threats the day after you raped me and your successful attempts to make me feel guilty. If I recall correctly, you told me that I deserved it and that I was a whore. At the time I didn't understand why you would call me a whore because my sexual experiences were extremely limited, at least the ones I was conscious of. It wasn't until the last few years in therapy that I came to fully realize how you and your friends set me up. This letter only addresses you, the rapist, and your evil and horrific sexual assault on me.*

*If you can't remember exactly what you did to me, I will remind you. I met you shortly after my father's death and my 22nd birthday at a restaurant where I was waiting tables. You took a special interest in me, and over the course of time I shared with you my sadness and immense pain of losing my father. You told me that you played sports for my father back in the early '60s and how much you admired him. You pretended to be a friend of my father and I began to trust you. In some ways you filled a void for me and I confided in you about my lack of self-confidence and struggles in life. As our friendship developed I began to trust you. If you recall, my father had been very sick for several years and I was under a tremendous amount of stress in caring for him. You*

told me that you could help launch a modeling career for me and also offered to take me hunting, fishing and to sports games. You said you missed out on having a son and these were things of interest to you. These were all things that were very important to me because my father's illness had prevented me from doing them along with him.

On one occasion I told you I needed to buy a car and you offered to help me select a used one. When we went to look for the car you told me that you would buy me a car if I were willing to be involved with you romantically. I told you that was not what I was looking for, and our friendship ended for a while. You then stopped in to the restaurant with your wife and kids and acted as if had I misunderstood you. Once again I began to trust in you and found comfort in your emotional strength and wisdom.

Over that year I continued to grieve the death of my father and I confided in you that I had been molested as a child and was confused about my sexual orientation. You shared with me that you struggled with your own sexual orientation issues. One night you called to ask if I would like to join you for a drink. I agreed to join you, and while at the restaurant I complained to you that I had to sleep on the sofa because my grandparents were in town. You told me that you could get me a comp room at the Westin Hotel. I accepted your offer to take the room and said that I was willing to talk more about our lives. When we arrived at the Westin Hotel, it was sold out and you told me not to worry because you also had connections at the hotel up the street. When we arrived at the hotel, I became very nervous and uncomfortable about the situation and did not want to enter the hotel room with you. After several minutes of hesitation, I entered the hotel room. You became very quiet and looked at me demonically.

Realizing I had made a horrible mistake, I told you that I wanted to leave. As I began to turn around, you hit me on the right side of the head and used your left arm to put me in a head-

lock. You put a chokehold on my neck and began to unbutton my shirt and pants. You took your foot, pulled down my jeans from behind, and forced me on to the bed. We struggled for a while and I fought for my life but eventually you succeeded in ripping my clothes off. You forced me on my back while hitting me several times across the face. I continued to scream and you began to choke me. You eventually turned me over and piled pillows on top of me, preventing my cry for help from being heard. You held my hands above my head and wrapped the sheets around my head and then began to penetrate me. The pain was so extreme I felt like someone had taken a knife and was stabbing me in the rectum. As I continued to scream, you continued to bite, hit, and choke me. Eventually I stopped moving and you pulled the pillows and blankets from my head to see if I was breathing. At that time I hit you in the face with my head, broke away from your hold, and made it to the bathroom. I locked the door and laid on the bathroom floor bleeding. You knocked on the bathroom door, at which time your personality changed once again, and you began to apologize for your behavior. I screamed at you and you left the hotel.

The following day you called me and asked if I was OK and wanted to know why I over-reacted. I told you that you had hurt me and that I had hundreds of bruises and bite marks all over my body. You told me that I was now your sex slave and the marks should serve as a reminder to me. I told you that I was going to tell, and you told me that people who tell disappear. You told me that no one would believe me because you were a pillar of the community and nobody would expect the obvious. You said you would destroy me if I ever told. Little did I know that I was destroying myself by remaining quiet.

Your attack on me left me wounded but not destroyed. It impacted my ability to trust others socially and has prevented me from sustaining long-term romantic relationships. It slowly

*chewed away at my self-image and prevented me from reaching my fullest potential academically and professionally. There have been times when the impact your assault has had on me emotionally and physically has been unbearable and brought me to my knees spiritually.*

*Perhaps this was the greatest lesson I learned from my experience with you. If we surrender to a higher power when we are in our greatest pain, we will be greeted with a caring soul who offers a place of healing and recovery. I have been blessed with a supportive family and friends who carried the burden of my pain when it was too difficult to carry myself. They offered me the presence of love, which created an opportunity for me to heal. For that I'm forever grateful and will repay them by advocating for others.*

*You are a very sick, demonic man and need to get help for your illness. I have become empowered despite your evil attempt to destroy me and with the grace of God have found the strength to move on with my life, and have transformed the pain, hurt, and anguish into a healing ministry that will help others who have been wounded. What I want of you, now twenty years later, is for you to spend the rest of your life coming to terms with all the people you have exploited physically, financially, emotionally, and sexually. Please realize and accept responsibility for the fact that your self-centered actions have robbed others of their happiness and inner peace—and for some, their lives.*

*Survivor—Grant Watkins*

After I finished reading my letter, the room was silent. Then Debby said something like, "This concludes today's meeting and I want to thank both of you for coming." Again, a short moment of silence filled the room and then the Wrestler said, "I need a few minutes" as he typed on his BlackBerry.

After he said that, I stood up and spewed out all the anger and

rage I had felt for all those years directly toward him. I yelled, "You are not in control of this meeting. I am." The Wrestler started to stand up and I could see his hands were shaking. He quickly sat back down. I let him know that he had robbed me of many years of my life and that if he ever tried hurting me, my family, or my friends, I would expose him for the rapist he was. I know I also threw in a few cuss words but I don't recall what they were. I then concluded the meeting.

After the meeting I waited in one of the counselors' offices until Debby and her boss escorted the Wrestler out of the building. At first the Wrestler drove away but then came back and waited outside for me. Debby's boss went outside and motioned him to move on. Debby came into the office and congratulated me on a job well done. She had nothing but praise for me and I felt young and free again. I asked Debby what the Wrestler said when I left the room. She reported that the rapist said I had him confused with someone else. There are a lot of things in life I've been confused about, but being raped by the Wrestler is not one of them.

I left the center that day feeling good about my progress and was grateful that I had the opportunity to express myself to the Wrestler. Debby's boss told me about a shortcut out of the building that I could take just in case the Wrestler was still waiting for me. I drove around town for a while and then met up with Joey's parents, Joe and Juanita, for dinner. Since I had been on the phone most of the day, my battery was low and I was unable to retrieve the calls from Debby checking to make sure I was still OK later that afternoon. Apparently everyone back at the center was quite concerned about my well-being. Finally when my phone was charged, I called Debby and let her know that I was OK.

After a wonderful dinner, I checked in at the El Paso Radisson Suite Hotel under my assumed name of Mr. William Le Dale and had one of the most peaceful nights of sleep I've ever had.