

PLEASE
tell
someone

“When I was 18, I was brutally raped. And I want everyone to know about it. That’s why I’m making a documentary about my ordeal. I’d been modelling in Milan and planned to go home to Israel. I went to a travel agent who told me all the flights from Milan were fully booked, but he said he was driving to Rome, where he could get me a flight the next morning, and offered to give me a lift. I agreed, but on the outskirts of Milan he stopped the car and attacked me.

“He taped my mouth and hands, and raped me repeatedly, before trying to strangle me with a cord and a plastic bag. I struggled with all my strength and, finally, when he didn’t succeed in choking me, he released me and asked me not to tell anyone. I promised not to so I could get away.

“Shaken and terrified, the first thing I did was call my mum. I never considered keeping quiet – that would mean my rapist winning. With her support, I reported the rape to police. Still coming to terms with the trauma and struggling to leave the house most days, I took my rapist to trial, where I had to relive the horrific events and face his denials.

“When I was crowned Miss World seven weeks later, the story spread and I became the face of rape victims everywhere. As a result, more women spoke out about their own experiences.

“A year after the attack, my rapist was jailed. I’m proof that speaking out will help you get justice. The only way we can make a difference for rape victims is by telling our stories. If you get robbed, you go to the police. So why not report a rape? Society finds rape shocking so many people turn a blind eye, but how can we start to make a difference if we don’t talk about it?

“Many women feel they can’t turn to the police for fear of not being believed or of having to share their ordeal with strangers. But even if this is the case, tell a family member or friend instead. Sharing your feelings helps unload the burden and you’ll realise you’re not alone. In making my documentary, I’m speaking to rape victims all over the world and many had kept silent. Speaking out is the first step to recovery, and the more you talk about it, the easier it gets. I no longer feel like a victim. I’m



**‘I was raped
but I won’t
STAY SILENT’**

Cosmo’s Please Tell Someone campaign has the support of rape victim and former Miss World Linor Abargil, 29

sharing my story with the world and that’s empowering. Each time a woman writes to me and tells me I’ve encouraged her to come forward, my confidence grows.

“Remember this: if you’ve been raped, the worst thing has already happened to you. Speaking out, telling the police and fighting for justice will *not* make you feel any worse. Reliving your ordeal and sharing it with other women is not only a vital healing process, it could encourage other women to do the same. There’s no need for any rape victim to suffer in silence. If you have a friend who’s been attacked, encourage her to speak to you, tell the police or call a helpline. When I told my mum about my rape, she called Rape Crisis, who gave her the advice she needed to support me the best way she could. Help is out there – you just have to ask for it. And never stop talking.”

YOU TOLD US

COSMO GAVE ME COURAGE

“I was celebrating a friend’s birthday in a nightclub when a man I’d never met before blew on my neck and made crude remarks. I shrugged him off, but later I was smoking outside when he asked me for a cigarette. I offered one to get rid of him, but he caught me off guard, and raped me. I told my friends I was ill and went home to shower, feeling dirty. I cried all night, angrily replaying everything in my head. It changed me from confident to a nervous wreck, but I never told anyone. Now, though, since reading *Cosmo*, I’ve told the police about my attack. I don’t want another girl to go through the same nightmare. Thank you for giving me courage.”

ANON, VIA EMAIL