

Student's false rape claim 'snowballed out of control'



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A UNIVERSITY student admitted yesterday she made a false rape claim to gardai after she was refused entry to a city centre night club and left by her sister and friends to walk home alone.

Lorraine Ford's action sparked a huge Garda manhunt last September with 15 Cork officers and detectives investigating the non-existent crime for 12 days - even staging an elaborate reconstruction of the crime.

The allegation by Ford (23) - who claimed she was subjected to an horrific early morning rape in the grounds of The Lough Church by a lone male attacker - led to gardai mounting road blocks, house-to-house inquiries, forensic tests and even seizing footage from CCTV security cameras in the supposed rape area.

Gardai also involved the special sexual assault unit from Cork's South Infirmiry Hospital in their probe.

Yesterday, Judge Leo Malone heard that Ford's fake claim had "snowballed out of control" after she made up the rape story to her sister in a mobile phone call and a text-message.

Despite making two statements to Gardai about the false rape, she eventually admitted the whole story was fabricated when confronted by gardai on October 1 last about significant discrepancies in her story.

"It did not happen - I was not raped. I made it up," she said.

At no point did Ford specify an identity or specific individual as her attacker.

Yesterday, the court heard that Lorraine Ford did not contact Gardai herself - and was shocked when Garda Karen Seymour arrived at her sister's home in Cork city shortly before 2.30am on September 19 last.

Ford (23), from Baltimore Road, Skibbreen, Co Cork pleaded guilty before Cork District Court yesterday to making false statements about an alleged offence at Skibbreen Garda Station on September 19 and at Angelsea Street Garda Station on September 27 last.

Judge Malone was told by Garda Seymour that Ms Ford - an honours university student - had been travelling from Limerick to her native West Cork but missed her bus in Cork city on September 18. She decided to stay with her sister in the city.

The sisters then went out for a few drinks - with Ms Ford consuming two pints of cider before moving on to a city centre pub.

However, when the group went to attend a nightclub, Lorraine Ford was refused entry on the basis she did not have an age-confirmed ID.

Her sister and the other members of the group went into the club, leaving Lorraine Ford to walk home alone.

She got lost while walking home and eventually had to be directed to her sister's house by three people returning from the city centre.

When she reached the house, she decided on the spur of the moment to make the false attack claim to her sister.

"She rang her sister's mobile and then texted her. She said she had been raped," Garda Seymour explained.

Her shocked sister and friends immediately returned to the house - but notified Gardai as they were on their way.

Garda Seymour said that Lorraine Ford was very distressed when she arrived at the house.

"She was very, very upset, She was crying and vomiting. She was very distressed," she explained.

However, when she was later asked about discrepancies in her story, she blurted out the truth to Garda Seymour - and sobbed that she did not want to waste Garda time.

"She apologised for her actions. The whole thing had snowballed on her. She did not want the Gardai involved. But when she said it, she had no way out," Garda Seymour added.

Defence solicitor, Tom Coughlan, explained to the Court that Ford had personal problems and that the false rape story was "a cry for help". She had never been in trouble before and had an exemplary academic record.

Inspector Con Cadogan said the girl came from an excellent family while Mr Coughlan stressed she was deeply remorseful for what happened.

Judge Malone agreed to a defence request for the matter to be adjourned pending the completion of a Probation and Welfare Service report.

He remanded Ford on continuing bail to appear before Cork District Court on May 5 next for sentencing.

<https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/students-false-rape-claim-snowballed-out-of-control-26011963.html>