

*Be a lady they said. Your skirt is too short. Your shirt is too low. Your pants are too tight. Don't show so much skin. Don't show your thighs. Don't show your breasts. Don't show your midriff. Don't show your cleavage. Don't show your underwear. Don't show your shoulders. Cover up. Leave something to the imagination. Dress modestly. Don't be a temptress. Men can't control themselves. Men have needs. You look frumpy. Loosen up. Show some skin. Look sexy. Look hot. Don't be so provocative. You're asking for it. Wear black. Wear heels. You're too dressed up. You're too dressed down. Don't wear those sweatpants; you look like you've let yourself go.*

*Be a lady they said. Don't be too fat. Don't be too thin. Don't be too large. Don't be too small. Eat up. Slim down. Stop eating so much. Don't eat too fast. Order a salad. Don't eat carbs. Skip dessert. You need to lose weight. Fit into that dress. Go on a diet. Watch what you eat. Eat celery. Chew gum. Drink lots of water. You have to fit into those jeans. God, you look like a skeleton. Why don't you just eat? You look emaciated. You look sick. Eat a burger. Men like women with some meat on their bones. Be small. Be light. Be little. Be petite. Be feminine. Be a size zero. Be a double zero. Be nothing. Be less than nothing.*

*Be a lady they said. Remove your body hair. Shave your legs. Shave your armpits. Shave your bikini line. Wax your face. Wax your arms. Wax your eyebrows. Get rid of your mustache. Bleach this. Bleach that. Lighten your skin. Tan your skin. Eradicate your scars. Cover your stretch marks. Tighten your abs. Plump your lips. Botox your wrinkles. Lift your face. Tuck your tummy. Thin your thighs. Tone your calves. Perk up your boobs. Look natural. Be yourself. Be genuine. Be confident. You're trying too hard. You look overdone. Men don't like girls who try too hard.*

*Be a lady they said. Wear makeup. Prime your face. Conceal your blemishes. Contour your nose. Highlight your cheekbones. Line your lids. Fill in your brows. Lengthen your lashes. Colour your lips. Powder, blush, bronze, highlight. Your hair is too short. Your hair is too long. Your ends are split. Highlight your hair. Your roots are showing. Dye your hair. Not blue, that looks unnatural. You're going grey. You look so old. Look young. Look youthful. Look ageless. Don't get old. Women don't get old. Old is ugly. Men don't like ugly.*

*Be a lady they said. Save yourself. Be pure. Be virginal. Don't talk about sex. Don't flirt. Don't be a skank. Don't be a whore. Don't sleep around. Don't lose your dignity. Don't have sex with too many men. Don't give yourself away. Men don't like sluts. Don't be a prude. Don't be so uptight. Have a little fun. Smile more. Pleasure men. Be experienced. Be sexual. Be innocent. Be dirty. Be virginal. Be sexy. Be the cool girl. Don't be like the other girls.*

*Be a lady they said. Don't talk too loud. Don't talk too much. Don't take up space. Don't sit like that. Don't stand like that. Don't be intimidating. Why are you so miserable? Don't be a bitch. Don't be so bossy. Don't be assertive. Don't overact. Don't be so emotional. Don't cry. Don't yell. Don't swear. Be passive. Be obedient. Endure the pain. Be pleasing. Don't complain. Let him down easy. Boost his ego. Make him fall for you. Men want what they can't have. Don't give yourself away. Make him work for it. Men love the chase. Fold his clothes. Cook his dinner. Keep him happy. That's a woman's job. You'll make a good wife someday. Take his last name. You hyphenated your name? Crazy feminist. Give him children. You don't want children? You will someday. You'll change your mind.*

*Be a lady they said. Don't get raped. Protect yourself. Don't drink too much. Don't walk alone. Don't go out too late. Don't dress like that. Don't show too much. Don't get drunk. Don't leave your drink. Have a buddy. Walk where it is well lit. Stay in the safe neighborhoods. Tell someone where you're going. Bring pepper spray. Buy a rape whistle. Hold your keys like a weapon. Take a self-defense course. Check your trunk. Lock your doors. Don't go out alone. Don't make eye contact. Don't bat your eyelashes. Don't look easy. Don't attract attention. Don't work late. Don't crack dirty jokes. Don't smile at strangers. Don't go out at night. Don't trust anyone. Don't say yes. Don't say no.*

*Just "be a lady" they said.*

Camille Rainville