

The voicemails you're about to hear contain intense and sometimes emotionally challenging material. Listeners are encouraged to attend to their own wellbeing in the service of engaging bravely and honestly with these stories. Voices have been pitched and identifiers removed in order to protect the speaker.

DAKOTA: Welcome to The Left Ear podcast. Before we begin, I wonder if you would be willing to listen from your heart. Can you take what you know and believe and represent and gently set it aside? Can you be a neutral and safe place for these voices to be heard? When you listen to a poem, you don't listen with logic. You listen with your entire being. You let it find its place in you. Here, I wonder if you can attempt poetic listening. To the listener. thank you for being here. To the speaker. we hear you. We witness you.

SPEAKER 1: Hi. I'm so nervous and I'm not even talking to anyone but a voicemail. Um, yeah, I never told anyone that story and I'm so nervous. I don't even know if this is real. I don't even know what I'm doing. Um, but maybe saying it out loud feels good. So it was college time except everyone went to college and I took a gap year and I came back from my trip. And these two kids, these two guys, — that I was friends with, I, yeah kind of. Um, they were like too hot shots in high school and I just kind of pretended like whatever, but I was still friends with them and I went over to — 's house because he said there's a party, and I was like okay. I went there and it was just him and — and I felt kind of weird and they were obviously drunk. Um, I was like whatever I'll have a drink with them. Um, turns out I got roofied and I remember lying on a beanbag and — had my arm and — had my legs and — 's older brother walked down. And I was like I was like screaming for him to help me and he just goes, Oh, shit, well done. And then just leaves. And my heart sunk and, yeah it was awful. It fucking sucked. Um, I guess they didn't rape me, but um, pretty much everything up to it that I really didn't want, obviously. Um, but I, it sucked because I couldn't get home because I was like lost.

SPEAKER 2: Um, I've never told my full story and not even to my therapist. And, um, it's a very challenging thing. Um, but my, my first experience with sexual violence probably began, um, 10 years ago as a freshman in college. I was a student athlete in college, division one athlete. Um, and my first experience would be around my teammates and my friends. We had a party one night and we all stayed over at the captain of the club team's house, or at least I think it was his, I don't really remember but, the point of the story is we all stayed over after drinking a lot. Um, and I was woken up in the middle of the night with a hand over my mouth and another hand down my shirt and, um, and trying to get into my pants. And, um, it woke me up and I remember it. I didn't know what to do and I didn't want to make a scene. I had all of my best friends and all of my new teammates, um, with me. Uh, the second time was also in my freshman year in college. At least I think it was, I have a hard time remembering and I, I don't remember the whole details of the night. I remember, uh, one of my really good guy friends, uh, told

me after drinking too much that he would take me home and he didn't take me home, he took me to his apartment, um, with another guy and he locked the door and he took my cell phone and, um, put it in the nightstand and, um, two men try to sexually assault me that night. Um, but thankfully, once again, I was an athlete and I broke his nose and the other guy passed out. Um, and the captain of...

I was recording my story earlier and it got cut off and, uh, I have been brave enough to talk about it, but I want to finish. And, um, so yeah, the captain of the gymnastics team actually came and picked me up. And the interesting thing about that whole scenario now that I look back on it so many years later is he was actually, um, an advocate for poor, um, for, um, you know, like protective protective against women's violence on campus. He had posters back and whatnot. And, you know, I have my shirt ripped and my bra ripped, but, um, you know, he didn't believe me and he actually dropped me off, uh, at the freshman dorms. And I just remember I just sobbed the whole way there. And, um, and that whole night, um, the real time, uh, I was actually sexually assaulted. Um, uh, it was by another friend of mine. Um, once again, it goes back to the scenario of, of drinking and being vulnerable with friends. Um, uh, and I lost my virginity that night. Um, you know, I was so drunk that, uh, I threw up and, uh, he took me to the shower and cleaned me up and then, um, proceeded to have sex with me. Um, and once again, I didn't tell any of my friends any of these things and I didn't know how to make of them. I had more important things to deal with. I was an athlete, I was a student. I tried my best. Um, and I met a guy that was wonderful. Um, yeah, about a year later, um, his name was Cory and I just adored him....Yeah. So I met this guy named Cory. And long story short, I had a really hard time loving this man. Um, because I was dealing with a lot of emotional issues I wasn't aware of the time. And um, we broke up and I have to say it was completely due to the sexual violence history, not knowing how to deal with those emotions and never looking at it or examining it. Um, and really trying to bottle it up. And I ended up breaking up with him. And once again, I ended up with a scenario with friends at a friend's house and, uh, um, it was given something, um, and uh, was drugged and uh, um, was drunk and friends left and I was, uh, brought upstairs and, uh, I just remember staring at a clock and, um, I remember waiting and hoping the time would just finish and, um, fell asleep. And I remember crawling on the floor, trying to find my clothes and getting dressed and, um, finding my phone and I was so happy to get out of there. And I called my friend, I called and I called and I tried all these different numbers and I finally got someone to phone and another friend came and picked me up and they took me to their house and I just was a mess. And um, you know, we briefly talked about it, but, um, I ended up girlfriend friendship after that cause I was just so grossly embarrassed, um, from the whole scenario. And I don't think I've ever talked to Cat again after she came and picked me up and saved me from that situation. And, um, I just remember standing on the street corner, halfway dressed and not being able to read street signs and, um, it was just a really horrible night. And, um, yeah, I, and since then, you know, I, I finally, it took me a really long time to figure out...Yeah. Um, and ever since then, you know, I that last time I had like a hard time with sleeping. Um, it was probably 6 to 8 months where I couldn't find myself going and sleeping in a bed

anymore. I couldn't look at our. Uh, uh, uh, nightstand clock. Um, I would have nightmares and a lot of anxiety and I finally took the step of seeing a therapist and I ended up seeing two, um, where I was living and they were just horrible and ended up moving and, um, found a, um, sexual assault, um, counseling group here, um, that was actually free for sexual assault survivors. And, um, uh, you know, I spent a long time in therapy, probably took me over a year to finally be able to sleep in a bed again. Um, even turning the lights off was a big ordeal for me. Um, but it's one of the things where I once again, I don't think I noticed those things, um, until it became such a problem or if someone else brought it up to me. Um, and, uh, it's been an interesting scenario when you know, you're actually diagnosed with anxiety disorder and PTSD and, um, just coming to the realization of, of what is sexual assault and, um, and that it happened to you and I'm feeling this enormous amount of guilt and feeling like I didn't do the right things or not enough. And, um, it's affected my everyday life. I can hardly go out anymore with friends or be in situations or scenarios around drinking and, and large groups of people. It makes me very anxious. And, um, you know, my relationships since then have been kind of abysmal. Um, I remember I went on a date one time and a guy, we were at a bar and of course...Yeah. And I just remember going to a bar with a guy and clearly it's not a good place for me. And that's where we wanted to go though. And I just remember being here and on this date, I guess, if you will. And this guy looked at me and was just like, you just need to relax and calm down. Why are you so anxious? And I just remember it. So, such a profound statement. Um clearly, how messed up I was from all of this situation was just so transparent. Um, this last relationship I had this year, right. This is what, 10 years from the first time anyone ever tried to touch me without my consent. Um, you know, I, I, I had sex with this guy and I've just absolutely sobbed and lost it and told him the whole story and, um, at least he was sweet enough to listen to me. And, um, yeah, I the whole thing is so bad and I wish I had written this story down and, um, but I wanted to say it, I've never fully said it and I don't think I'd be able to say in the right way, but, um, I hope that makes a difference for someone or it brings to light, um, how challenging these situations are. And there's a lot of question marks and, um, I'm still working through these things and it's not weird to still be thinking about them or have never disclosed any of that to someone, uh, for five years, 10 years, you know, whatever it is. And, um, I hope that we can band together as women and, um, find a way to end this and if not just find a way to support each other. Um, and I thank for your time

SPEAKER 3: Hi this is —. Calling from —. I was abused by my older brother when I was nine, ten, and he was 13, 14, uh, later he told to our, our older cousins who were his age and they wanted to do the same. And I've been living with that guilt since ever since that time because I don't know, I think that I must have done something, I don't know that makes him, that made him do that. I don't know. Thank you. Bye.

SPEAKER 4: Um, I have just been like so angry lately. Um, and I think I realized where that anger is coming from and it's kind of realizing that my relationship with my boyfriend of three years is over, but that it's also been abusive for a certain period. And,

um, I started to realize that more when I tried to open up to him about, um, like a rape, my rape, a rape, my rape, that, um, it's happened a few years ago and it was always just like awkward thing. He didn't want to speak about it. And then it came out that he didn't believe that it had like occurred as exactly how I said it. And just like the fact that he has never met my rapist, has never been in the same room as my rapist, has never spoken a single word to him. And my boyfriend of three years believes a man he has never known over me. It's just, it's mind blowing. And, and I'm a really privileged person. And in terms of like, I'm, I'm white, I am, um, no, I'm okay financially. I live in a nice apartment. So if I'm going through this and if this is like, so like destabilizing to my world, I just can't imagine what other women have going through and they just, I'm so sad on behalf of women, I'm so angry on behalf of women, just so fucking done with men. Um, yeah, I don't, I'm just done. Like women are really, really strong.

DAKOTA: Thank you for listening. Thank you for your time. And to the speaker, thank you for your bravery. We hear you. We see you. It's hard to not feel responsible for saving the world after hearing these stories, but just by listening with your heart, you saved someone even just a little bit.

Thank you for listening. We'll be back each Monday with more stories. If you or someone you know has a story similar to these, you can find help at the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-675-HOPE. That's 1-800-675-4673. Or visit theleftear.com, or the link in this episode's show notes for resources. The Left Ear was created by Dakota Johnson and produced by Spoke Media.