



For women the fear of rape is always with us. It affects our lives in countless ways – not only that we are afraid to walk the streets at night, but in all dealings with men, however superficial these might be. I must say at the minute I am very angry! This has been going on too long. Women should not have to restrict their lives when the majority of times it is men committing these violent attacks and, yes, murders.

Rape is an expression of power and hate; men rape to cause fear and to reassure themselves of their superiority. As we know it has nothing to do with an uncontrollable sexual urge; this is just a myth – like the myth that a woman needs a man to protect her.

No woman seeks to be brutalised or murdered. No woman wants to be sexually abused. When we draw attention to men's violence against women we are silenced and put down because we are 'radical feminists', 'men haters', 'dykes', or any other label

that may or may not fit. We may be some or all of these things but like all women we face violence every day. It is happening all over the world: women are murdered, raped and battered by men daily.

Don't make the mistake that I did when hitching a lift from Dublin to Belfast; because he was driving a flashy car and looked respectable I thought I would be safe, but to my horror I went through a two-and-a-half-hour ordeal of abuse. Recently, when I was able to talk about this with a small group of friends one guy said: "Well that will teach you a lesson not to hitch again." And this is the attitude from predominately male society towards these commonplace threats implying that I was to blame – obviously not the case.

The media framed pointless questions: how can women protect themselves? What are women going to do? The Garda Siochanna are giving advice for women not to be going out at night on their own! Why not a curfew on men? After all, it is men committing these violent crimes.

Don't get me wrong. I am all on for women knowing how to protect themselves but we wouldn't have to if we didn't have these animals on the loose. Actually, I feel bad about that last remark because I feel I have offended the animal kingdom by including these monsters in it. I feel powerless and invincible by turns – but how do you deal with monsters?

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