I am staring at my desk, but I'm not seeing my desk; I am seeing you. I am listening to my teacher, but I'm really not; I am listening to the sound of my heartbeat getting louder and louder as the anxiety grows. I'm not in English class anymore; I am with you. You! You knew what you were doing that night; you knew what you were doing the second you drugged me and locked me in that room. You saw me as an object, so you touched my body as if it belonged to you. You felt me shaking, shaking because my body was screaming no. My voice couldn't scream, but my body could and you knew that. You! You took something away from me that night, something I can never get back.

The bell rings, I blink, and I'm back in English class. I put my things in my backpack, stand up, and walk out of class. I walk down the halls hating everything. I hate how I can't escape from you and how my mind won't stop playing that scene on repeat. I hate how empty I feel walking to my car. I hate myself. The bell rings, I blink, junior year is over, and I still can't escape you as summer is about to start.

Although I feel the weight of the world on my shoulders, I get a job at a coffee shop at the beginning of the summer, and I meet the most beautiful people. I share my story with them, but unbeknownst to me, they have a story too. In fact, all the girls I work with have a story. I escape a little bit of you knowing I am not the only one. Over the summer, I connect and reconnect with so many people, and in sharing my story, I find that a majority of people in my town have a story, and I began to realize how significant this issue really is.

Now, senior year is about to start, but it doesn't feel right. I finished junior year not caring about anything and now I'm angry. Angry because I am attending a school I used to love, but have grown to hate because of you. My depression takes over my body, my happiness, and I'm just tired of being sad. I'm tired of sitting on the sidelines. I'm tired of the way boys talk to

me - talk to me like I don't matter, objectifying me. I'm tired of how we don't appreciate the women at my school and in my community as much as we appreciate the men. It's disgusting and inequitable. So, I ask myself, "What am I going to do about it?"

I think about starting a club, but the fear of what others may think of me strikes down the idea. I struggle with this thought for weeks, distressed over my peers finding out about my story. Will I be judged by the guys? Why do I care about what they think? These were the things I question, despite my awareness of their insignificance. I know I'm letting my anxiety win, so I think, screw this. Screw this because it's not even about me, it's about all of us women, and if change doesn't happen now, then it never will. I make an attempt to start an empowerment club; however, soon I learn of a similar, existing club called Rise. We join forces and I soon become one of the leaders whose main focus is to bring awareness to sexual assualt. Joining Rise and sharing my story has inspired me to continue to bring attention to sexual assualt. I've decided to major in Political Science, so I can gain the tools and knowledge to make changes in our society, and make sexual assualt a required topic in middle school and highschool health classes nationwide!

The night of my rape, my innoncence was stolen from me, but from it a strong woman was born, liberated from the experience, and ready to fight.