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BY MARIAN HAWIT ROSMO | MARCH 11, 2023

# Catcalls & Cocktails: We Only Want the Latter

**Sometimes all a girl wants is a fabulous Martini. Sometimes she gets it with a couple of olives for garnish and a side of an unwanted, sexually suggestive comment from a stranger in the street as she leaves the bar.**

The experience of being a woman can be magical and empowering. But it can be tough and overwhelming, too. Oftentimes this means you are degraded and sexualized. You are assessed based on your looks. And you are, in many ways, *reduced.* I write these words for all the women who at any point, have been called out in the street and have feared for their safety.

*Marian is a contributing writer for Vogue. She likes art, sushi, and long walks. The beautiful illustrations on this article are the works of artist Kelly Beeman.*

## The Mini Skirt.

I think the first time I came to know what a catcall was, I was eleven or twelve years old. Chest? Flat. Legs? Unwaxed. Desire to be noticed? Zero. I had a denim skirt on. It was short, sure. But my twelve year-old-self didn't question whether to wear it that day or not. It wasn't even a decision. It was a hot summer day in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, with the temperature nearing 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Hence the mini skirt.

Ten years later, and now I know what a catcall feels like. I know it by heart. My sister knows it by heart. My mom, friends, neighbors, classmates, aunts, professors. We recognize the ill-intent behind a stranger who whistles at us while crossing the street. We understand that when a guy in the street yells, "Hey sexy, why don't you want to talk to me?" He wants more from us than a conversation. We know that when he says, "Aww, baby are you running away?" It is, in fact, time to pick up the pace. Street harassment includes unwanted comments, gestures, or acts directed at someone in a public space without their consent. A catcall refers to the act of whistling or yelling something sexually suggestive to a stranger, usually in passing.

## A Catcall Can Be a Catalyst.

A catcall can be a catalyst to sexual harrassment and sexual assault. In my eyes, the overlap between these lies in the dynamic of power and control. The moment a perpetrator sexually objectifies and reduces a woman to her body parts, it's a complete invasion of her rights: not only does it cause pyschological damage, but it also makes her feel physically unsafe.

**About 45% of women have been a target of a sexist comment in public at least 25 times in their life.**

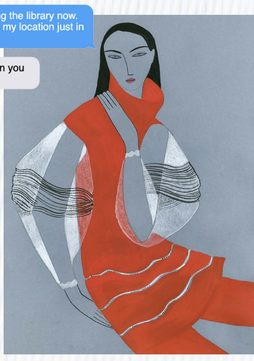
## The "She's Asking For It" Theory.

There's a lot of people who dare to say that when a woman is catcalled, sexually harassed, or assaulted, she may have been asking for it. While the mere thought of this nauseates me, I've realized this absurd blame game opens a window to ambivalence—a gray area where the perpetrator is made allowances for their wrongdoings. It's ridiculous to associate a violent crime such as rape with questions like, *what was she wearing? Was she drunk? Was she alone with a group of men?* Yet, here we are. The only thing I can say to the part of our society and culture who believe this to be true is, *do better.*

## Drive-thru Daze.

A good friend of mine was once in a drive-thru, waiting for her food inside her car. Out of nowhere came a man, right up to her window. He started yelling suggestive things. Then, he pulled his pants down and started masturbating while looking right at her and smiling. Immediately, said friend looked the other way in complete disgust. She was so confused. Why would someone do this? She wanted her fries. But she was horrified, furious, and shocked. She drove home. She told me she contemplated hitting him with her car. I can't say I blame her.

**88% of women ages 18 to 24 have experienced sexual harrassment at least once.**




## Live Location has entered the chat.

Sharing your live location can protect your personal security and save your life. According to the United States Bureau of Justice, women have a 62% chance of getting assaulted at least once in their lives. When walking by yourself in a deserted area, it's not a bad idea to share your location with trusted friends or family—if needed, you can get help sent to your location much more quickly. Another trusted tactic I often resort to if I feel unsafe is to fake a phone call or actually call a friend. *If you ever feel threatened, if you are being followed, or if you are in immediate physical danger please call 911.*

## Our clothes? Never an Invitation. Catcalling? Nothing Sexy About It.

Levi's is a proud advocate for women's safety. We believe women's wardrobes are never an invitation or an excuse to a catcall, sexual harassment, or assault. This March in honor of Women's History Month, Levi's has partnered with Birdie+, the personal safety alarm. With every purchase of our 501® Original jeans, you'll receive a complimentary Birdie+ personal alarm.

This device emits a siren loud enough to deter an attacker. Unlike other popular personal safety devices like pepper spray or taser, you can travel with your Birdie+ and take it with you everywhere. Your device can be connected to an app where you can receive a fake "excuse-to-leave" call, share your location with emergency contacts, and have access to a 24/7 live support rep. To learn more about street harrassment and its effect on our culture, visit *stopstreetharassment.org*

*Levi's stands with women, always. Visit levi.com to learn more.*