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## Consent

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CONSENT

They did not tell us that their catcalls were really just compliments  
That we were being oversensitive  
They did not have to  
We told each other these things  
Not because we believed them  
But rather because we didn't  
We knew that their jabs were predatory  
We kept it to ourselves  
We felt the phantom sensations of hands  
Stroking, touching, searching, finding

They did not tell us that we were just asking to be groped with our  
choice in clothing  
That we shouldn't have been teasing if we didn't want to have our ass  
slapped  
They did not have to  
We told each other these things  
Not because it was true  
But rather because it wasn't  
We knew we did not consent  
We kept it to ourselves  
We experienced the spectral conversation with an authority figure  
Disparaging, judging, blaming, belittling

They did not tell us that it was our fault for being too drunk or too high  
That it was their right as our significant other  
They did not have to  
We told ourselves these things  
Not because we felt this way  
But rather because we didn't  
We knew that it was rape  
We kept it to ourselves  
We lived the illusory court case  
Probing, shaming, besmirching, wilting

JAMES-OLIVER MACK