

RICH MARRIED MEN TARGETED BY FALSE-RAPE CON ARTISTS

Bashi Letsididi 01 Sep 2013

Men who are married have (or appear to have) lots of money and patronise liquor-selling establishments at late hours are prime targets of female temptresses who will make false rape claims if they are not paid for sexual services rendered. There would have been no agreement over transactional sex in the first instance.

That is the rudimentary assessment of the Old Naledi station commander, Superintendent King Tshebo, who made clear the fact that he was speaking from his general experience as a police officer and not about what happens in his current policing district. One false-rape case that he cites involved an acquaintance of his, whom he says has a very high social standing.

The man was visiting his home village and had stopped by the local bar to knock back a few. In no time, a beautiful young woman catwalked over and began chatting him up.

"Why are you sitting alone?" she asked sweetly. "I don't know anyone here," he replied. She took a seat next to him and in no time the pair got acquainted, instantly getting along like a house on fire. By great coincidence, they discovered during the course of a wide-ranging conversation that their families had cattle posts in the same farming area. When the woman learnt that the man was on his way to the cattle post, she decided, right there and then, that she wanted to tag along.

On the way out, she asked to stop over at her place to pick up something and there, invited him in. She then asked for a few minutes to freshen up and proceeded to take her clothes off right in front of the man. For the next couple of minutes, his brain had to endure a prolonged deprivation of oxygen supply as the woman preened around with not a single stitch of clothing on.

Tshebo picks up the story: "When he saw all this he thought to himself: 'ke bolaile' [I got so lucky]. When the woman was done, they continued their journey and on arrival headed straight to the man's cattlepost. There they got intimate and afterwards when he indicated that he wanted a

second go, the lady asked: 'But would you be able to afford another round because one costs P1000?'"

The chilling words stopped the man cold and only then did he realise that he had just strolled into an elaborate honey trap. After gathering himself, he had to drive some 60 kilometres away to reach the nearest auto-teller machine (ATM), withdraw money and pay the woman off.

In another unrelated but similar false-rape incident, another married man recalls having to drive from the parking lot of a police station - where he had just successfully negotiated the price of his freedom - to an ATM in the dead of night. The young woman he had picked up earlier at a bar - and showed a really good time, had instructed him to take her to the police station so that she could report rape and as they sat in the car, bluntly told him that she could turn his life upside down if he didn't pay her.

Why rich married men are the main targets of honey traps is Psychology 101. Tshebo says the scammers prey on them because they are easier to extort. Someone who fits this profile would not risk possible divorce and public shame and would be more than eager to pay off the false accuser, retreat into the façade of happy married life while maintaining his dignity. They also have oodles of money to buy their freedom back and always negotiate from a position of weakness.

A form of closet prostitution, false rape has, globally, become a multi-billion pula industry and some Batswana women seem to have claimed a share of that market. In what is so far a futile attempt to fight back, some victims have formed False Rape Society, an online weeping post on which men from across the world offload their sob stories and campaign for the reform of rape laws.

One is that suspects should not be identified only after being sentenced. Conversely, the view expressed by an official of a Maun-based NGO called Women Against Rape, Mpho Mahopolo, a few years back is that it would be improper to equate the rights of the culprit with those of the victim. Her argument is that if the identity of the alleged culprits was protected, rape cases would skyrocket as criminally lustful men would rape women with impunity.

In Botswana, the leverage and main legal incentive for honey-trap practitioners is that they retain their anonymity while those they accuse are named, shamed and prosecuted. While parliament has enacted laws to protect genuine rape victims and encourage more such women to come forward, it is also being abused by the con artists in question.

To be clear, bachelors also do get hustled the same way and police sources in Gaborone tell a multi-tiered story of a former police officer who responded to a late-night rape report. Upon arriving at the supposed crime scene, he found a girl who had reported countless cases of what he and his colleagues believed to be false rape because she never bothered to make any follow-up.

"It's you again?" he confronted the girl. A split second later, he slapped her hard across the face, and then harangued her for extorting money from men by not telling them that she was prostituting herself. All the while, the alleged rapist watched and listened slack-jawed as the officer parsed the girl's modus operandi. At the end of it all, he is said to have remarked to the officer with a sigh of relief: "Bra, o kare o ne o le teng."

Tshebo says that the other common type of false rape is of women who report such assault after tricks refuse to pay up. While he was head of the Sir Seretse Khama International Airport police station, Tshebo says that he dealt with a case of a woman whose client didn't keep his end of the bargain after she had had hers. His recollection is that the woman was reportedly honest enough to admit that she had prostituted herself but considered the man to have raped her because he had reneged on his promise to pay the agreed sum.

Tshebo says that in terms of Botswana law, this is not classified as rape but is in the neighbourhood of breach of contract because one party is not fulfilling its obligations in what is essentially a business transaction.

While in other parts of the world women can claim "rape by fraud", Tshebo says that this is not the case in Botswana and that a woman tricked into having sex has no recourse to law.

"The main element of rape law in Botswana is 'consent' and someone who has consented to sex because she was tricked has no recourse to law," he says, adding that often such women report rape at police stations when they had in fact given consent.

On account of this legal standard, the station commander asserts that randy traditional doctors who administer muti potions carnally cannot be charged with rape because the women clients would have given consent to be treated that way.

The situation is different in other jurisdictions.

In 2010, an Israeli court convicted a Palestinian man of rape-by-fraud after he had consensual sex with a woman whom he tricked into believing that he was a fellow Jew. If Botswana had such law, a man using fraud to secure sex (say a backyard-garden labourer claiming to be a manned spaceflight engineer with the Botswana Aeronautical Space Agency) would be liable to prosecution.

<http://www.sundaystandard.info/rich-married-men-targeted-false-rape-con-artists>