Grace Jiang

She Testified Against a Rapist. Then She Became an Advertisement.

From London courtrooms to Chinese social media, survivors of rape are finding their pain exploited by black-market ads spreading unchecked on X and illegal websites.

Nearly two years have passed, but Sunny still remembers the details of that room and that night. What began as a personal story of survival became a disturbing glimpse into a vast, online underworld. After she testified against a serial rapist—Zhenhao Zou, a Chinese PhD student was [convicted of raping ten women in March 2025](https://news.met.police.uk/news/met-detectives-thank-victim-survivors-who-have-come-forward-following-conviction-of-serial-rapist-zhenhao-zou-495737) in the UK—Sunny thought the worst was behind her.

But then her trauma reemerged in an unexpected and deeply violating way.

She discovered that the news of her case was being exploited by black-market actors. Black-market actors on X were advertising rape videos, the public interest in Zou’s trial was being hijacked to advertise rape videos, voyeur content and illegal drugs. “If the police hadn’t found me, I wouldn’t think about this incident often. I would barely remember that it happened,” she said. Now, her past had been twisted into bait for illegal content.

Sunny shared updates about the case on Rednote, a popular Chinese social media app, where her posts encouraged other victims to come forward.

Sunny’s story is not isolated. Her testimony, meant to hold a predator accountable, has become part of a wider network of digital exploitation. Black-market accounts on X hijack the visibility of trending rape trials to peddle porn, drugs and access to illegal sites—an ecosystem largely operating in non-English languages, evading moderation and exploiting algorithmic loopholes. These posts don’t name Sunny directly, but they exploit the media interest in her case, using it as bait.

And it’s all happening in plain sight.

**THE SURVIVOR AND THE CASE**

A [trial](https://news.met.police.uk/news/chinese-student-convicted-of-drugging-and-raping-10-women-494243) at Inner London Crown Court found Zou guilty of a total of 28 offences, including 11 counts of rape against 10 different women. The case is listed for sentence on June 19, 2025, according to K Arulsivayokan, an Admin Officer at the court replying in an email.

Only two of his victims have been identified so far, and police believe there could be 50 more. Sunny, one of the two who testified, said she had been invited to Zou’s flat after he contacted her on social media. It wasn’t until later—when police showed up at her door—that she realized she was one of many.

British police told her that 1,300 videos [were discovered](https://news.sky.com/story/zhenhao-zou-how-a-student-described-as-smart-and-charming-was-unmasked-as-a-prolific-sexual-predator-13321005) on Zou’s devices but wasn’t published online. “I was terrified the first few times. But after watching several so-called leaked videos online and realizing they weren’t mine, I felt a little better,” Sunny said.

The trial received significant attention in Chinese-language media. On Rednote, comments flooded in. “I already watched the rape video on X,” one user said. Another replied, “Where did you find it?” “Just search his name.” Sunny followed the threads. The videos she found didn’t match Zou’s apartment, but the intent was clear: the case itself was being exploited to drive traffic to illegal websites.

“They are using someone else’s trauma to sell illegal websites,” she said. “But it’s happening on foreign platforms. There’s nothing I can do.”

**ENTER THE ALGORITHM**

A screenshot of a computer

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

Searching for “GHB” on X led to 731 accounts. Of those, more than 300 were clearly engaged in illegal drug or sex-related transactions, often in non-English languages. Searching for “Roofies” or “春药” (GHB in slang) produced similar results: profiles with contact information, Telegram links and background photos of drugs.

A screenshot of a social media post

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A screenshot of a graph

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

The term “偷拍” (hidden camera) showed accounts offering voyeur content of public restrooms, schools and even minors. Profile bios advertised “Lolitas,” “high school girls,” and “young students.” Clicking on one led to a video: a girl in a school uniform filmed masturbating, the caption read: “So young, so innocent.”

A screenshot of a web page

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

Zou’s name was also used. Searching “邹振豪 偷拍”(Zou Zhenhao Voyeurism) in Chinese surfaced accounts pretending to offer leaked videos from the case. English searches mostly turned up news articles, but in Chinese, the results were much darker.

One of the accounts even posted that Zou had “filmed 1277 videos,” echoing reports, however, the video itself linked out to a Telegram group that turned out to be selling unrelated pornography and drugs.

A screenshot of a social media post

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

To understand the scale of the issue and how this content spread, I built an AB test environment. I created a new X account using a ProtonMail address and accessed it through Tor Browser. Then, using Grok, an AI tool from xAI, I generated a list of keywords commonly associated with rape culture, drug slang and voyeurism—in both English and Chinese. By doing this, I saw how different content was surfaced depending on language and how non-English posts were far more likely to involve illegal advertising and imagery.

In English, results often returned official news coverage or unrelated accounts. But switching to Chinese slang and code words turned the platform into a dark marketplace.

“Very common. Very common,” said Marc Berkman, CEO of the Organization for Social Media Safety. “Platforms like X don’t enforce moderation in other languages. AI alone isn’t enough. And if you don’t have human moderators who are native speakers, it slips through.”

He added: “It’s a profit motive. Every extra minute someone spends on these platforms makes them money. That’s the conflict. Safety doesn’t pay.”

**THE MONEY MACHINE**

On X, many illegal accounts direct potential customers to Telegram, WeChat groups, or third-party websites. In some bot bios, the term “91” immediately raises red flags.

[91Porn](https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-cn/91porn) is one of China’s best-known underground pornographic platforms. Launched in the late 2000s and modeled loosely after Pornhub, it relied heavily on user-generated content and became infamous for secretly filmed videos and revenge porn. The platform was accessible without registration for years, though many features were gated behind an invite-only model.

During China’s [2018 “Clean Internet” campaign](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-05/24/c_1122883122.htm), police arrested several top creators, including a user known as [“Mr. Qin”](http://www.ce.cn/xwzx/fazhi/201907/24/t20190724_32708268.shtml)—a married father, foreign-educated and a former executive at a multinational company in Shanghai. He secretly filmed his sexual encounters using hidden cameras and uploaded the footage to 91Porn. In June 2021, Beijing police cracked down on 68 locally registered 91Porn accounts, removed 508 videos, and arrested 45 creators.

Yet the site is resurfacing—this time openly on X.

91Porn now operates an official X account with over 682,000 followers. Its bio presents a carefully worded disclaimer:

“91Porn Mission Statement: To entertain everyone without malicious intent. Protect privacy. We reject incest, violence, voyeurism, drug use, date rape, and all activities involving minors (under 18 years of age). We call for collective resistance against and condemnation of all forms of online doxxing, cyber extortion, cyberbullying, and similar behaviors. People in mainland China, please do not visit this site.”

However, this public message stands in contrast to the content the site promotes. Beyond the official account, 91Porn is also promoted through a network of bot accounts—many of which post nude content or link to its site.

Now, 91Porn and its imitators post free pornographic videos daily, many of which are trending news in China. Whenever a major incident occurs—especially those involving sexual violence, related videos often appear within one to three days. The authenticity of the content is rarely verifiable. More often, these platforms exploit public outrage to generate clicks.

Posts are frequently titled with women’s names, home addresses or workplaces. The content ranges from leaked nude selfies and revenge porn to violent and misogynistic videos, including child pornography (video title marked under 18 years old), bestiality, and footage of unconscious women—all in direct contradiction to the mission statement on X.

The site hosts more than 1,600 videos and frequently uses degrading language like “bitch” and “sex slave.” Some videos are tagged “underage” or “high school student,” but it’s impossible to verify whether those are minors. Many uploads are described as revenge porn, allegedly shared by ex-boyfriends or ex-husbands.

In the comment sections, many users leave crude remarks like “I want to f\*\*\* this bitch,” or solicit hookups: “Anyone in Beijing want to meet up?”

A popular genre, dubbed “Explorer” videos, features men secretly filming encounters with sex workers. These users set up hidden cameras in hotel rooms to livestream for paying viewers. Others record the stream and resell it for 1,000 to 3,000 yuan. Livestreamers can earn tens to hundreds of thousands of yuan, while the sex workers—unaware they’re being filmed—receive nothing and risk exposure in real life.

More disturbing are the drugged rape videos, in which unconscious women or girls are assaulted on camera. Assailants often slap the victims, call their names, and force their eyelids open to prove they are unconscious. Experiencing sexual violence is traumatic enough. Having those assaults replayed on thousands of screens multiplies the psychological harm.

Mainland China’s internet firewall blocks platforms like Google, Instagram and X. Users bypass restrictions using virtual private networks (VPNs). One IP address—154.207.77.23—has been linked to porn sites, VPN providers, and pirated movie hubs. These services promote one another in a closed marketing loop: the pirated video site advertises the porn site, the VPN site advertises both, and the porn site serves pop-ups promoting hidden cameras, date rape drugs and illegal sex services.

The result is a self-sustaining ecosystem: voyeuristic videos draw viewers in, misogynistic content dehumanizes women, and embedded ads sell tools, substances and illegal services (hidden camera, rape drugs, prostitution services and online gambling) to commit further crimes.

Site operators are careful. When Chinese authorities attempt to block them, domains are quickly replaced, redirecting users back to the main site. Registration emails and hosting servers rely on major services like Cloudflare, GoDaddy, Alibaba Cloud and Amazon AWS—making enforcement difficult. They use VPN to change IP address, typically located in Hong Kong, South Aisa and United States.

Other porn platforms are copying 91Porn’s model. Some, due to inexperience, have left traces that reveal their growth. One domain flagged by DomainTools (with a maximum risk score of 100) was registered with a domestic Chinese email. In six months, the domain was linked to three shell companies—in Shenzhen, Haikou and later Shanghai. All had minimal capital and either ceased operations or barely existed on paper. During the six months, it relocates IP address from Mainland China to Hong Kong. This website initially focused on pirated movies and TV shows but later evolved into a site that distributes pornographic videos—just like 91Porn.

**LAW, LOOPHOLES AND FRUSTRATION**

While voyeurism is a criminal offense in Hong Kong—[punishable by five years in prison](https://www.clic.org.hk/en/topics/sexual_offences/I_Non-consensual_Sexual_Offences/E_Voyeurism#:~:text=Section%20159AAB%20of%20the%20Crimes,effect%20on%208%20October%202021.&text=an%20individual%20for%20a%20sexual%20purpose.)—mainland China treats it as a [minor offense](https://sfj.beijing.gov.cn/sfj/sfdt/ywdt82/flfw93/436418115/index.html). A man secretly filming a woman in a changing room might only receive a ten-day detention and a 500 yuan fine. Women often report these incidents online, not to police.

Wanying Su, a graduate student who once worked as a private chef for Zou, now lives in China and has become a quiet advocate. After the trial, she offered to help victims translate materials and gather evidence. But what she uncovered shocked her.

While browsing Rednote, she received a message from an account called “Dating Guide for Singles.” It invited her into a group chat. There, over 400 members discussed how to drug women, shared links to fake dating apps, and sold how-to guides. One member boasted about using sleeping pills to seduce a foreign woman. At the end of his post, he included a QR code for donations.

Su scanned it. The QR code led to his Alipay page. His real name and ID were displayed.

She reported him. A Wuhan officer told her they identified the man but couldn’t arrest him due to lack of witnesses. He asked her to stop sharing the story.

Su filed a second report through China’s official petition platform. She listed: drug trafficking, obscene material, use of VPNs, and cross-border Telegram groups. Months later, it remains under review.

“The more I understand, the more frustrated I feel,” she said. “Like there’s nothing I can do.”

**EVERYONE SAW, NO ONE ACTED**

Back on X, the accounts persist. Some are suspended. Others adapt. The moment a major sexual assault case trends, they pivot—filling timelines with tweets selling voyeur content, rape drugs or links to Telegram groups.

Even now, nearly two months after Zou’s verdict, searches for his name still return illegal content.

Sunny, who once stood in a British courtroom and bravely testified against her attacker, now watches as the public interest in her case is recycled in an endless algorithm. Her story became a headline. Then it became bait.

“The rape was one thing,” she said. “But this? This is like being violated again and again and again.”