

SUMMARY

KNOW MY NAME

CHANEL MILLER



Summary of “Know My Name” by Chanel Miller

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Learn the painful yet inspiring true story of Chanel Miller, known as Emily Doe, who aims to reclaim her identity and voice after a years-long trial against Brock Turner.

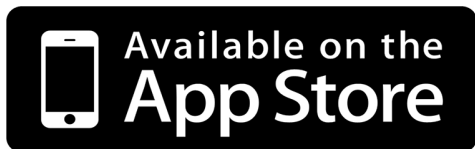


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Introduction

Known to the world for years as Emily Doe, she was the girl whose victim impact statement went viral and was read by millions across the world. She was the victim of a rape committed by Stanford student, Brock Turner, who was praised for his accolades in swimming. That night, Turner would assault the unconscious body of a young woman, only to be caught in the act and attempt to run away. The world was then stunned to hear that Turner was sentenced to just six months in county jail, and would only go on to serve three. Despite his light sentencing, the viral victim impact statement inspired changes in California law and many others to share their own stories of sexual assault. Emily Doe is now known as Chanel Miller and she aims to reclaim her identity and no longer be identified as “Emily Doe” or “the victim.”

In the eyes of the courtroom, the case against Turner seemed clear cut. There were eyewitnesses, he tried to run away, and the woman was unconscious. However, as you’ll see, this case illuminates a culture that aims to protect perpetrators while blaming victims. Though Chanel’s story is both traumatic and painful, her story can be related to by many and will become a source of inspiration for years to come.

Who is Chanel Miller?

You may have never heard of Chanel Miller, but you've likely heard of her rapist: Brock Turner. The media labeled Brock as the Stanford student or the Olympic swimmer, but many failed to label him as the rapist. The media attention hit Chanel hard, they labeled her as a partier, a girl who shouldn't have gotten so drunk, a girl who should have known better, protected herself better. The criticism caused Chanel to hide for years behind the name of Emily Doe. Now, Chanel wants to rid herself of Emily and take back her identity and tell her story.

In January 2015, Chanel was twenty-two, living and working in her hometown of Palo Alto, California. On January 17, Chanel was living at her parents' house when her younger sister, Tiffany, had driven up from school for a long weekend. Tiffany and her friend Julia mentioned a party they were going to that evening at Kappa Alpha at the Stanford campus. Chanel, no longer a college student, toyed with the idea of going to the party with them. Eventually, she agreed.

The last thing Chanel remembers is thinking about how she had outgrown the fraternity party scene. Her memory for the rest of the night is blank; however, she believes nothing about her actions from there on out is important. Little did she know that the public would scrutinize everything she did and said that night. They would analyze, measure, and calculate them to present to the world for evaluation, "All because, somewhere at this party, is *him*."

Chanel didn't find out what happened to her that night until she read the details online. From the article, Chanel found out that she had been found half-naked and passed out next to a dumpster behind the Kappa Alpha fraternity house. While she was unconscious, Brock Turner sexually assaulted her until two Swedish students who were cycling through campus discovered him in the act. At first, the cyclists believed they had simply stumbled upon an intimate moment, but once Brock tried to run away, they

quickly realized something more sinister was happening. The students chased him and fought him to the ground. A bystander called the police who came and arrested Turner.

That night, Chanel's old life left her, she was forced to begin anew as Emily Doe. She didn't know what the next few years would bring, she couldn't predict how the trial would change her life. She didn't realize just how broken the justice system is, that she would be vilified, characterized, and mislabeled in court. Since that night, her life has never been the same. Now, however, she wishes to rid herself of Emily and all the people who stand by and enable a broken system. She plans to move forward without naming those that hurt her, instead, she's going to finally name herself. Her name is Chanel.

Victim Blaming

Upon reading the article that told the story of Brock Turner and “the victim,” Chanel was horrified. A story about a man raping an unconscious woman would certainly bring sympathy for the victim, right? This sex-crazed man was so sinister that he could violate a woman who was practically dead! Chanel pored herself over the comments of the article and found the responses were just as horrifying: they didn’t criticize the rapist, they criticized her.

Why was she at the party in the first place? She was no longer a student. Why did she get so drunk? Why wasn’t she more responsible? Shouldn’t she know better? As she continued reading, she knew she was just tearing herself down, but she couldn’t stop. Those toxic comments hit her hard and affected her so badly that she began to question her own perspective. She questioned what she did wrong, what mistakes she made, and how she put herself in that situation.

While Chanel was distraught over her own credibility, media outlets were portraying Turner in a rather positive light. They included pictures of his swimming days praising him for being a Stanford student who was on the swim team. He was a top athlete who participated in the 2012 London Olympics. Journalists gave him glowing character reviews despite his criminal charges of rape and sexual assault. Meanwhile, Chanel was only referred to as “the victim” who had too much to drink and found half-naked and unconscious.

Since Chanel chose to keep her identity a secret, it was hard for her to find support among her peers. She states: "For the past year I have been raking through comments looking for signs of support. I dug through opinion pieces in local newspapers searching for someone to stand up for me. I locked myself in my car in parking lots crying into hotlines, convinced I was losing my mind. All year the loneliness had followed me, in the

stairwell at work, in Philly, in the wooden witness stand, where I looked out at a near-empty audience.”

Unfortunately, the loneliness would continue even when she revealed to her close friends and family that she was the Emily Doe that all the news outlets were referring to. She would soon realize that society largely disregards victims of sexual assault while giving support to the perpetrator.

Living a Double Life

Chanel recalls the horrifying experience of waking up that morning in the hospital. Two men stared at her, an older African-American man in a red Stanford windbreaker and a Caucasian man in a black police uniform. They asked how she was feeling, if she was okay, and if there was someone they could call. Chanel answered their questions, still now knowing exactly why she was in the hospital in the first place.

Finally, the deputy turned to her and said: “You are in the hospital, and there is reason to believe you have been sexually assaulted.” Confused, she slowly nodded her head thinking they must have the wrong person. She didn’t even talk to anyone the previous night. However, when she made her way to the bathroom for the first time, she made a discovery that both shocked and terrified her. With the absence of her underwear, she realized that the deputy was telling her the truth. She questioned what happened. What was taken from her? She felt terror and confusion and said, “so begins the brutal awakening.”

The moments that follow include interviews with the SART (Sexual Assault Response Team). She watched as needles punctured her skin and bloody Q-tips emerged from between her legs, yet she felt nothing. She compares herself to a mannequin, turning off her senses, was she really even there? At this point, the only people that knew about the assault were the people at the hospital and Chanel’s sister. Her identity remained anonymous and so began a double life as she tried to cope with being both Chanel Miller and Emily Doe.

In the beginning, Chanel couldn’t bring herself to tell her parents and her boyfriend that the victim they kept hearing about in the media was her. She simply felt compelled to protect them from the truth and she couldn’t bear to disrupt their lives with the news that she’d been raped. She’d been determined to stay as far away from Emily as possible, but after only ten days, she struggled to stay silent.

She broke the news to her parents first and finally told her boyfriend when he came to visit a few weeks later. Chanel recalls how painful it was to break that barrier with the people she loved, and how hard it was to explain that her vulnerability had been taken advantage of by a stranger. Thankfully, she found comfort and support among those who loved her. And while she tried to maintain her routine and normalcy of life, she was eventually forced to quit her job and focus on the trial which would last a total of three years and eight months.

The Trial and Verdict

It's a well-known fact that many victims of sexual assault fail to come forward because of fear. They fear the response of officers, judges, lawyers, family, and friends. It becomes even worse when the victim is intoxicated, and in Chanel's case, too intoxicated to remember anything. However, Chanel believed she had a strong case, her perpetrator was caught red-handed, right? The two Swedish cyclists caught Brock in the act, tackled him to the ground, and cried as they looked upon Chanel's unconscious, naked body. Unfortunately, this wasn't enough.

Chanel was still subjected to ridicule and judgment for drinking, while many sympathized with Turner, whose bright future was ruined. She knew a lot of things about rape before her experience, but she goes on to say, "I didn't know that if a woman was drunk when the violence occurred, she wouldn't be taken seriously. I didn't know that if he was drunk when the violence occurred, people would offer him sympathy. I didn't know that my loss of memory would become his opportunity. I didn't know that being a victim was synonymous with not being believed." Chanel's lack of memory allowed Turner and his team to manipulate the narrative. It gave them the power to fill in the gaps with what they believed happened. Meanwhile, they were silencing Chanel and forcing her to relive the painful details over and over again.

Her life soon revolved around court dates, which would often become postponed. She would consistently prepare for trial, relive the moments, and then watch in horror as Brock's legal team twisted her words and made her seem like an unreliable witness. Her words were twisted, edited, pulled out of context until their meaning was no longer recognizable as her own. To do this, Turner's lawyer would ask specific questions designed to confuse and denounce her as a witness. They would ask irrelevant questions like whether her father cooked rice or quinoa for dinner on the night she was raped, and if she noticed any bruises on her body when she awoke. In the process, they made Chanel question her own credibility.

She recalls how she felt to be questioned by the DA, she states, “I felt gutted, forced to come face-to-face with my painful memories, reliving it for the jury to see. Being questioned by the defense was stifling. He didn’t want to open up the emotional territory...he wanted to smother it, to erase my specific experience, abstract me into stereotypes of partying and blackouts, to ask technical questions that tied my shoelaces together, tripping me as he forced me to run.”

Brock’s drinking, on the other hand, was framed by his lawyer as being a normal part of campus life. His family even spent \$10,000 hiring a doctor who supposedly specialized in blackouts, and testified that even in Chanel’s state of intoxication, she could still give her consent. The entire experience was traumatizing for Chanel, but on March 30, 2016, a 12-person jury returned a unanimous guilty verdict on all three charges of felony sexual assault.

A Viral Impact Statement

Chanel and her legal team were victorious, the jury proved to her that she was credible, that she could be trusted. There was, of course, just one more thing: the sentencing. Brock still needed to be sentenced by Judge Aaron Persky. Prosecutors recommended a sentence of six years in prison based on the seriousness of the sexual assault and on the basis that Chanel was unconscious, and Brock tried to run away.

Now that the trial was over, Chanel felt free, she could finally be herself. So when a probation officer called Chanel to ask about her wishes for Turner's sentence, Chanel simply said that she didn't want him "to rot in prison" and that he needed rehabilitation. Once again, Chanel's words would become twisted and made into something other than her own. The officer falsely claimed that Chanel wasn't concerned with how much time he spent in prison, that she simply wanted him to get better. The officer recommended a moderate county jail sentence.

That's exactly what Turner got. Claiming that he too had suffered from media scrutiny, Judge Persky believed prison-time would be harmful to his future. He sentenced Turner to just six months in county jail, followed by three years of probation. His name was permanently entered into the sexual offenders' registry, and in the end, Brock Turner only served three months. On September 2, 2016, he walked free.

Despite the sentencing, Chanel vowed that she would never again allow her words to be overshadowed, her words being her property. She had the opportunity to read a "victim impact statement" in court which would detail the impact the rape and trial had on her life as well as the lives of those around her. She wanted the court to hear just how much she and her family had been impacted, so she poured everything she had into it. She addressed Turner directly and told him the now-famous lines "You took away my worth, my privacy, my energy, my time, my safety, my intimacy, my

confidence, my own voice, until today.” By the end, the people in the courtroom were crying.

Of course, she could’ve never predicted that her victim impact statement would fall on more ears than those inside the courtroom walls. When a reporter from BuzzFeed contacted Chanel, she gave her permission for them to publish it. She told them to edit it however they saw fit, just make sure her name wasn’t attached to it. The woman swiftly told her that editors wouldn’t touch her statement, it would be published exactly as she wrote it.

The statement was released at 4 p.m. on June 3, 2016. In twenty minutes, there’d been fifteen thousand views. Chanel’s contact at BuzzFeed, Katie, began forwarding her thousands of emails they were receiving. Almost every response depicted the location of where they were crying, all of them enraged and devastated by her statement. Once again, she was faced with whether or not she should pore through the comments of the article. This time, however, she found heartening words. Throughout the following week, over fifteen million people had read her statement. It was praised and read by politicians, read on the floor of Congress, and translated into French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, and more. Congressman Ted Poe of Texas said, “She wrote the bible on what happens to sexual assault victims.”

Finally, people were no longer minimizing her experience or blaming her for her own rape. They were praising her for speaking out and being strong. She realized that despite the loneliness she felt during the trial, there had been eyes watching her, rooting for her the entire time. She goes on to say, “I was surrounded by survivors. I was part of a *we*... I was the leader on the front line fighting, with an entire infantry behind me. They had been waiting for me to find justice. The victory would be celebrated quietly in rooms in towns and states I had never been to...this was only the beginning. I was not alone. They had found me.”

Sexual Assault is Political Not Personal

After Brock's sentencing and the viral impact statement, the public was devastated and enraged. People sought justice, including Stanford law professor Michele Dauber, an activist against campus sexual assault. Dauber launched a campaign to recall Judge Persky from the stand due to his lenient sentencing in Chanel's case.

The theory was that with enough support, Judge Persky could be voted out of his position. This wasn't a typical way for a judge to be recalled, but Dauber was willing to change the rules to ensure justice was served. To get the measure on the ballot, Dauber and volunteers would need to collect at least 90,000 signatures. The team managed to collect over 95,000 and the motion was put onto the ballot. When it came time to vote, 61.51 percent of Santa Clara voters voted to recall Judge Persky. Chanel felt that justice had finally been served.

After her experience, Chanel began to receive contact from activist groups such as RISE, an organization for victims of sexual assault. She realized that she was not alone, her story was similar to thousands of women just like her. Her experience was not an isolated one and that too many women become blamed for the sexual violence that is forced upon them. Would you ask a victim of a home invasion why they didn't fight back? Or how they made their house vulnerable to criminals? Yet victims of sexual assault are constantly asked similar questions. In other words, women are tasked with the responsibility of not getting raped.

Unfortunately, while women are blamed for becoming victims, sexual offenders become praised and normalized. Take the president of the United States, Donald Trump, who admitted on tape to "grab a woman by the pussy," and even continued with "when you're famous, they let you do it. You can do anything." This tape was revealed prior to the 2016 election; additionally, he's been accused of several accounts of sexual assault, including rape, by at least twenty-four women. Yet, his campaign prevailed

and he was able to pass off his comments as “locker room talk,” suggesting that this is just how men act.

Chanel realized in the past few years just how widespread her experience was. She felt the bravery of other survivors who spoke out, including the gymnasts who testified against Dr. Larry Nassar, who assaulted over 160 young women. She empathized with Christine Blasey Ford, who suffered intense media scrutiny but didn't let it stop her from speaking out and testifying against Brett Kavanaugh. These cases all share a common thread in which male perpetrators feel a sense of entitlement to trespass on a woman's body.

Now, Chanel wishes to use her experience and her voice to push for the rights of assault survivors and campaign against a system that consistently fails victims. When Chanel's case first began, California law narrowly defined rape as an act of sexual intercourse. Now, amendments have been made and there is now a mandatory minimum sentence for the sexual assault of an unconscious person, and the definition of rape has been expanded.

Final Summary

Wanting to stay anonymous and simply move on from her sexual assault, Chanel Miller couldn't recognize the power of her experience. What started as media attention flooded with victim-blaming and perpetrator-sympathizing has now become the driving force behind society's fight for justice. The high-profile sexual assault case against Brock Turner, who was praised for being on the Stanford swim team, shows just how broken the justice system is. During the trial, Chanel was subjected to humiliation and criticism as defense attorneys aimed to tear her down and prove her an unreliable witness. Chanel's story was subject to manipulation as reporters focused their stories on the perpetrator and Chanel became "the victim" and then "Emily Doe." Unfortunately, Chanel's case is all too common and many women share similar experiences after speaking out about rape and sexual assault. After her experience, however, she has chosen to no longer be silenced. She aims to use her voice to fight for the rights of sexual assault survivors and help pick up the pieces of a broken system.



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