

TRUE STORIES

For Tommy Sandini, life was pretty good. He was sixteen years old and a sophomore in a Staten Island high school. He did well enough in school, was on the varsity football team, and for the past three months was involved in his first serious relationship with a girl. One day after school his girlfriend, Pam, informed him that she was pregnant. It was not long after that Pam's mother, a police officer, found-out. Pam's mother hadn't even known that Pam was having sex, much less pregnant. When her mother angrily confronted her, Pam panicked and claimed that Tommy had raped her. So began Tommy's nightmare.

Mr. Goldman began his investigation by speaking with some of Pam's friends. One of those friends was present at a party a few months earlier at which Pam and Tommy disappeared into a room together and later came out laughing. During a conversation with the friend afterward, Pam mentioned that she had sex with Tommy. She added that she'd been having sex with him for over a month.

Mr. Goldman decided to have Tommy tell his story to the grand jury. Testifying before a grand jury is a risky business. In the right case and with the proper preparation, however, it can save one from being indicted, with all the ugliness that an indictment entails. So Mr. Goldman had Tommy testify. He also had the grand jury informed that a defense witness exists who they should hear from. As a result, they asked to hear the testimony of Pam's friend as well. In the end, the grand jury did the right thing and returned a "no true bill," with the result that the case was dismissed.

Instead of moving from his home to a cot in an upstate prison, Tommy remained in school and continued to play for the football team. His family was enormously relieved but deeply shaken that all it took was the say-so of one fearful sixteen year old girl to bring it all about.