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97% THE STORIES 97%

BEHIND

THE

STATISTIC

97% 97%

97% A Mouthy Magazine Project © 97%

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EDITORS NOTE

I am incredibly proud to present to you our second Mouthy Magazine project - The Stories Behind the Statistic.

In response to the immense public outcry following the death of Sarah Everard, and the increased conversation around female safety, this project was born as a way to illuminate the voices of the many womxn who have been victims of sexual harassment and assault.

The saddening response by many to our demands for respect and safety has shown the true extent of society's crippling ignorance towards the reality of what it is to be a womxn in today's world.

Nevertheless, we will not be silent and our stories will be heard.

These are the stories behind the statistic.

TRIGGER WARNING

The contents of this project are incredibly raw and sensitive. There are explicit descriptions of abuse, harassment and sexual assault.

If you feel that you may be negatively impacted by the contents in any way, please refrain from reading and prioritise your own well-being.

SADLY

WE ALL
HAVE A
STORY
TO TELL

When I was 16 I was walking back from my friends sleepover at around 8 in the morning. I was only 5 minutes away from my house when I noticed these two guys standing at the side of the road. I immediately thought to cross the road but I didn't want to antagonise them, they might have followed me as I have experienced that before.

So I kept walking. One of them said something to me but I didn't answer and kept walking forward so he grabbed me, held me there and sexually assaulted me while the other man just laughed.

I won't go into detail but I'll never forget the feeling of his arm pressed against my neck holding me in place. I felt so helpless. I froze. I didn't know what to do, I tried to get out but couldn't.

I managed to bring my elbow forward and back into his stomach. He let go and I very calmly walked away. I was in shock and I kept myself calm by telling myself 'this is not a big deal, this is not the first time and probably won't be the last time something like this happens to you'.

At 16 I knew that. I expected it. That's what's so messed up about how we as a country accept sexual harassment towards women and do nothing to reduce it.

I didn't tell anyone for 3 days until I was walking back from school and a group of guys catcalled me and it brought it all back and broke down, ran home and told my dad what happened to me. I reported it but there were no witnesses and I waited too long for them to get more evidence.

I am just another statistic and I'll always know that. I didn't feel safe walking on my own for a long time. I still don't. I never will. I am now 21 and starting from the age of 11 I couldn't tell you the amount of times I have experienced some form of sexual harassment. For any girls who don't feel safe I heavily recommend getting into martial arts, it's not easy but it makes you feel so much more in control.

-Anonymous

**WE KNOW IT'S
NOT ALL MEN**

**F*CK YOU
I WAS 15**

I was 15. I finally found the courage to tell you enough, to ask you to stop, but you didn't.

-Anonymous

I didn't consent when I had sex with this guy at uni. I said things like 'I am not too sure' and was overall not enthusiastic. He took it as 'it's a no until I make it a yes' game.

After we had sex I told him that we are dating now because I was not used to sleeping randomly with guys. He says that I initiated it because I gave him a blow-job - this didn't mean I wanted to have sex with him. I felt so guilty and ashamed after. We have been together for 3 years now.

-Anonymous (aged 22)

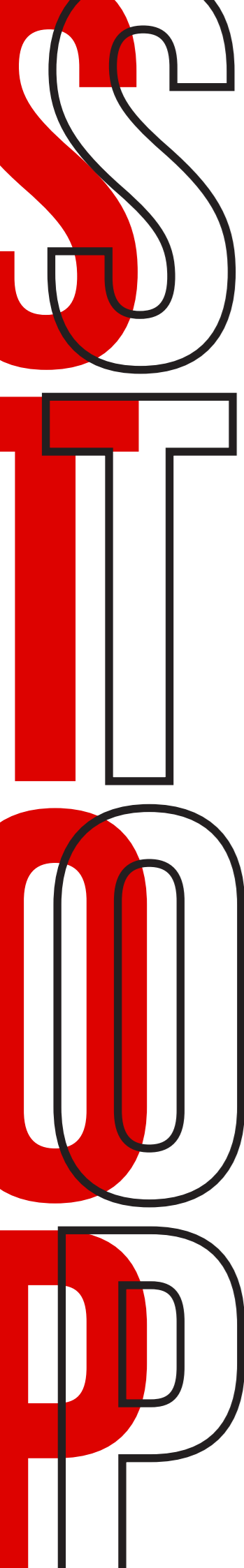
I was pressured into having sex without a condom once because he 'never wears one'. Despite trying multiple times to go to the shop & buy condoms, he wouldn't let me leave until we had sex.

I contracted Chlamydia after. This was the first and last time I had sex without a condom.

-Anonymous

When I was 16 an older man got me into his house and forced himself on me. He just whipped his dick out with no warning. I still can't walk on the street and it's been 4 years.

-Anonymous (aged 20)



I was once on the train back to university. As I got on the train, a man offered to help me lift my bag onto the train. I thanked him, smiled and took my seat. He sat 6 or 7 rows further down my carriage.

I sat reading a book, enjoying my journey...Until I felt that someone's eyes were burning in my head. I could see out of the corner of my eye that the same man who helped me onto the train had been transfixed on me since I sat down, already 40 minutes into the journey.

I gave him a frowned look to communicate my distaste as his staring at me. Yet, he greeted me with a snigger and continued to stare.

As I was sitting in a table seat of four chairs, I moved into the window seat away from the aisle so he could no longer see me in his eye-line.

I thought I was in the clear, until the train halted to a stop and as people trickled off the train, the same man moved three rows towards me. He took another seat that was now directly in front of me, moving seat purposely so that he would be able to see me.

I began to get nervous and texted my mom and dad that something strange was going on and that I was scared. As the train became more and more empty, I was scared that my carriage would be left with just me and him as I waited until the very last train stop.

My dad called me and asked what was wrong; telling me to move further down the train away from the man.

I didn't want to move. I should have to move. I couldn't move, because I was scared.

I stayed in my seat transfixed by fear and hoping that the woman opposite me would stay on the train until the end. As the train pulled to the next stop, the woman began to pack up her stuff and move to exit the train. I was about to be alone in the carriage with this man.

As he saw her get up, he also began to pack his things, and approached up the aisle towards me. The whole time he maintained a sly grin, despite my evident fear and disgust.



Much to my horror, he slipped into the seat directly opposite me and prepared to engage. That was my cue to escape.

I gathered my things rapidly and moved to pull out of the seat, but the man also stood up and quickly stepped in front of the aisle exit where I was aiming.

He just stood, looking down over me like he'd won, Like he'd trapped me.

I didn't know what to do, except the first thing that came to my mind was to yell 'MOVE' into his face. In his moment of shock, I managed to barge past him and flee down the train and it pulled into the final stop.

I had been wearing my university hoodie and was terrified that he'd follow me off the train or somehow find me again. I fled the train with my heavy bags, dwelling on the idea that I wouldn't be able to fight him off if he approached me again. I looked over my shoulder the whole way home.

In this instance, I had smiled at him and thanked him for his help when I got on the train. He had taken my kindness and gratitude as consent to stalk and invade my personal space.

In his mind, I had invited his attention. In my mind, I was terrified.



- Claudia (aged 22)

HE WAS ABOUT
45 YEARS OLD
I WAS THIRTEEN



I am fifteen right now.

My first experience was when I was thirteen.

It was the summer holidays and I was at a scout camp. We were going to go swimming down at the lake as it was a very hot day and we had nothing left on our schedule for the day. There were three other girls and about fifteen boys on the trip. I was only close with one of the girls and she was two years older than me. We went together and were the last ones down to the lake.

One of the scout leaders kept watching us from afar as we went swimming. Once it was time to go back to the camp, my friend and I came out of the water. One of the scout leaders approached us and was staring at our chests in a very creepy way. He kept telling us how 'lovely' we looked and we were both extremely uncomfortable and had to wrap our towels over our bodies so he would stop staring.

Before you try to tell me it was my fault, I was wearing a baggy white t-shirt with space themed things like planets and stars all over it and pink shorts that went almost down to my knees. I wasn't very developed and I didn't have a large chest so telling me it was because of that is pointless.

-Anonymous (aged 15)

“GIVE ME SOME OF THAT!”

“NICE TITS/ARSE!”

“ALRIGHT LOVE!”

“HEY BABE!”

I avoid going out alone.

You may be one of 4 strangers or groups of men who have shouted at me today.

You are bigger and stronger than me. If I shout back I could put myself in danger.

I feel powerless. You could attack me right now and there's nothing I could do.

I'll pretend I didn't hear you. Hopefully that will keep me safe and you will leave me alone.

-Anonymous (aged 26)

**MEN OFTEN DON'T
UNDERSTAND HOW WOMEN
SOAK UP EACH OTHER'S
SEXUAL TRAUMA, THE
TRAUMA OF OUR MOTHERS,
OUR SISTERS, OUR FRIENDS.**

WHEN I WAS 13,

I was groped at school. I told one of my friends but the boys denied it, one of them said that I'd made it up and of course "nobody would like me that way." Although the groping stopped after a while, I still received sexual comments. I believed that it was my fault the boys treated me like that, as if the fault lay in me and not them.

When I was 14, a man at a barbecue asked me what I wanted to drink. I said water. My dad laughed and said, "Cheap date, isn't she?" The man grabbed me and pulled me right into his body, and said "What are you doing Friday night?". They both laughed. I was pressed against the man's body and it was the first time I was really aware that men were a lot stronger than me.

When I was 16, my twin sister and I were on holiday with our dad and my godfather. My godfather moved my sister onto his lap and stroked her genitals over her leggings. It was in a busy room filled with people and different families. Afterwards she told our dad and he didn't react, it was like he didn't want to believe it or thought she was overreacting. A week later my godfather took us shopping and made us try on clothes and spin round in front of him. Whenever we tried on an outfit he surveyed us and took pictures of our bodies. I saw one of the pictures on his phone, it was a close up of my bum in tight trousers.

When I was 17, the local dentist stroked my sister's inner thigh. I remember her face when she came out of the appointment to the waiting room, like something had died in her eyes. It is one of the worst memories of my life and it wasn't even me it happened to.

When I was 18, a boy I'd had a crush on for a year finally kissed me one night. He wanted to finger me and I kept saying no. When I said I was drunk, he said "You don't seem that drunk." He tried to stuff his hand down my jeans and I made up some excuse about how I hadn't shaved and didn't want him to touch me because of it. "I don't care," he said. I performed oral sex on him instead because I didn't want him to be annoyed at me. In the morning I found a bruise in the shape of a hand-print on my thigh. I still had a crush on him.

When I was 19, a professor invited me to his house and told me that the only women he'd met like me, he'd married. He leant close to me at his dining room table and said he could see my soul in my eyes.

“IS THIS WHAT GROWING INTO AN ADULT WOMEN IS - HAVING TO PREDICT AND ACCORDINGLY ARRANGE FOR THE AVOIDANCE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT?”

- Candice Carty-Williams

Over the course of months, he made lots of comments to me, about how special I was and how he'd known that from the first moment he saw me. Once he said that post-Weinstein, he "couldn't get away with anything anymore." When I heard that, I got chills down my spine. One of my friends said she thought he was grooming me after we went for dinner at his house. He invited her to see him in his office, and joked "I'll keep the door open."

When I talked to my boyfriend about my experiences after Sarah Everard's death, I didn't mention any of that. Instead I said: I've been catcalled twice, once when I was 15. I remember kissing a stranger in a club who kept biting my mouth and when I told him to stop, he wouldn't. I ended up hiding in the bathroom because he was following me. Once I provided evidence to the police in support of my friend, a rape survivor. The man isn't in jail and my friend still sees him in their hometown.

I said that I wished I could go hiking alone, that I wished I could go jogging at night, that I wished that fear wasn't so heavy to carry.

-Anonymous (aged 22)

“BUT BEHIND IT
ALL, WE CAN'T
TRULY KNOW
WHICH MEN ARE
HARMLESS. AND
THE COST OF
BEING WRONG
IS HIGH”

- Soraya Chemaly

Two and a half years ago, I had just taken a big break off of dating apps for a few months because I had finally got on a course that I loved and was soaring through it. I was doing so well. I felt like my mental state was back in a healthier place and I felt better to date again.

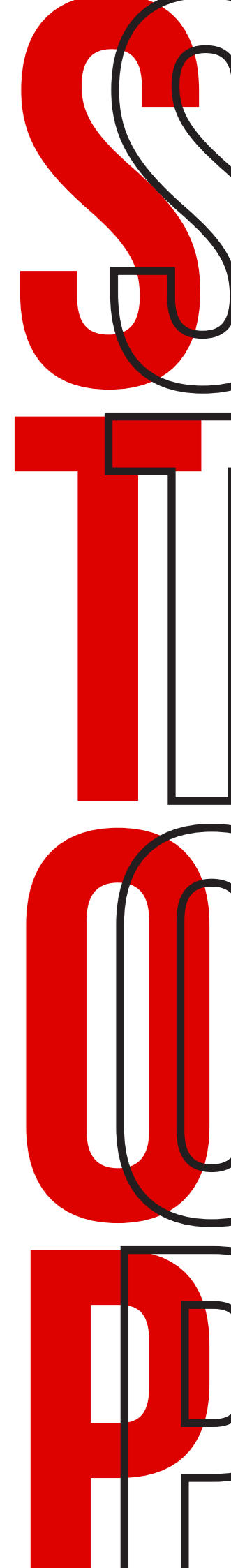
I started talking to this guy for a few weeks and then we met for a drink and everything seemed really good. We continued to go out and see each other and I felt a lot more comfortable around him.

One night he asked if I wanted to go round his and have dinner and stay if I wanted too. I didn't hesitate to say yes and even if something was to happen I seemed okay to do that too.

He picked me up and we drove to his home which was a good 30 minutes away from where I lived in the car. That made me a little uneasy. What made me more uneasy was the fact that he literally lived on a very dark, unlit and not very busy main road, with a turning road off of it that you could easily miss and not see if you had never been there before. We drove down the road for a good 5 minutes and it turned out it was the drive way to his house. It was huge. I noticed when we walked in there was some sort of security system on the days that alerted the house when people went in and out without a code to type in first. It seemed a bit much, but I went with it.

He had come from work so he said he needed a wash. I followed him upstairs and whilst he went to shower I sat awkwardly on the end of the bed waiting for him to sort himself out and get ready. When he got out of the shower he had a top and boxers on and laid on the bed, instigating that I should lay with him. I did it but I was really uncomfortable and then he tried to kiss me and I didn't want to. All I kept thinking in my head was I can't get out of here. I'll have to walk up the road on my own in the pitch black and then once on the main road where do I go after that. I couldn't call a cab without an exact address and even if I did it was more than likely that they'd get lost or miss a turning which then risks them phoning to ask where I was.

He kept pushing and pushing and eventually he got what he wanted. It's always difficult talking about this moment because I willingly let him do it; but the point is, I didn't want too, he didn't listen and I could go anywhere. Thinking that was it, he very quickly tried it again and he was a lot more violent this time. He took no care when moving me around forcefully, I could feel my limbs aching and stinging in places he'd grabbed me and moved me around.



I DIDN'T GIVE CONSENT... I DIDN'T GIVE CONSENT...

I got up shaking when it was over and walked into the bathroom. There was blood all over my legs, my underwear and it was coming from inside me - I knew it wasn't my period because I'd finished a week or so prior. Thirdly, something felt extremely sore and painful inside me.

After that, I cleaned myself up and got dressed in private when he decided he was hungry. He wanted Chinese so he ordered it to be picked up. We got in his car and drove to the Chinese. He went inside and waited whilst I was sat in the car. I was thinking of ways to get out and disappear without him finding me but I was more worried that he would or I'd be in even more danger by doing that. There was barely any signal and I couldn't even get hold of people. I saw a shop next door but I was too afraid to go in and tell someone. He got back in the car and we drove back to his place.

I remember picking at my food awkwardly on the other end of the sofa. I caught myself at one point in a mirror and noticed the big dark brown and black smudges starting to appear around my neck. The aching and pain only continued. When we finished eating he forced me to lay with him on the sofa. My arms were so stiff and tense, I didn't let the weight of my head relax onto him and all I thought was get me the hell out of here.

After that, he wanted to go back upstairs. He knew I'd bled last time, he knew I was exhausted yet he took advantage of my weakness, my limp feeling body, too tired and too in pain. I just laid there. At one point he pushed so hard down on me I felt my lip physically bust, sting and bleed.

It was late by this point and I remember laying on the opposite side of the bed facing away from him, making sure I wasn't touching him. I heard him fall asleep and I checked my phone to count down the hours until 6am when I knew he'd have to be up for work. I worked out there was 3 more hours and so I tried my best to sleep as much as I could before he awoke. It's safe to say I didn't get much.

I woke up in the morning to the bed shaking and then something wet hitting the back of my butt and lower back. Then I felt the bed lighten as he got up and went downstairs. He'd come all over me, whilst I was asleep, completely unconscious and just left me there covered in him. As soon as he left the room I broke down completely and then got up and stood in the shower with my underwear and everything still on. I got out and got dressed still soaking wet and waited on the end of the bed.

He picked up a knife because he apparently has to cook on his breaks at work. That wasn't the problem; it was the fact he held the knife in his hand the entire drive back to my home.

HE CALLED ME BUBBA. IT HAUNTS ME TO THIS DAY.

I got out of the car, I left, I went inside. I stripped down upstairs, shoved on a dressing gown, threw my clothes in the bin and ran a bath. It was only until I got in the bath that I saw what I looked like. My thighs were covered in fingerprint bruises, my neck was black, green and brown, my lip was so deep of a cut that it constantly kept busting open for days after. I sobbed hysterically in the bath, with a hand wrapped round my mouth so none of my house mates could hear me. I used an entire bottle of body wash and I still felt dirty.

I SLEPT FOR THE NEXT 3 DAYS.

I never went to the police. Why? Because no cell, no prison, no sentence could bring me justice for what he had taken from me. I will never get that back. My identity changed within one evening and I have never been the same since. But I will not let him take away my spirit; he will not win.

I continue to actively talk and speak to others about this assault - to raise awareness and to help others. I scream my voice so loud and I will spend the rest of my life doing that.

- Jen (aged 23)

WHAT CAN I GET YOU TODAY?

It disgusts me that so many women can literally write these kinds of experiences so easily as if it is like a shopping list. I don't remember my first ever experience cause to be honest I've tried to block out most of these experiences from my brain. So many times I've had my ass grabbed while working my way through a crowd in a nightclub or had random men in the street stare at my chest or my legs when I get dressed up for a night out with the girls, It's not a compliment to be stared at like a piece of meat.

I worked as a waitress for 2 years between the ages of 18 and 20, whether it was on the journey to and from work or actually while on shift the harassment didn't stop. Many occasions had large tables of men old enough to be my dad sometimes even grandad, wolf whistling when I walk past shouting for their "sexy waitress" made me so uncomfortable but I remember looking at the clock waiting for my other co-worker to come in for their shift so I could go on my break away from the uncomfortable atmosphere.

While working I've been asked multiple times if I have a boyfriend which is not something you need to ask a young woman serving you in a restaurant EVER!!!. I remember serving a table of older men and a few my age, having the older men comment on my figure and how I was beautiful also asking my relationship status (again none of their fucking business), straight after telling me to marry their son whom was sat right next to him, the son laughing and threatening to beat up my boyfriend stating that he would be better for me.

**NO, I AM
NOT ON
THE MENU**

IT WASN'T

I've had a lot of bad experiences but nothing will compare to this, for ages I put this off as being anything serious and tried to clear it out my head not telling anyone until now. I was on a night out with a friend from work, we had a great night, had some drinks and got a little drunk but couldn't complain we deserved it after our long shift. Near the end of the night we were standing at the bar waiting to get our last drink before heading home and these 2 guys came up to us, chatting away which was fine asking us what we were drinking and if we were having a good night etc. One of the guys was flirting with my friend, I kept a close eye on her while the other guy was talking away to me, asking if I was single although stating that I wasn't his type.

My friend wanted to have some "fun" with this guy and was going back to his flat. I didn't want to leave her by herself with these 2 random guys we just met so I went with her. We got to the flat and my friend and the other guy went off to another room which left me alone with this other guy in the kitchen. It was fine at first we talked but he then began coming closer and closer to me which made me a little uncomfortable before he then grabbed my waist and started kissing me without my consent I tried to pull away but I was still very tipsy and didn't have a lot of room to move as he kept going and pushing me further against the kitchen counter. After a few minutes I managed to catch my breath and push him to the other side of the kitchen although going by his next action that didn't agree with his ego as he grabbed me again pushing me back to the counter holding my wrists and telling me he was in charge. I could feel my legs shaking at this point hoping my friend would come in and we could leave.

MY

FAULT

Unfortunately this went on for a few more minutes but felt like hours of him holding me to the kitchen counter and forcing his lips on mine without my consent, trying to turn my head away from him but my body too weak and dizzy to fight. His hands somehow ended up under my skirt I could feel his hands touching my thighs and I couldn't help but feel guilty as I was in a relationship I didn't want to cheat, the whole time worrying I was being unfaithful as this guy forced my underwear down and flipping me round, pressing me against the oven and fucking me. I wanted it to stop, I tried to make him stop, nervous laughing it off and saying No. Trying to pull away and pulling my underwear back up, this happened a few times and every-time he flipped me around onto that cooker and pulling down my underwear, I kept just wishing the cooker was on as the burning of my hands would hurt less than the emotional and physical abuse that was happening at that moment. I could feel myself about to be sick, I couldn't control it, I was sick in his bin to which he thankfully stopped but that shouldn't have been the end point it should of been when I first said no when you could tell I wasn't in the right state to want it or at the club when I told him I had a boyfriend. I never told anyone I lived with this guilt of being a cheat for years worrying it would ruin people's opinions of me and think I was easy or a cheat. I'm not, It wasn't my fault and I know that now.

- R (aged 21)

**WHEN YOU SHAME
WOMXN INTO
CHANGING THEIR
BEHAVIOUR IN ORDER
TO PREVENT RAPE.
YOU'RE REALLY SAYING**

**“MAKE SURE THEY
RAPE THE OTHER GIRL”**

S
T
O
P

I was 12 - walking my dog with my mother and sister. I was excited to wear my new high heeled sandals out. The ones that made me feel "all grown up". A pickup truck filled with men pulled up beside us and started catcalling me, "You look scared. We won't bite" they whooped and hollered. My mother told me to ignore them, that I'd get used to it. It was then, for the first time ever, that I realized that maybe I didn't want to "look grown-up" anymore. I never touched those sandals again.

I was 16 - standing outside a restaurant with my friend waiting for my dad to pick us up. We were laughing and dancing to a song that had just gone viral when we were wolf-whistled by a passing van. We immediately stopped, no longer in the mood to dance. We waited in silence, but even that didn't stop the catcalls, "What's your price baby?" They jeered. I added waiting for a ride to the list of things I no longer felt safe doing.

I was 17 - being hit on at a cast party by a 27-year-old man. Despite being 10 years older than me, he was interested in talking to me. I was flattered! A good looking older guy choosing to hit on me? He insisted I stay with him the whole time instead of joining the rest of the cast and crew. I couldn't believe my luck... then I could. He grabbed my arm when I tried to leave and wouldn't let go until my cast-mate pulled me away for a photo. "Are you okay?" She asked, I grinned widely as the camera flashed, "No". I went home and cried.

I was 18 - working a night shift alone in my summer job. A man came up to the desk and wouldn't leave. I asked him if he was interested in buying tickets, he didn't respond. I repeated my question a little louder, maybe he just couldn't hear me properly, the wedding next door was quite loud. He doesn't say anything and I begin to wonder if he's a drunken guest. "Can I help you with anything?" I ask as he hunches over, his hands going to his groin. He started masturbating in front of me. I stare at him with eyes wide with horror. This wasn't covered in training. How was I supposed to deal with this when the customer is always right? I looked at the other wedding guests who had wandered in with tears in my eyes, unsure of what to do, they just laughed.

“YOU LOOK SCARED. WE WON'T BITE”

I was 19 - and invited, who I thought was a friend, over to watch a movie. He began to feel me up. So I moved. There was no point in pausing the movie - I didn't want to cause a scene. Maybe it had been an accident. He fondled me again... I moved again. It was a game of cat and mouse: he would touch, and I would avoid. He was the hunter, and I was the prey. It was only then that I realised I had invited a boy over to my dorm, alone. There was no one else in the flat. No one would hear if I were to scream. He groped me again, this time I slapped his hand away. I was terrified he would rape me in my own bed. When he finally left, I felt as if I could still feel his hands touching me as I said stop. I could smell his cologne on my sheets, room and body, just as pervasive as him. I cried as I scrubbed everything down. I no longer felt safe in my own room.

I am 20 now and can't name a single woman who does not have her own story. I could ask any family member, friend, co-worker, classmate, or even a stranger on the street - and they can tell a story about being sexually harassed, assaulted, or raped. It might be 'not all men', But it is every woman.

- Olivia (aged 20)

PARK SEX ATTACK Girl, 17, raped in busy park in broad daylight as police launch manhunt for man 'in his 40s'

SICK ATTACK Girl, 15, raped after being attacked as she walked across Southampton Common

CAREER CRIMINAL Man 'who drugged and raped spring breaker Christine Englehardt and left her to die' has 26 crimes on his rap sheet

MARRIAGE FROM HELL Gambling addict husband 'threw acid on wife after she refused to let his friends gang rape her when he lost a bet'

SEX ATTACK HORROR Girl, 8, 'raped in dumpster and offered 5p to keep horrific attack a secret' in India

RAPE HELL Girl 'gang-raped at knifepoint by 20 men after they dragged out of her car and beat relative who tried to save her'

FAMILY FIREBALL HORROR Rape victim set on fire along with her husband and daughter, 7, after she reported attacker to police in India

SHOCKING ABUSE Girl, 14, pregnant after being groomed and raped by Romanian sex gang while being 'trained' for prostitution in UK

BRUTAL ATTACK Girl, 10, beaten to death with a brick by 'family friend who tried to rape her' in India

BIRTHDAY RAPE Girl, 15, drugged and gang raped by TEN men at her birthday party with horrific sex attack leaving her needing surgery

FIND HIM 'Devastated' uncle of woman, 35, found dead after she was raped at home by intruder calls on cops to find attacker

I was the new girl at my current school and this boy asked me out and I liked him so I said yes. He gave me a tour and then we sat down in a corridor and talked and got to know each other. We talked for like 2 hours and he kissed me, which was fine, but then we started making out (bare in mind it was my first kiss, I've never done anything at all).

He then started to inch his hand down my joggers and I was really confused and just asked him not to. He repeated this same thing like 5 times.

Then he started fingering me when I clearly said no. I didn't really know what was going on to be honest, but I bled. It was horrible. And then the next day the rumour went around that the new girl was an easy slut.

I HATED IT

-Anonymous (aged 16)

About three years into my former relationship, my boyfriend (at the time) sexually assaulted me. We had been together since I was 16, and for a couple of years we were very happy. When we both started at the same university, he became emotionally abusive. For so many reasons, it was too difficult to leave. One night, he stayed at my parents' house with me and he sexually assaulted me while they were asleep in the next room. I remember telling him that I didn't want anything to happen because I was tired, but he carried on anyway.

I remember that I had my back to him and that I was crying while it was happening. And then afterwards, he cried, and told me that he hoped that I hadn't been forced into anything and said that he would never be that person that pressurised or forced me to do anything I was uncomfortable with. I reassured him that everything was fine - but his actions were far from fine. For a long time, I don't think I fully understood how awful his actions were, and even now I sometimes still can't believe that it happened. The reason I wanted to send this story in is because I know how difficult it can be to process or even recognise sexual harassment/assault when it involves someone who you should be able to trust and someone who claims to love you.

-Hayley (aged 23)

Text me when you get home x

When I was 16, I had my first kiss.

Whilst I agreed to the kiss, the guy I was kissing proceeded to try and finger me.

I found myself having to repeatedly grab his hands out from under my skirt and reiterate 'no'. It happened over 10 times and each time I felt myself give in a little bit more to the idea because I was tired of battling with him.

Luckily, he gave up trying.

But to this day, my only memory of my first kiss is having to keep him at bay as he tried to push me for more.

-Anonymous (aged 22)

“I AM NOT YOUR DOG THAT YOU WHISTLE FOR; I’M NOT A STRAY ANIMAL YOU CALL OVER AND I AM NOT, I NEVER HAVE BEEN, NOR WILL I EVER BE, YOUR BABY!”

- Joy Jennings

I wish I wasn't part of the 97%, or that I only had one story to tell, but, like the majority of women, there's more than a handful to pick from. My experience of sexual assault begins at the naïve age of thirteen, where I find myself trapped in a situation with an older boy. He's a bit rough around the edges, somewhat unpredictable, and in that moment I have to make a decision: Is it better to cause a fuss or go along with the situation? Will he get angry? Will he hurt me? If I leave, will I be safe in this area? What will he tell everyone? I try to make excuses and eventually it ends. I cry on the phone to a friend as soon as we part ways.

Since then I've experienced sexual assault a further four times. Four times a man has intimidated me with aggression, refused to take no for an answer or used force against me to gain what they want. Some seeking a kiss, some seeking far more. The most concerning part isn't even the shocking sense of entitlement they felt towards MY body, it's that I didn't expect it from any of them and now I can't tell who is or isn't a danger. A guy I pass on a dark street, my Uber driver, someone I meet from a dating app, I have to assume that every man has the ability to harass or assault me.

Alongside my five experiences of assault there are the countless times I've been harassed by a man putting his hands on me in a club. Some try to grope discreetly as they pass in the crowd, others outright slap and grab, all without my consent. The questions that I asked myself at thirteen continue to echo in my head whenever I find myself in these situations: Will he get angry? Will this compromise my safety?

Names like Sarah Everard and Grace Millane flash red in our minds. Because of this, we often can't take the risk of calling men out in the moment, as they (yes, that means you) have the potential to hurt us. Though we can't always tell you at the time, we can tell you now. Listen to us. Learn from what we say. Break the cycle of stories that every woman shares.

-Kirsty (aged 23)

At 12 I was groped for the first time. Standing in a queue in my school cafe the boy in the year below pinched me. I tried to ignore it at first because, if you ignore these things they just go away, right? If you don't give a reaction, people get bored and stop? Wrong. Squeeze. Squeeze. Squeeze. I turned round to look at him, maybe if he knew that I could tell what he was doing, he would stop? I was taller than him, by a lot. I couldn't quite believe that someone who was 11 who I had never met was touching me in such a public place. Turning round and trying to focus on what I was going to pick to eat, he kept on putting his hand on me and squeezing.

Looking back I wonder if any of the teachers saw what he was doing, it definitely wasn't subtle. I question whether, if I was a bit more confident or a bit less anxious I would have said something sooner? Would I have pushed his hand away and hit him? But then I remember, after it had kept going I spun around and told him to 'F*** Off' and mentioned it to my friends. They were the ones who had reported it to a 'grown up' and I was asked who it was.

I picked his face out of the year group's pictures and that was it. Nothing came of it, no apology, no punishment. That was the moment I began to realise that this is what life was like because I look like a woman.

Over the years I have been catcalled when I've been out for a run (red in the face, leggings and a tank top), Harassed at work by a customer in his 70s who couldn't stop commenting on my *cough* (uniform: white shirt and black trousers - I was 16 and when I mentioned it to a co-worker they laughed it off...'Yeah, he's creepy') and groped in a club (teetotal and out for a friends birthday, we were back to back Each time I've been terrified. Terrified that someone would think it is ok, terrified because I don't know what to do to make it stop, terrified that they would take it a step further and because my response to terror is to freeze (not fight or flight)... that I wouldn't be able to do anything to save myself. Sure, we've all heard the justification for things like catcalling 'it's a compliment', 'it's a good thing'.

FUCK OFF

**“DO YOU WANT TO KNOW A SECRET?
PEOPLE WHO KNOW YOU AND LOVE
YOU GIVE YOU COMPLIMENTS, THE
ONES WHO YELL AT YOU AS YOU
ARE WALKING DOWN THE STREET
OR TRY AND TOUCH YOU WITHOUT
PERMISSION ARE NOT DOING THAT”**

They are reinforcing the ideology that they can treat anyone as an object, they have decided you are not a person because of how you look or simply because you are in the right place.

Something I wish I knew, something I am still trying to learn, not everyone is like that. But, it doesn't stop the fear that you feel, the sickness in the pit of your stomach as you are walking down the street and you can hear footsteps behind you. If someone can do something in public without fear of being called out with no chance of their behaviour being stopped, how far could they go when they also control the environment?

As women, we know that 'could' isn't definite. But, you need to give us a reason for us to know it WON'T (because no one else has).

-Anonymous (aged 21)

SAYING NOTHING AT ALL DOESN'T MEAN

CONSENT

You may not like the statistic 97%, but we don't like being a part of the 97% either. I was 18. I was an adult, just. I have never really been a massive alcohol drinker, there's so many that make me ill. Generally speaking I'm a sensible person, but I'd been at work all day and hadn't eaten much. Without even considering it I drank as much as I did every Wednesday and every weekend.

This was maybe my 3rd or 4th week of uni, still finding my feet, meeting people. We played a bunch of drinking games and went out clubbing. We were all dancing and by that point I was completely trashed. I decided to go to the bathroom to splash water on my face. It took a while because the room was definitely spinning.

On my way back I felt a lad grab my hand and pull me into him. I leant against him with my eyes closed, his body holding the weight of my head and by that point standing was becoming difficult. He leant down to me and kissed me without a reaction from me, then proceeded to stick his hand down my trousers despite me being less than responsive. I'm not really sure how long this went on for, but he then grabbed my hand and started pulling me towards the exit. I had tears and was resisting as much as I could in my drunk state. I wasn't sober but I knew I was uncomfortable. I had accepted my fate at that point, but I was extremely fortunate that half way down the stairs that someone that semi recognised me grabbed my hand and pulled me away.

I always blamed myself for what happened that night, I was drunk and I never explicitly told him 'no'. Years on I know it wasn't my fault. I barely knew my own name in that state, there was no consent given.

-Anonymous (aged 21)

I was 18 at the time, it was my first boyfriend and he pressured/forced me into sex for the first time. We were home alone in his parents house and I felt like I wasn't ready and things were going to fast. I told him to stop and he made excuses and held me down. I hated every second and still to this day only my long term partner now knows what happened. I felt ashamed and he told me friends would think I was stupid why I was saying no when we were in a relationship and at the time I believed him. The relationship didn't last long after that and it affected me loads in future relationships.

Over the years I've also been in a taxi which tried to drive off and wouldn't let myself and my female friend out until we called the police, been followed when walking home, touched inappropriately in bars and clubs (which guys get angry and defensive when you challenge them) and guys I've even known personally made sexual remarks.

It's not okay that this is happening so often and so many people think it's not!!

-Anonymous (aged 33)

RED LIGHT

In year 9 (14), I was sitting in science learning about something that seems almost obsolete now when the boy sitting next to me asked me if I wanted to play a game while we waited for science to be over. He'd been in my class since I was in year 7 of course I said yes. Usually this means hangman on the back of a worksheet or letter we had no intention in taking home. This was different. It was something I'd never heard of before. 'Fire Truck'- apparently a friend of his had told him about it. He put his hand on my knee and moved up my thigh. I asked him how I could make him stop and he replied with 'just say red light'.

14 year-old me was not only baffled by the game but extremely uncomfortable. I said red light. He didn't stop, so I repeated myself, 'red light', I hit his side and said again, 'red light'. Finally he made his intentions clear when he looked at me and said 'fire engines don't stop at red lights'. Those words are ingrained in my head. His hand made his way under my skirt and unfortunately I'm sure you can imagine what happened. I started to hit his thigh and told him to stop but he proceeded. I grabbed his wrist and moved his hand away, and tried to switch seats with the person next to me, because I started crying. The teacher allowed me to leave to find my form tutor. You may think, how did a teacher not notice but our science benches are completely closed off and four rows to the back seems pretty private. The only reason it stopped was because I used force and cried.

-Anonymous (aged 19)

RED LIGHT

When I was 13, I was sat in an English lesson next to one of my male friends. I say friend, I wasn't close with him, but friendly nevertheless.

He and his friends at the rest of the table were sniggering and whispering things to each other, much to my confusion. The next minute, the guy next to me turned to me and put his hand on my knee.

"Say 'red light' when you get uncomfortable, okay?"

Before I registered what he said, he began to run his hand up my inner thigh.

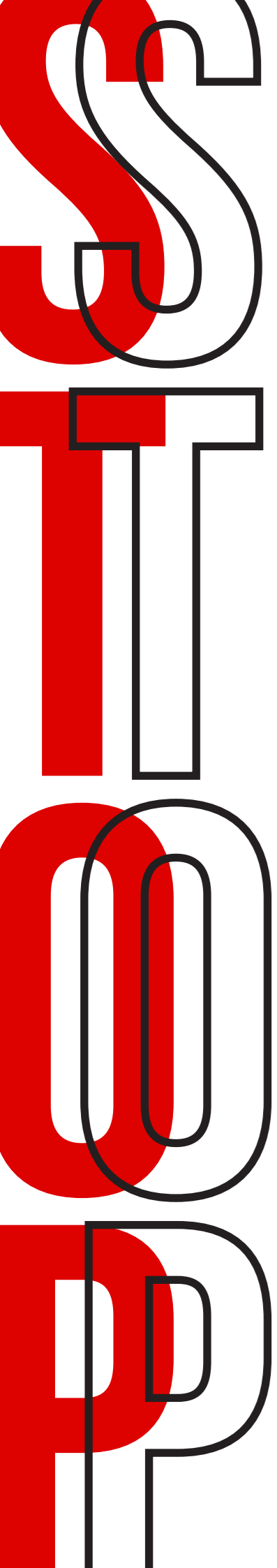
"Red light!" I said.

He responded: "Sorry, fire engines don't stop at red lights."

-Anonymous (aged 21)

RED LIGHT

**“SORRY, FIRE
ENGINES DON’T
STOP AT RED
LIGHTS”**



The first time I was sexually assaulted I was 16 at a gathering for Halloween with some friends I met on NCS. I knew/know of most of the people there, so I was enjoying myself until one boy from another college went to grope me as I walked past, luckily a lad I had mutual friends with stopped him – but this lad proceeded to come up to me and describe 'how good my arse was'. Trying to avoid him, I ended up chatting to another guy who I kissed; this guy then told me he needed the toilet, so I show him where it was – but instead he pushed me into an empty, spare room and pinned me up a wall. As I repeatedly asked him to stop, he forced me onto the floor to try to put his fingers inside me. I ended up having to give him a hand job, so he'd let me go as he was blocking me from the door.

The second time was during my 1st year at university. I started speaking to this boy on tinder who was a year above me before Christmas and spent the whole month I was at home talking to him. I whole-heartedly believed he was serious about me: telling me how we were going and do everything, while also giving me a shoulder to cry on about some things happening at home – he knew how vulnerable I was. So, we met the second night I was back at uni and we got on really well. We didn't stop talking and we kissed but I told him I wanted to take it slow as I really liked him. After not really speaking the rest of the week, on the 5th night back at uni, I went out with my friends but forgot my key. I drunkenly asked him if I could stay at his – as we had been speaking for over a month at this point and I trusted him. When I got there, I was very drunk and just wanted to sleep but he kept trying to touch me, and I got panicky (after what happened when I was 16). The only thing I remember is being pushed to my knees and him ramming, quite forcefully, his penis down my throat. I woke up in denial of what had happened and planned to see him again. He then ghosted me, messaging me once every 3 days with the excuse of family issues when in fact he was seeing another girl at the same time. Believing it was all my fault, I ended up in a very bad mental state, as he was able to manipulate and take advantage of me while he knew my home-life was falling apart. To this day, I panic if I see a group of lads in case one of them is him, he also ruined my trust and confidence, as well as caused issues with my boyfriend in the bedroom if he tries to touch me sometimes.

To the boys and men claiming, 'not every man...', the first guy's best friend was the one who stopped me getting groped, yet his best friend hurt me so much more. You don't know what your friends are like when they're not around – please start believing in us.

-Anonymous (aged 21)

“IT’S JUST WHAT HE’S LIKE”

When I was 18, I arrived later to a wedding that my boyfriend at the time was at.

I hadn't met his extended family before and when being introduced to his uncle, he tried to give me a kiss and went for my lips and tried using his tongue instead of a polite greeting on the cheek.

I was mortified, embarrassed and wanted to leave immediately.

He stayed beside us at the table for ages and most of our table laughed it off saying it's just what he's like and he's done it to other family members partners while I sat there very uncomfortable not understanding how this was "normal behaviour" that was accepted. The rest of the night, he was around the girls who were younger than his daughters including me and also rested his hand on my bum while he apologised about earlier.

My boyfriend didn't seem to take any notice and his dad had to check I was okay.

-Anonymous (aged 21)

I was 16 when I got my first job at a pub local to my area. Maybe it was stupid of me to think I wouldn't get into awful situations being in an environment where there would be older men drinking and becoming reckless. Apparently I looked like Katherine Langford and he loved that, something lots of my male co workers spoke about I guess. So when they'd move me using my waist or touching me or trying to see how many tips I'd made by cupping my bum feeling for change. Suddenly these men that kept asking me out sprung to action when customers would treat me like that. The time someone put a fiver in my back pocket and then slapped me like I didn't deserve any respect. Or when a drunk man with his family I might add, pulled me onto his lap and started throwing things at me and other customers because I wouldn't 'give him what he wants'.

The football lads could be the worst, watching me, tugging on my shirt which was obviously too tight because why would women's shirts accommodate girls with boobs. But as a barmaid at 16, you have to 'smile' 'the customer is always right' I guess. The kicker really was when one of the chefs left water on a top step and I slipped down the entire set of stairs and one of the team leaders who had been pressuring me to go out with him and touching me wanted me to show him what had happened, what 'damaged it had done to my body', like it was his to see. I had shown my female co workers and that lad had watched the footage of my falling- it's not like he could prove it didn't happen but no. I didn't want to put myself on display. I didn't want to undress. The punters thought it was some kind of show. This team leader forced me to unbutton my work shirt and take it off so he could 'examine' me. In front of the entire pub. In the middle of summer what was the likelihood of me wearing something other than a bra under my shirt. He ran his fingers under the back of my bra, making his way to the front.

**BOYS WILL
BE ~~BOYS~~**

**HELD
ACCOUNTABLE
FOR THEIR
ACTIONS**

Yes, unfortunately in front of the whole pub. I shook him off, an action which received a 'boo' from drunk old men. He could see the bruising, that should've been the end of it. Surely? I was certainly hoping it was. Before I could even begin to dress he wanted me to take my jeans off. I hadn't said there was any bruising there even if there was. My objection to this demand was met with a pelting of displeasure from the punters. The only way it wasn't forced on me was because my female manager told him that was enough. Would you believe it? All she said to me was 'boys will be boys' Fair to say I only worked one summer there- I was there for a year before I finally said enough was enough. I wish I could say this was the last time anything like this happened to me as I'm sure lots of women wish the same, but it wasn't. I felt empty, ashamed, I was repulsed by the idea that he was meant to be my higher up. That no one felt to intervene before I was forced to strip. Dinner and a show was it? I was disgusted with myself for months, he scared me because seeing so much of me only encouraged him and it only got worse. I was too scared to tell my boyfriend. I did tell my mum though, this anger and upset coming from me was met with 'it's part of the job'. It wasn't part of the job. I've never been so embarrassed or dismissed.

-Anonymous (aged 19)

[HALF-ARSEDLY] APOLOGISED [HALF-ARSEDLY] APOLOGISED

I am no stranger to sexual assault and harassment; I have experienced it more times than I can count. It has left me with constant questions of why? Is it me? Do I really attract that many messed up men? The one glaring issue that I have become familiar through my experiences is how sexist institutions can be and how they are not equipped enough to deal with sexual assault/harassment cases.

I was living in a new city with new friends and a new life. It was the end of my first year at University, and I entered a bedroom with my 'best friend'.

He bailed early. I never knew why. He messaged me to meet him at my friends flat to get things he had left. He had been upset about something, so I hugged him. The hug lingered too long, I tried to push him away, but his lips suddenly were against mine. I said no countless times as his arms stayed wrapped around me, as his lips slobbered over my neck and whilst his hands struggled at my belt. It took insistent begging. Eventually, I raised my voice, kicking, shoving, and pushing until he finally gave up with a, "Well, fuck you".

It could not have been more than ten minutes, but it was long enough for me to immortalise the fear of feeling someone grab me. It was long enough for me to never wear my navy blue bodysuit again. It was long enough for me to cry about it for years on end. And yet, the trauma was not enough for the University to believe me. He had depression, had a rough home life, and was going through things I could never understand. He (half-arsedly) apologised. He had been my best friend. Did I really want that sort of friendship to diminish? And did I really want to ruin that young man's future?

All of this, apparently, excused him assaulting me. And thus, it went unspoken about. It went unspoken about even when he confronted me, accused me of lying and blamed me for him trying to take his life multiple times. In fact, he made me guess how many times he had tried to commit suicide because of me.

I went to the University; I recounted the assault multiple times and had friends on stand-by with texts proving that he had admitted to assaulting me. There was evidence. He had been accused before I went forward. It wasn't enough.

He was let off and was allowed to carry on his studies. Nothing was put in place to stop him having the same classes as me, I had to suffer with seeing his face on campus almost every day and suffer with the fear that he would confront me. I even had my mitigating circumstance form rejected because the University did not believe my assault had been bad enough to affect my work performance.

The University Counselling asked me why I did not come forward sooner. They asked me why I did not go straight to the police. They told me I had done the right thing by fighting him off, but would that mean that I would have done the wrong thing if I did not fight him off? If I had not done certain things, I would have fucking deserved it?

He will graduate next month. I am grateful for an online ceremony due to the pandemic. I should not have to shake the hands of a Principle who represents a sexist, backwards institution. I deserve to celebrate my achievement surrounded by my friends and family and with my fingers up at the University that abandoned me.

I would love to say that is where my experience with sexual assault ends, but it isn't.

STOP BLAMING THE VICTIM

About a year ago I was out drinking with some friends. One of my friends wandered off and decided to go into a different pub with some other people she knew, at this time, I was alone in the streets, a “friend” of mine recognised me and told me he could take me for a walk to ‘sober up’ and then he’d take me back to my friends. Naively I agreed.

We walked towards the castle and stopped for a while. He began kissing me, I thought this was strange but I was okay with it and kissed him back. My friends started phoning me, but he wouldn’t let me answer it, he said “just 5 more minutes”, I thought okay that’s fine. Until he pushed me up against a castle wall, undid my belt and my trouser buttons, he reached into my pants.

I didn’t want this, I asked him to stop but he was insisting that he hadn’t got to the ‘good bit’ yet. His hands hurt me, his words hurt me. When I finally got home, my knickers were stained with blood, he cut me, he cut my vagina.

For the next week I was in a lot of pain, but I was too ashamed to tell anyone because I felt like it was my fault. I shouldn’t have been so drunk, I shouldn’t have worn skinny jeans, I shouldn’t have wandered off with him in the first place.

When I finally felt like I could talk to someone about it, I turned to one of my guy friends. We went out for a few drinks together and had a good laugh. When we were walking back he kissed me, I told him it was wrong as he had a girlfriend, but he didn’t care, she was at Uni, she would never find out. He kept kissing me, naively, I kissed him back. I really liked him, and he certainly knew it. He took advantage of me, he took advantage of my weakness, he took advantage of my feelings towards him. We continued kissing, and it was so lovely, until he got his penis out, he put it in my hand and told me to wank him off, I was so confused and unsure about what to do. I couldn’t, I didn’t want to.

I made a fool of myself because I just held his penis awkwardly in my hand. Eventually he had enough and told me he wanted to leave now, I agreed and he made me promise never to tell anyone about what had happened between us. That was the last time we ever spoke or saw each other. I was taken advantage of TWICE within a month by two boys who I thought I could trust, two boys I called my friends.

-Anonymous (aged 19)

**WE WILL
NOT
BE
SILENCED**

So, I’ve healed from this within an excruciating force. This event happened around the Summer of 2019, where I was still a minor and still in college. To this day, I cannot speak the name of my abuser, however he was the one who made me frightened to never meet up with a guy again.

Across from all of the counselling and therapy that I was catered to, I still am healing from the pain this man had caused me. I had been pressured online to meet up with this volatile and sick person, as it was known to be a dangerous adventure for me. The sunken feeling was first associated even minutes before I had met this guy, he knew he had a charm as well as a way to sway everyone’s sorrow into his manipulation. As the amount of gas-lighting and love bombing he had showed made the whole situation worse due to the amount of guilt I had treasured, only blaming myself for doing these things, whereas, I had remembered saying “no”.

I was too embarrassed to reject his offer and decided to ‘cave in’ and regretting every single minute of the penetration and later had not realised the effects that he had done. Of course, he blamed me by speaking constant lies saying I was “begging for it” and I “teased and made him”, to the point where I couldn’t even look at myself in the mirror anymore.

A part of me had shattered due to the realisation that I was not in control of my life and there were people in disbelief and had constantly aggravated him to hang into our friendship group. I mean, if I was honest, I’ve never felt more alone due to the fact that no one believed in me, therefore, I had lost all of my once trusted friends and he had made it seem as if it was my wrongdoing and I had made him do those things to me. I couldn’t even bring myself to speak about the things he had done to my body because I feel as if it was too excruciating.

These things happened as my relationship with another toxic guy had fallen through, to the point where I feel as if I wanted it all to end, and I only knew one way to end it all - if it didn’t exist anymore. As university came around, I felt more free than I was before, by blocking this abuser and his mind games out of my life and starting afresh. However, these things come up before you knew it because once again, I was too drunk to consent towards doing sexual acts on a guy and his rebuttal that made me feel so empty and used. It was the first night here and I felt more alone than before because a few weeks after, everyone started to detest me even though alleged rumours that surrounded me being associated with the name ‘sexual predator’. After this, I had lost everyone, again, that I knew and trusted and had realised that I cannot live like this anymore, I had lost faith in myself again and I know none of this makes sense, but I just felt so lost to the point of almost committing many times; losing my mind into dark places that would question my humanity and sanity.

I don’t know what else to say, I may be broken inside, but I am trying to heal and these men broke me without an apology as they victimised themselves and left me to ‘deal with it’. I am so tired of them trying to dictate, control and end my life because I know that it is just starting, I hope.

-Anonymous (aged 19)

“YOU SPENT THE WHOLE NIGHT FLIRTING WITH HIM...WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?”

That was the insightful response I gratefully received, from a boy, upon recalling to him the events I originally wrote for this publication. Inevitable responses like this led to me shredding it up. Because unlike the infinite, deeply personal stories women are increasingly unapologetic on sharing – I’m one of the many who can’t. And I think the confusion about what we judge as consent, are prime culprits for the other countless stories currently buried.

Moving to a city and meeting girls from varying backgrounds, sprawled over the country has spotlighted the most disturbing similarity many have suffered: whether they’ve been sexually assaulted or not. And this stems from the central factors of denial, misinformation, and lack of basic sex education. Worst of all, certain scenarios completely parallel in their plots with the same conclusion of uncertainty whether they wanted it. Because of these uncanny resemblances, I don’t have a doubt that other victims are silently contemplating, alone, whether their pain is justified, or a fabricated exaggeration. So the following scenarios, from experience on talking to girls, are irrevocably shared by others.

“BUT I’M ALREADY HARD”

A classic form of guilt tripping, and consequently, coercion. Because this borderline beg is only heard if we’ve already clarified no. Otherwise, he wouldn’t resort to his caveman instincts of believing that the blood rushing to his tiny cock is the only reason for people to fuck; without checking if that’s something we mutually, and genuinely want. It would be no surprise if he started banging stones together in rage at another rejection. Unfortunately, this unceasing persistence can, and does lead to unwanted situations.

THE ‘TEASE’

He cannot comprehend, that because you gave him an hour of your time on a night out to flirt, or even the entire night, that you still don’t want to fuck. And consequently, his bigoted, misogynistic mind interprets that flirting, and perhaps kissing as consent to fuck. Even if you began the night fancying the pants off him, with that was your initial intention, changing your mind, even if you’re in the most compromisable position, is more than acceptable – even if he’s inside you; as humans we are perfectly competent of rational thought and the ability to think for ourselves, listen to each other and change our minds in a split second. Yet too many girls have been in situations where boys don’t possess this rational thought, and don’t understand the concept of no longer wanting to fuck them. Similarly, we’re mistaken for playing a ‘tease’ and deep down, just want him.

JUST STICK IT IN

The previous scenarios have possessed potent themes of coercion and guilt tripping. By the explicitness of this title, you can likely infer the physical and even violent forcefulness that will be depicted. As established, ‘doing bits’ does not count as consent, especially when we’ve unambiguously stated we don’t want to go any further than this. But he doesn’t listen. And in the midst of some fully consensual, second base-base entertainment, an icy uneasiness gradually clamps around our throat and burns every inch of our chest. Swallowing is almost impossible. The reasoning behind why there’s a sudden shift in mood is initially a mere suspicion, but his intensifying, quickening breath confirms that now suffocating fear. He didn’t ask.

The fluctuating opinions over consent have undoubtedly confused many girls; our feelings of discomfort over sexual assault have been disregarded due to how flirty we were, what we wore, if we drank, whether we wanted it to begin with... This dismissal is so doggedly damaging for girls, to the point that we don’t know whether we were assaulted or not. Compulsory sex education is patently needed, as well as for boys to start using their brains when it comes to fucking. Boys, if these girls don’t ask for you so enthusiastically and fervently that they clearly don’t possess a single doubt in their mind, then it’s not consent. Because nothing is sexier than wholehearted consent.

- Cara (aged 19)

“BEAUTY PROVOKES HARASSMENT, THE LAW SAYS. BUT IT LOOKS THROUGH MEN’S EYES WHEN DECIDING WHAT PROVOKES IT”

- Naomi Wolf

**“YOU’RE NOT A VICTIM FOR SHARING
YOUR STORY. YOU ARE A SURVIVOR
SETTING THE WORLD ON FIRE WITH
YOUR TRUTH. AND YOU NEVER KNOW
WHO NEEDS YOUR LIGHT, YOUR
WARMTH AND RAGING COURAGE” - ALEX ELLE**

**“THERE’S MAGIC
IN WOMEN
TAKING CARE
OF EACH OTHER
IN A WORLD
THAT SO OFTEN
DOESN’T TAKE
CARE OF US”**

- Olivia Deramus

HELPLINES

RAPE CRISIS ENGLAND & WALES

Support for women and girls affected by rape, sexual abuse or any form of sexual violence. Provides details of local centres.

Phone: 0808 802 9999

Website: www.rapecrisis.org.uk

RAPE CRISIS SCOTLAND

Support for women and girls affected by rape, sexual abuse or any form of sexual violence.

Phone: 08088 01 03 02 (Phone free any day between 6pm and midnight)

Text: 07537 410 027

Website: www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/help-helpline/

CITIZEN’S ADVICE – SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT AT WORK

Advice line (England): 0800 144 8838

Advice-link (Wales): 0800 702 2020

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/

VICTIM SUPPORT

Services are confidential, free and available to anyone who’s been raped or sexually assaulted, now or in the past.

Phone: 08 08 16 89 111

Website: www.victimsupport.org.uk/

REFUGE

Provider of emergency accommodation and emotional and practical support to women and children

Phone: 0808 2000 247 (24 hours)

Website: refuge.org.uk

WOMEN’S AID

Working with survivors of abuse

Website: www.womensaid.org.uk/

REVENGE PORN HELPLINE

Website: www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk/

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Natascha Ng - For approaching us with this idea and giving us the inspiration to pursue such an important project.

Rebecca Ogilvie - For always being the creative force behind all of our wonderful projects and managing to always turn our concepts into something truly beautiful.

Above all, I want to say a massive thank you to **all of the brave contributors** who have allowed us to share their stories. I have been blown away by the willingness of our readers and womxn everywhere to share their experiences and enable us to make such a powerful statement.

I am in awe of your strength.

Love from Claudia and the Mouthy Magazine team

97%

OF YOUNG WOMEN IN THE UK HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY HARASSED