

November 2017.

It was probably the second most hideous thing I have ever laid eyes on, next to that fuzzy baby pink Jonas Brothers sweater that my mom slapped on me in the 4th grade. *How could they make anyone sit in something so uncomfortable?* The flimsy navy blue thing didn't even have arm rests. And to make it worse, before I was forced to sit down, I noticed the cushion had a permanent butt print formed from all of the other people who sat there before me in front of the panel.

"Miss?"

They must have asked me something because all seven of them looked like they were waiting for something to happen. Who knows? I wasn't paying attention.

"Oh. Oops. Yes?" I answered startling.

"Please state your name and case number," Mr. Leonard Crude said. Well at least that's what was engraved on his name plate placed in front of him. "...and speak clear and loud enough so the court reporter can hear you."

*Why are they even called court reporters? This isn't even a court case.*

"Umm. Jessa. Jessa Gee, and case #34574B."

I felt like a peasant, sitting below them like little Oliver Twist begging for more porridge. They sat at a long white marble table seated in tall white leather swivel chairs. The panel was made up of six cis men, all who looked to be in their 60's, and one stuck up white woman who was also probably in her late 60's but attempted to look younger with her obvious botox in her lips and forehead. It wasn't working for her, because all she looked was angry. Even from the moment I walked in here I didn't like her. You could tell she just despised every little creature that crawled

the earth. And plus her nose was pushed up like a pig's. They all dressed in matching black long sleeve turtle necks and black slacks, her a pencil skirt and heels. It looked like they were posing for a Vogue issue, especially with the bright pure white wall behind them.

"Okay let us begin," Mr. Leonard Crude projected while looking down at the rest of the panel. "Subject Jessa. Case #34574B. Title: Sexual Assault. Then in sync they all typed it in on their high tech digital pads. "I see we didn't have you in the system here at TTC (Trauma Treatment Center) before today, so let me tell you what's going to happen. You're going to tell us your testimony. We need every detail of what happened in the situation so we can properly assess treatment options. We need to know all persons involved, place, time; don't leave anything out. After you speak we will immediately submit our decision, and you will be on your way. Remember to speak clearly and loudly. Any questions? Okay good. The floor is yours." He then cockily sat back comfortably in his chair and crossed his arms, as if he was ready to be entertained by my sexual assault testimony.

You see, they do this thing where if you had something scary or traumatic happen, done to you, or that you witnessed you get sent to TTC (Trauma Treatment Center). You're sat in front of a panel, much similar to the one I'm sitting with now, and you have to tell them every single detail you can remember about the event. They then assess if you should have treatment or not. The treatment is the same for everyone. The treatment basically wipes the traumatic event from memory. After the treatment, people know just a general overview of what happened, but there are no details left in their memory. It's all erased. My friend Estaban told me what happened to him when he was treated the very same day he witnessed a horrific car accident. The

driver of the car died at the scene. He said they hooked him up to all these wires and gave him this shot to make him go to sleep for a bit. When he woke up the specialists gave him a summary or what just happened. She told him that he just had treatment done for a car accident he had witnessed earlier that day. They gave him a packet that describe a little bit more into detail about the treatment itself and how it works, along with a prescription he had to pick up for his headaches that he would experience for the next couple of days. Then he was just sent on his way. All he knew was that he saw a really bad accident but had no memory of it whatsoever. I wonder if you would still know who or would recognize the faces of the people who were involved in the traumatic event?

*Okay Jessa. You can do this! Just take deep breaths and take your time.*

*What's going to happen after I tell them? My heart rate rises. No. Jessa. Focus. You're okay. You don't have to worry about that right now. All you need to do is tell them what happened and everything will be okay. You can do this.* I stare down at my brand new crisp black and white Chuck Taylors. It already had a scuff mark over my big right toe. *I wonder how I managed to do that. Oh gosh they're so intimidating.* It's like talking to my grandparent's super religious church friends. *I don't think I can dare to look them in their eyes.*

One more really deep breath and I had it.

"So on the weekend of the ninth of November, I went out for my birthday with a couple of my really good friends. So about three weeks ago now. Before we arrived at the club, we all pregamed so that we could get a little buzzed and have a good time."

"Why didn't you drink inside the club? Are you of age?" One panel member interrupted. I think it was Mr. Owen Bernabeu who sat at the far left.

"No sir. I am not," I responded in a subtle but polite way. Then I heard a couple of them go, "mhmm" under their breaths. "Once we got inside, we looked for my other friends that I told to meet us there. We went up to the third floor and found them. Among that group was my assaulter."

"And his name." I heard a rushed voice say.

*Really? They're really going to make me say his name? They already know who it is. What he looks like. Where he lives.* They made me give them all of this information when it was reported and again when I checked in at the front desk before I came in to see the panel.

"His name is كزار" I said after a very long pause, trying not to breakdown. "Okay, anyways. I danced with all of my friends for a while, and he, كزار, gave me the rest of his drink. He is of age by the way. After that I started to feel the alcohol."

"Were you drunk?" A deep voice asked.

*Are they really going to keep asking me questions or can they save them for after I'm done?* "Yes I was. But I was fully stable, could walk straight and was fully aware of what was going on. I was just trying to have a good time." I finally decided to look up, in respect as I answered their questions. But I wish I hadn't. All I could see was judgment and disapproval on their faces. This was not going well.

*Okay Jessa. You got this.* "We all stayed and danced for another thirty minutes or so, and I specifically was dancing with and on him. Then he wanted to leave. He told me that he didn't want to be there anymore and that we can both go chill outside and wait for the rest of my friends

to come out later. I didn't want to go because it was my birthday and I wanted to stay to celebrate. After a little bit he did convince me to leave with him. I told my friends that we were going to meet them outside. At this point I was still a little drunk, but I was fine. We went to his car and just chilled in the backseat. I thought that's all what we were going to do. We started to mess around and there was a lot of touching between both parties. I quickly sobered up once I didn't like that he was telling me to do certain things.

"But you said you were still drunk at this time. So you did or didn't know what you were doing right?" the snooty Mrs. Susan Pratt asked, "Did you like the feeling of what he was doing to you?"

*Okay. Come on now. Stop interrupting me.* "Yes, I was fully aware of what was going on, I wasn't fall on the ground loud mouth drunk if that's what you were asking." I said as I tried to hold back my sass. "He started to become a lot more rough with me, and started telling me instead of asking me to do things. I was telling him that I didn't want to and I was trying to leave because I was getting texts and calls from my friends. Yeah I liked it, but only for a little bit, up until he wasn't listening to me, taking my phone away from me, pushing me down, and hurting me. It started to get really scary. He started to forcing me to do things to him, and forcing himself onto me."

"Why didn't you scream? Did he actually do anything to you?" Mrs. Susan Pratt raged.

*What the fuck kind of question is that? DiD hE aCTuaLly dO AnythInG To yOU? Isn't that why we're here?* "I kept telling him no and that I had to go. I shouldn't have scream for him to stop."

*I've had it. This panel is really starting to piss me off. I shouldn't have to explain why I did or didn't do something. Just listen to my freakin testimony.* "He tried to take my clothes off, flipping

me over, choking me. Is that him actually doing something to me now?" I started to raise my voice. "I have proof of the marks he gave me and the phone calls and texts he wouldn't let me send and receive."

"Ummm," Mr. Leonard Crude said as he raised his hand like exactly like Simon Cowell as he glanced over his notes on his mini tablet device.

*What the hell does that mean? You don't like when someone gets a little heated because of the dumbass questions you wanna ask, huh boss man?*

"I think we just have a couple more questions. First, who was he to you before this night?"

I responded, "Well I know him from high school. We were really close friends for about six years, maybe one of my best friends for a couple of those years. We had some chemistry and a lot of love for each other; we almost dated at one point, but we both knew it wouldn't work out. We messed around a couple of times, but it never went far." *Why does it matter who he was to me before that night?*

"Ookkaaayy... Ummm, what did you wear that night?" Mr. Crude asked with a perverted smile creeping up the side of his face.

*I don't know what that has to do with anything.* "I was wearing black leggings, a flowy low-cut top that had a pink, white, and yellow floral print that revealed my shoulders, with knee high boots."

"And lastly, he wanted to have sex with you, but you didn't let him, correct?" They didn't push me into answering it and quickly moved on, because my neck snapped and I must have had the nastiest, most baffled look on my face. *I can't believe they really just asked me that.*

At once, they all adjusted in their swivel chairs, straightened out their tablets, and finished up the last of their notes, as Mr. Crude wrapped everything up. "Well we want to thank you for taking the time to come down and share your testimony with the panel today." *Ha. Yeah right*, I thought as I rolled my eyes so hard you could probably hear them. "We will now assess and submit our decisions for whether or not you should be treated here at TTC. Once all member of the panel has submitted their vote, you will see the average vote pop up on the wall behind us, and we will go on from there. Now if the vote comes down to treatment, you will be escorted to one of our treatment rooms by one of our guards," pointing to a door to the left of me where a big bald latino man who looked like he could be Secret Service stood in a very fancy black suit and wore dark shades. "And if you do not receive treatment," Mr. Crude continued, "Mr. Dominic Pierce will escort you out the doors you came in and you will pick up an information packet from our front desk."

I calmly sat back but was starting to really panic on the inside. I've always hoped that I would never had to have come to TTC, but things happen and you can't always control if something traumatic goes down. It's been three weeks since that night, and it was long enough. I totally forgot that TTC was even an option, until my best friend Ivy reminded me about it. At the time, I didn't think my situation was all that traumatic, mainly because I was in so much shock and hadn't fully processed all that went down yet. I sent in the report as all the memories would still be fresh. Once I sent in my report, there's no going back. These past three weeks have been hell. Everyday I have waited to be summoned to TTC. It's kind of like jury duty. After you send in your report, you wait to be summoned, then on that day you arrive at TTC and wait to see if they can fit you in with a panel. Now if they can't see you that day you have to wait for

another summons for another day. But like with Estaban, he didn't have to send in a report because one was made by officers on site. In reports made by law enforcement or authority, you have no choice in if you think the event was traumatic or not. It's a terrible system; making victims of traumatic events have to relive it again and again in the heads as they wait to see if they can be treated or not. *I'm so grateful they got me in so soon, it would have been sooner but they've been so booked lately. I know it has only been three weeks, but I can't live like this anymore. Replaying what happened to me over and over again in my head. It's too much. All I want is to hurry up and do the treatment, forget it all and move on with my life.*

Within seconds all members of the panel submitted their answers. As each one did, there was a ping sound that went off from their tablets. Felt like I was on an episode of 'World of Dance' starring Jennifer Lopez, with them locking in their final votes based on my testimony. *What do they even judge my testimony off of? They're probably rating the quality of my story, if it was believable enough, or if it should even be classified as traumatic.* But who are they to say? I was the one who submitted the report so I must think the event was traumatic. Then all of a sudden, a message was projected onto the white wall behind the panel. It read in big black lettering:

Case #34574B

Treatment: Unapproved

My heart plummeted to my stomach and all I could feel was the cold sweat on my hands. I couldn't have stared at it long enough. I tried to squint my eyes, I tried to blink really fast just in case my vision was going blurry, but no, the results were the same. Mr. Wanna-Be Secret Service guy appeared to my left and nudged my shoulder for me to stand up from my chair. As I

stood up, I glanced at the panel with tears starting to form in my eyes, to see if they had any reaction to what I might be feeling. None. not one of them could care less. They all were getting up from their chairs, maybe to head out to lunch or something. My testimony was nothing but another case for them; another twenty minutes of work for them. It obviously meant nothing.

I was escorted out the door located in the back of the room. It lead us to the waiting area where I was supposed to pick up my information packet. As I stood in line, I scanned the room at all the tired faces. They all had a story to tell. Some of them seemed perfectly fine, and some looked like they were barely keeping their shit together. I tried to focus on the environment of the room so that I wouldn't breakdown crying. It smelled like a gas station restroom with a hint of citrus and you could tell the air conditioning was on high, because the vents were shaking with cold air. The lady I was standing in line to talk to was placed at the center of a very round counter that wrapped back behind her on both sides. After checking in a little boy who was about four years old and his mother, she called me forward. The gold name tag she wore upon her short sleeve black turtleneck read Kenny. Her body was very slim and in good posture. It finished with a point at the top with her very tight slick back bun. Her look was complete with her perfect dark red lipstick and the bubblegum she smacked on. "Name and case number please?" she asked. "Uh yes. My name is Jessa Gee . Case #34574B." I said with a sniffle.

She reached over to the printer, grabbed a stack of papers, and sealed it in an envelope with my name and case number on it. "TTC will be in contact with you very soon to ask if you have anymore questions on things that were not discussed in the packet or if you need more information than what was provided," Kenny said politely. Without saying anything else, I walked out the large glass doors with packet in hand. I was in such disbelief in the whole

situation that I just stood there outside the doors once they closed. *Did that really just happen?* *What did I saw wrong for them to not believe my pain? I didn't even get an "are you okay?" or "do you need anything or have any questions now?"* Nothing. Probably about five minutes passed, then I eventually snapped out of it and found a large pink sandstone rock to sit on. From there I texted Ivy, to tell her I was ready to be picked up. I had some time until Ivy would be there, and I needed to know. I needed to know why I wasn't approved for treatment. Before I desperately ripped open the manila envelope, I took a couple deep breaths and whipped my face clean of tears. Typed out in a tiny but sophisticated font, it read:

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Jessa Gee

Case #34574B

Upon your visit with us at Trauma Treatment Center, we inform you that you were not approved for treatment. This is an information packet that discusses the reasons why you were not approved (Including notes from your specific panel), places and people you can seek guidance from, and highly suggested and/or required medication and counseling options. The following notes were taken during your testimony by some of the members in your panel. We include direct notes from the panel members so that our patients are getting a clear answer and reason to why they were not treated for their trauma event. Some people have found these notes very helpful so that events similar to theirs wouldn't happen again. Think of them as suggestions of what to do or not to do next time so that you will agree that it's not traumatic. Something to be aware of, is that some reasons for not approving your treatment are due to state laws and regulations. So not all causes are set because of the panel.

Reason for why you were not approved for treatment:

- The event/case was not reported/titled as a rape, therefore not classified as rape, just sexual assault. Sexual assault events are not as “traumatic” as rape events, therefore, it is not mandatory to approve treatment.
- This event was a heterosexual encounter.
  - If the event had been a homosexual encounter treatment would then be considered.
- “Both parties had similar interests in each other”
  - Before the event, کرار and Jessa could be considered friends. Jess, “We had some chemistry and a lot of love for each other; we almost dated at one point,” they also messed around a lot.
- Jessa should not have sexually taunted کرار.
  - “Jessa was wearing very revealing clothing on the night of the event. She was being very flirty with کرار, and before the actual time that Jessa believes she was assaulted they were already messing around and doing unspeakable acts to each other. She was actually okay with all of it happening.
  - “More of the argument should be on why Jessa taunted him.”
  - “Jessa needs to learn what not to do next time so a man doesn’t act on his instincts”
- “You wouldn’t feel this way or believe that you were sexually assaulted if you just did what you were supposed to do.”
  - کرار wanted to have sex with Jess, and Jessa didn’t let him.
  - “She knows better than to sexually taunt a man and then not give him what he wants.”
- Teachings from our ancestors:
  - Women are to be submissive to their husbands, male significant others, and male partners. Women have the responsibility to please Man. If a woman’s

husbands, male significant other, and male partner desires to be pleased or want to please you in any way, she is obligated to do so.

Medication: Highly suggested.

TTC highly suggests that you be put on antidepressants. 75% of our cases who report their own trauma event and do not receive treatment fall into depression within the next few weeks after giving their testimony. A notice will be sent to you in a couple of days that has all of your medication information.

Counseling: Required.

Although you are not going to be receiving treatment from TTC, you are required to attend weekly sessions with a specialist assigned to you. Until the specialists believes you have worked out your trauma you must attend every session. After they have lifted the requirements of going to weekly sessions, it is then your choice of whether you want to continue the sessions with your specialists or not. You have been assigned to our specialist Jenn, who is located on our sister campus across town in suite #115. Sessions will be on Mondays at 10:00 AM. Your first session will be this upcoming Monday.

If you have any questions please call or email Trauma Treatment Center.

Sincerely,

Trauma Treatment Center

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My arms dropped in sheer grief. I wasn't able to control my crying. I just couldn't believe what I was reading. Everything and nothing was going through my head all at the same time. So many questions, wonders, feelings, and emotions. *Who are they to say that an event is traumatic to me? They really are set on the fact that it was all my fault, or my fault at all. I did nothing to*

*deserve this.* I cried so hard that once Ivy saw me outside in the state that I was in, I totally blocked out the drive back home.

For the next couple of days I nested myself into my comfy twin bed with layers of blankets and pillows. I perched in front of Netflix and drowned myself in my tears, sorrow, and anger. Being so deep into one's emotions can be dangerous, but I needed it. I need to coupe and attempt to process what my life would end up being from then on out.

### November 2018.

It's been a tough year. One of the toughest ones yet. After that night last year when I was sexually assaulted and then after I was denied treatment from TTC, everything went downhill from there. I dropped into a bad state of depression within weeks of my visit to TTC. I had no idea how I was going to get through it all. I was so alone in all of it; mainly trapped in my own head accompanied by all of my thoughts and emotions. Thank goodness TTC predicted that I would go into depression and went ahead and prescribed me the medications and forced me to go see a specialist. Who knows what would have happened with me. I guess it was a good call on their part, but that's literally all the "help" I got from them. TTC was supposed to contact me to check in on me to see how I was doing after the visit with them. It took them two months to do so. There was no effort whatsoever. All I got was a notice about my prescriptions and more details about the specialist I was required to see. At first, I was not looking forward to going and seeing this specialist. *What makes you think she will listen to you when TTC didn't even listen to you? You don't need to tell her shit.* I dreaded going to these sessions. I had to talk to a complete stranger about my deepest memories, thoughts, and actions done to me. So I held back a lot of

information about myself to her, but one session it all changed. I knew I needed to start and open up for my own well-being. I got use to the company and eventually started to look forward to going and seeing her. I couldn't go through this storm alone. On the outside, it may have seemed like nothing ever change, but to me, my whole world was flipping upside down. I had to live life in fear, fear that I would have to see him one day. Fear that I would be sexually assaulted again. Fear that I would never love the same way that I did before it all happened. I scheduled my life to make sure that I steered clear of كراڻ , so that there was no more conflict or memories and feelings that would come back up. After so many sessions with my specialist, I started to accept the fact that I wasn't approved for treatment. Working through it with the specialist and processing it, I've become okay with my story and what happened to me.

A week before my 21st birthday, I went to my specialist. We talked about how I'm doing with the anniversary of my sexual assault soon approaching, and what I want to do for my birthday this year. It's been extremely difficult having old emotions and feelings rise up as the anniversary got nearer and nearer. I made a plan with my specialist of how I was going to push all of the useless thoughts out of my head so that I could focus on myself for my birthday. Everything was working out perfectly. A couple of days later, I'm out with my best friend and a few other friends. It was all that I wanted. I celebrated at a popular 21+ club downtown. Obviously I didn't learn from what the panel told me about the way I dressed and how I supposedly sexually taunted my assaulter. I slipped on a short black dress that wrapped up around my neck; this time, revealing all of my shoulders including most of my back. I strutted in thigh-high black suede heels. I was going to wear whatever I well pleased, and was going to look bomb doing whatever I ended up doing that night. Nothing or nobody was going to ruin this

emotional but magical birthday for me. I was having the time of my life; I could've danced all night. But then it all changed, faster than how the night slipped away from us. The Uber was called and waiting for my group to pile in. A familiar figure brushed passed me and knock me back a bit. In pure horror I stood face-to-face, so intimate and close, with that same person I had fearing for exactly a year. Such a beautiful cocky sneaky smirk.

"Oh... Hey Jessa. How are you? How was your treatment?"