

Rape accuser 'sent text asking friend for help'

A TEENAGE girl, who claims she was raped by a schoolmate two years ago, texted her friend saying 'help help please' shortly after the alleged incident, a court has heard.

The girl, now aged 18, broke down as she gave evidence on the first day of a trial at the Central Criminal Court yesterday. The accused man, aged 19, denies one count of rape and one of sexually assaulting the girl in a town in Co. Donegal on March 18, 2016. He cannot be named for legal reasons.

The court heard the girl, then aged 16, met the accused in a takeaway sometime around midnight after St Patrick's Day celebrations. She told the jury

By Jessica Magee

she had known the boy as he was in the year ahead of her at school and that she had kissed or 'shifted' him at a house party three months earlier.

She said she was 'quite drunk, very light-headed' when she went into the takeaway with some friends. She said the accused suggested going for a walk and took hold of her hand after they left the takeaway.

The girl said he pushed her up against the wall and sexually assaulted her. She said she had made it clear she didn't want this and told him so repeatedly. The girl broke down as she told the court the accused also

grabbed her by both elbows, turned her around to face the wall and raped her.

Text messages were read out in court from the girl to a friend sent just after the alleged incident, saying 'help help please', 'IDK (I don't know) what to do' and 'there's blood all over my hands'. Her friend texted her in reply to drink plenty of water, sober up and find people to go home with. 'I have to sleep but if you really need me call,' read one reply from her friend.

The court heard the girl walked back to the takeaway with the accused after the alleged assault, met a number of people and was very upset. The trial continues.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

My family's midsummer night's dream

LAST Friday evening, the Dooleys went to savour some Shakespeare. The setting was a natural theatre in Temple Carrig School, which is in Greystones, Co. Wicklow. The play was Romeo And Juliet, but it was a performance with a difference.

It all began the previous Monday when, fresh from Irish college, our eldest attended his first morning of a Shakespeare drama camp. The idea, conceived by Paul Cullen of Arclight Drama Studio, was daring to say the least: present a group of young actors with a play they have never read, get them to learn every line and prepare them to perform it before a live audience. 'Ay, there's the rub': they had to do it all in a single week.

What 'midsummer madness', you say, and you might well be correct. How on earth could you get young teenagers to do what it takes professional actors a good six months to achieve? What's more, they had to do it all in sweltering heat.

Our eldest was cast as the unfortunate Friar Laurence - a man whose plan to save Romeo and Juliet from their feuding families has unforeseen tragic consequences. The friar is trusted by both protagonists and, indeed, marries them in secret. It is also he who provides Juliet with a potion that will enable her to feign death.

From early morning, the group worked tirelessly on their lines. Paul put them through their paces on stage, acquainting them with their characters and polishing their performances. Then, each evening, they would knuckle down at home to learn a language more than 400 years old.

It was not easy. Their job was not to learn and act in an edited version of the play. It was to perfect, from scratch, the complete and unabridged edition.

By Thursday night, our eldest was moving through the house in full Franciscan habit. Not only that, but he had also given Friar Laurence an aristocratic English accent with a comic twist. Normally sombre and serene, 'our' Laurence was morphing into a hybrid of an English royal and a medieval Pope.

Mrs Dooley and I did not believe they could successfully master something so complex in five days. Like all Shakespeare, Romeo And Juliet is a complex tragedy which

demands emotion, passion and a deep understanding of the underlying moral. This was, we felt, too much to ask of people so young and inexperienced.

The fateful day arrived, and we were on tenterhooks. That morning, we bade the good friar adieu, knowing that the next time we saw him would be on stage. Then, that evening, we made our way, in trepidation, to Temple Carrig.

Deep down, I really didn't mind how they performed the play. The fact that people so young opted to sacrifice a week of their holidays to learn Shakespeare was, in itself, wonderful.

At a time when most teenagers would prefer to text than converse, isn't it just marvellous that some still desire to claim the riches of the language?

Think, for a moment, about how much the English language was shaped by Shakespeare. Even today, people are unaware that so many of their phrases are Shakespearean. 'We have seen better days' is a phrase we all use, but did you know that it comes straight out of Timon Of Athens?

'All that glitters is not gold' is a variation of 'All that glitters is not gold' from The Merchant Of Venice. And who could possibly have travelled through life without being warned: 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be.' Most famously, 'To be, or not to be' is, perhaps, the greatest philosophical question ever posed, while, 'To thine own self be true' is undoubtedly the best advice.

SHAKESPEARE is immortal because he uses language to capture the most fundamental truths of the human condition. From the moment they arrived on that sun-drenched stage, it was obvious that the boys and girls understood this. In word, deed, gesture and song, they not only rose to the challenge, but showed why there is no finer education than the timeless work of William Shakespeare.

Romeo And Juliet has had a long history, but I doubt there was ever an occasion when Friar Laurence had his audience in hysterics of laughter. Then again, I doubt he was ever performed so hilariously.

Indeed, each of the actors made it seem like the play was written only yesterday.

They did it all in just five days. Midsummer madness?

More like a midsummer night's dream!

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