

# Seelye

ISSUE VII



# Letter from the Editor

“Today, our sexuality is an open-ended personal project; it is part of who we are, an identity, and no longer merely something we do.” - Esther Perel

As relevant today as it has ever been, sexuality is the key to our being. It defines us at almost every turn - how we think, how we love, who we become. Issue VII explores sex, gender and everything in-between. From our tolerance of oversexed media (page 22), to lust vs love and celebrating the female form (page 30). As ever we aim to stimulate your mind and arouse discussion. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Jenna

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# More than just pillow talk

MARNI BANKS

*“The moon is for things unseen, things done in the shadows and beneath the fog. Under bridges and beneath bed sheets — it’s for wild hearts and unconcerned minds. It’s where plans are made in dark alleyways and secrets revealed under the soft haze of light coming through the cracks of closed shutters.”*

Lauren Martin, Senior Lifestyle Writer, Elite Daily

Nothing feels better than that moment of release after a long, hard day at the office. The delicate softness that surrounds you, and the hyper-sensitive places it takes you to. Of course, I’m talking about getting into bed and drifting off into a deep sleep. What did you think I was talking about?

Imprinted with the patterns of your sleep, where your dreams and nightmares are mapped out by the creases on the sheets, your bed is a personal territory that allows you to stop, think, rest, and express your inner self. Many psychologists argue that people need to use the bedroom for sleeping and making love, and not much else. But in today’s society, where modern technology gives us a 360 digital reality, we’re so connected that it’s almost impossible to switch off. Have our beds become a platform to not only sleep and make love, but for the late nighters, creative writers and nocturnal thinkers to come alive?

As I write this, I’ll admit I am lying in bed, surrounded by soft cushions and a steaming cup of tea by my side. Don’t worry



Images courtesy of Alex Van

though, I'm not about to delve into the irony about how I am a product of what I'm writing. It's about 9am in the morning and I have a fresh, clear mind. I'm what you would categorise as a 'morning person', but as I scroll down my Instagram feed, I'm met with tonnes of images and memes of people who haven't been able to sleep. The second of the categories, aka the 'late nighters', float along during the day casually, barely going beyond the expected. But when it comes to night, they suddenly start challenging everyday normalities, and wondering why the Earth was placed exactly here and allowed us to provide a perfect climate to sustain human life. It is these people who come alive at night, who provide an interesting insight into how our beds are becoming an authentic canvas for stimulation and creativity.

According to Psychology Today, intelligent people are more likely to be nocturnal thinkers. It's been argued that average brains are conditioned to follow a sleep pattern that follows the rise and setting of the sun, while the more inquisitive, intellectual ones want to defy that pattern and create their own. Perhaps it is that only after the day is over, can we really begin to reflect, learn from, and absorb the effects of the day. Without the distractions of conversation, phones ringing and piles of paper work, we can really begin to play in the open spaces of our minds, indulge in our honest opinions and focus on our clearest perspectives.

Many bloggers and writers today use their beds as a thinking space, a desk and a library all in one, gathering everything they need on one laptop and writing to their hearts content. Bed is a peaceful, open playground, where we can be with ourselves. There's no need to order a coffee just to justify your space in the café, nor is there the need to make small talk with the person next to you who's

asking what your creative influence is. Bed is a space where we can just be, and for many writers, it's the perfect location to let the mind sync with your hands to write something profound.

We've all seen the pictures on Instagram and Tumblr of our favourite blogger's set ups, which consist of a black coffee, stylish laptop with a marble cover, and two bronzed legs with warm cosy socks on their feet. In a world where everything can be filtered to look like an idealistic setting and dreamy lifestyle, it has actually become the fashion to sit up in bed on a Sunday morning and blog. Not only are our beds a useful space for creative thinking, they are now becoming part of a show-reel to illustrate the chic, stress-free and idyllic lifestyle many associate with bloggers.

Our beds will always mean something to us. We wake with them and end the day with them. They are our door into tomorrow. But if like me, you fall asleep the minute your head touches the pillow, stop and think for a moment of what will be happening while you dream. This is when the poets rhyme and the musicians play; when geniuses have their breakthrough moments and your next favourite novel could be written.

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# Love to hate

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SOPHIE SEYMOUR

It often seems that in the year of 2015, more or less everywhere you look there is some form of 'story' concerning the day-to-day life of someone within the public eye. Unfortunately, in this culture whereby we are oversaturated with media at every turn, the content that we absorb isn't necessarily positive. If you were to calculate the grand total of negative articles that caught your eye over a 24 hour period, across all platforms (yes, that does include reading the newspaper over the shoulder of the commuter next to you), not only would you be left with a staggeringly high figure, but you'd also be forgiven for feeling a little melancholy afterwards.

When was the last time that you read an article that was genuinely brimming with praise for the individual being discussed? It's a little hard to think of an example. Now cast your mind towards

the type of copy that slates a celebrity because of their style/work/lifestyle/relationship/personality. Bingo. An endless supply of case studies. We have reached a point whereby society is so openly critical of others that certain marketing plots for those in search of fame even embrace this, using our nasty habit of selecting celebrities that we 'love to hate' for their own personal gain. The notion of 'no press, is bad press' has undeniably reached its uttermost limit.

The immediacy of our social media obsessed culture means that we have grown to expect a stream of endless content at the click of a button at any given time. Gone are the days of traditional journalism where a feature was properly researched and written with the greatest of care, before being printed and distributed to an appropriate audience. Why read something worthwhile when





you can just tap to see the latest fashion faux pas of the most recent tabloid victim?

This demand for throwaway content has grown at an alarming rate, and as a result, we see a stream of disposable articles both online and in print 365 days a year. Whilst writers and publishers fight to keep up with these changes within the industry, those who have achieved fame for whatever reason are continually relied upon to supply 'news' for the hungry press. Personalities who appear to thrive on scandal, shock and gossip gain immeasurable column inches and can even make a career out of provoking headlines. We're looking at you, Miley Cyrus.

In contrast, showbusiness alumni of bygone eras are remembered as iconic individuals, who were perhaps more authentic than celebrities of recent years and are therefore to be respected and idolised accordingly. For example, when details of Marilyn Monroe's personal life are brought to the surface in various documentaries, films, and articles, anything less than glamorous about her existence is considered to be tragic and utterly unfortunate. Similarly, other classic Hollywood icons such as Audrey Hepburn, Brigitte Bardot, and Elizabeth Taylor have an unspoken 'untouchable' status.

Whilst classic Hollywood stars seem exempt from this vicious cycle of damning press, it is also noticeable that male celebrities are often considered to be less appealing targets. Though they are not entirely off the radar in terms of gossip related articles, men in the media do seem to get off lightly in comparison to their female peers. If mentioned, they are likely to be considered an accompanying party, as apposed to being painted as the protagonist in the situation.

A common explanation for this would be that women are increasingly more competitive with one another, thus increasing the demand for catty, cruel statements and photographs to be published. Equally, it could be considered that the screen stars of the past are similarly not viewed as direct competition and would therefore be let off the hook. My personal inclination would be

that although most women agree that they have both been on the giving and receiving ends of this nature of criticism; the media has embraced these aspects that are supposedly typical of the female nature and enhanced an already downward spiral, which is proving incredibly hard to break.

The primary way in which we could put a stop to the tsunami of negativity, is to stop clicking those links online which claim to reveal the 'worst dressed'. Quit purchasing the publications that actively shame celebrities on their cover and within their pages, and aim to eradicate any form of unnecessary catcalling in our everyday lives. I bet that nearly everyone would agree that it would be beneficial to see an end to the bitchy nature of our society, yet very few seek to find an alternative.

The popularity of websites such as HelloGiggles.com reiterates the need for change, as the site veers completely away from malicious content, following the lead of co-founder and much loved actress Zooey Deschanel. The same also stands for magazines that only offer positive and interesting articles, such as Lula and Violet, the whimsical bi-annual publication created by renowned editor and stylist Leith Clark. We may have fallen into bad habits of consuming catty content, but that doesn't mean we can't break them. Though there may be a warped satisfaction in ranting about whoever it is that we select to 'love to hate' there is far greater pleasure in absorbing something entirely harmless as an alternative. Cat videos anyone?

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# Is sex no longer sexy?

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SAMANTHA VANDERSTEEN

If you are old enough to remember when *Sex and the City* first hit our TV screens back in 1998 then you might also remember how shocking it was to see such explicit sex scenes on mainstream TV. However many of the racier scenes from the popular TV show seem almost Victorian when you compare them to the graphic nudity and sex displayed in more recent shows like *True Blood* and *Game of Thrones*. Are we now so used to seeing sex on TV that it's no longer shocking or surprising? Is sex no longer sexy?



Can you remember the last time you were shocked by sex on TV? Over time public perception shifts and things which were once considered shocking suddenly become commonplace. Shows like *Sex and the City* drew criticism when they aired for glamourising casual sex, yet fast forward to the present day and despite the rape, violence and incestuous sex displayed in *Game of Thrones*, it is often lauded as one of the best TV shows of our time. It is interesting to note that a sex scene that did draw criticism was a scene where Jaime Lannister forced Cersei Lannister to have sex next to the body of their dead son. The main focus of people's disapproval seemed to be the proximity of sex to death but they were not as concerned by the fact that the characters are brother and sister and that the sex was forced. Are we so bored by sex on TV that it is only by positioning it next to death that it becomes shocking again?

Perhaps the fact that the whole programme is obviously fantastical allows us to accept the explicit scenes more readily but it does beg the question, where do we draw the line? Lena Dunham's TV show *Girls* has drawn much criticism for its sex scenes, but surprisingly the complaints have been focused more on the body shape of Lena, who happily strips off for the show, than the sex itself. The fact that seeing a twenty-something girl, who is not your typical stick-thin model-like actress, naked on TV is more shocking or concerning than the violent and graphic sex displayed in *True Blood* suggests that our perception of sex on screen is becoming skewed.

It's not just TV shows where sex is now so common we barely bat an eyelid; the rise of so called 'mummy porn' like *Fifty Shades of Grey* has played a role in bringing graphic sex to mainstream culture, and stars like Miley Cyrus and Rihanna regularly use risqué displays to promote their latest single. And few can forget the *Blurred Lines* video which showed female models parading topless around Robin Thicke as he sung lyrics, which many argued could be considered to be justifying rape.

No one is suggesting that sex doesn't have its place on TV. We live in a time where people can be open and honest about their

sexual relationships and the fact that sex is a huge part of our everyday lives means that it is only natural that it plays a part in what we watch on TV, but the danger is that when we criticise the realism of shows like *Girls* and glorify the fantasy of *Game of Thrones* we risk losing our perspective.

It's encouraging that we no longer live in a time of sexual oppression but it's safe to say that sex on TV is in danger of being so mainstream it is borderline boring. With the danger of sounding like a prude why don't we, at least sometimes, just leave a little to the imagination.

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# Burlesque Baby

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JENNA JONES

“But your’re not sexy Jen” ... “And you certainly haven’t got any rhythm”. The type of comments that only life long friends can get away with saying, as I sheepishly informed them that I would be, for all my sins, partaking in a burlesque class. Of course I am more than aware that yes I’m probably not the most sexiest of people and that I have about as much rhythm as an embarrassing uncle at a wedding reception but I am nothing if not thorough. So when I decided that I wanted to write a feature on the art of burlesque I knew that I had to experience it for myself.

Turning up at Pineapple Dance Studios for my Burlesque Baby Taster Class I was apprehensive to say the least as what can only be described as perfectly formed extras from Fame lounged on the steps of the entrance. I’m generally quite good with new situations and I actually enjoy the nervous tinglings of being out

of my comfort zone; but this was on another level entirely as I gingerly made my way to reception, all the while the logical side of my brain urged me to immediately abort mission.

In the run up to my burlesque debut I knew that I couldn’t go it alone. And thankfully my person of choice - better known as Jess - was equally as awkward and uncoordinated as myself! Jess who when asked why she wouldn’t be removing her socks for the class, stated that her toes were “not quite summer ready!” But all jokes aside, up until this point we were still blissfully unaware of what was coming. Billed as a ‘taster class’ I naively assumed that we would be surrounded by fellow beginners to the world of burlesque; completely forgetting that said ‘taster class’ was being held at one of the most famous dance studios in the whole of London. Needless to say that as the confident dancers in their





crop tops, tights and high heels filed in it took just one look at our ill fitting black leggings and baggy t-shirts to realise that Jess's 'not quite summer ready feet' and I were tragically unprepared for what was to come.

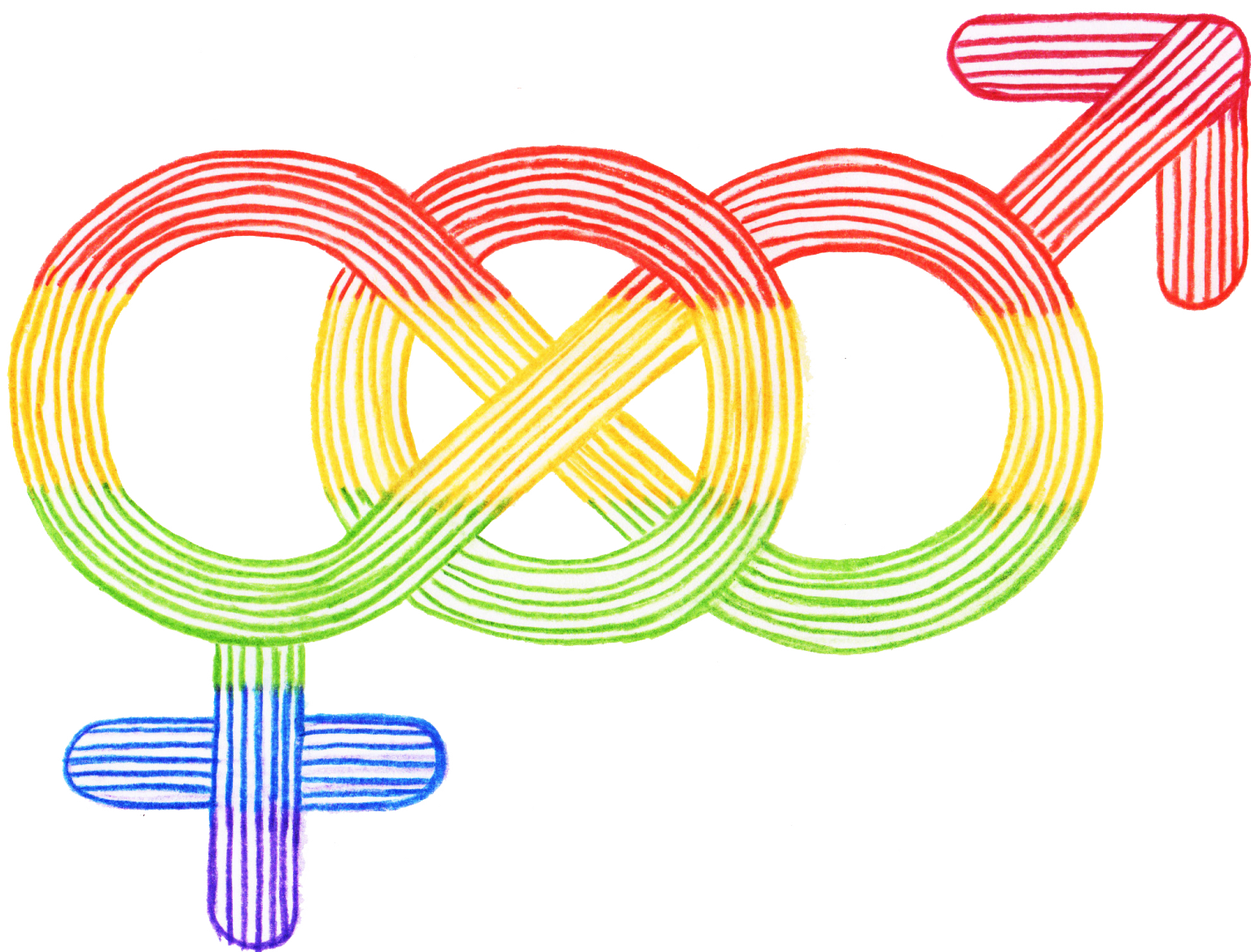
So why, I hear you cry, did I think that it would be such a great idea to volunteer myself for something so obviously out of my comfort zone? The truth is that I have always been fascinated by the world of burlesque and more importantly I fiercely champion any activity that encourages women to be proud, sexy and independent; without fear of judgement or ridicule. And while nowadays more and more women are actively involving themselves in such activities there are still so many across the board who are very uncomfortable when it comes to embracing their sexuality. A category which, it turns out, I unwittingly found myself in at the start of the class. In a room filled with nine other women - women who not once judged or questioned my being there - I felt awkward, embarrassed and uncharacteristically shy. Being sexy, all of a sudden becoming the most preposterous outcome to the situation.

According to owner of Burlesque Baby, Sharon K, "modern women wouldn't generally want to approach a class that had a strip tease or lap dance theme to it because that would be way too confronting. But with burlesque, while we are in essence teaching strip tease, it's old school strip tease which is less confronting and more glamorous." Sharon sees nothing wrong with modern strip tease or exotic dance but she feels that the type of 'old school burlesque' taught at Burlesque Baby is "much more adaptable and a great way for all women to face their fears and feel confident and sexy". Sadly, another major factor attributed to women's lack of confidence is today's fickle media portrayals of women.

Sharon understands that burlesque is obviously not for everybody for all manner of reasons, but she explains that "many women are often scared to come to burlesque because of the stereotypical standards of beauty that are promoted online and in the media".

Yet despite the portrayals, Sharon still welcomes women from all walks of life through her doors, "from princesses of Dubai to powerful lawyers" who, despite being career driven, self-assured women still don't feel confident in their own skin. A devastatingly preposterous, yet common occurrence. "It's never just about dance. We dig deeper and find out what it is these women really want out of the class. We teach these women how to feel like the sexy and confident women they are." From wearing red lipstick everyday to purchasing sexy lingerie, Sharon encourages women to make a change, as something as trivial as investing in a pair of stockings "could be the thing to change [their] life around." It's facts like these that not only educated me but made me realise just how naive I've been about the world of burlesque. Women attend burlesque classes to feel good about themselves and "there are many more layers to achieving that goal than you would imagine," says Sharon.

So did I enjoy my first taste of burlesque? Ultimately yes. Will I return? Probably not. But what I have gained from just one 60 minute class has been eye opening and invaluable. Who cares if I felt stupid or uncoordinated, Burlesque Baby is about empowering women through confidence, sex appeal and encouragement. "Ultimately it is so rewarding for us to know that we have made a difference to so many women's lives". And with parting words like that who could argue?



# Stand bi me

TALIA MAGUIRE

Sexuality is a hard topic to discuss. As an extremely personal subject matter it can often be difficult to understand and identify with others of a different sexual orientation, not to mention the many variations and myths surrounding the topic. Everything I have learnt about sexuality has been from friends, family and the Internet. I don't recall ever learning about anything other than heterosexual relationships during my time at school, and even then it wasn't exactly informative. Sex education was limited and what we were 'taught' was biased and censored to reduce embarrassment. But what exactly is there to be embarrassed about? It's this way of thinking that leads to oppressed sexual minorities and eventually depressed individuals.

***Bisexuality*** - A person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction

*to people of their own gender as well as another gender; often confused for and used in place of 'pansexual'*

One thing that I find worrying is why a person's sexual identity is of such importance to society, as surely such a choice has no bearing on anyone other than the individual in question. Society feels as if it should dictate and protect people from these alternate sexualities, but why? They are not in themselves damaging. What is damaging however, is denying somebody the right to be themselves because others may not be comfortable with it. Sexual intolerance is evident everywhere; just think of most mainstream media and the types of relationships they depict. Even though a queer\* individual consuming media aimed at a heterosexual couple will not be damaged by this material, they are rarely

offered an alternative that depicts their own sexuality, which is most definitely harmful to their well-being and self acceptance.

I often see indie, low budget documentaries and films being made with the LGBT community in mind, but it doesn't seem to be reaching popular culture in the same way. Thankfully there are exceptions to the rule, with a number of recent TV shows and films aiming to actively promote other sexualities. Popular television series' such as Orange is The New Black and The 100, as well as 2014 feature film Pride, are intent on encouraging the acceptance of sexual minorities within society. Sexual minorities are also restricted by the 'LGBT' community label, which can often be more of a hindrance than a help. By labelling certain TV shows and films as LGBT specific society is inadvertently excluding the heterosexual population from media that could, and should, be enjoyed by the masses.

***Pansexuality - a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions***

Increased exposure with regards to all types of relationships and sexuality is needed, not just for the queer community, but for the entire human race. I'm constantly dumbfounded by the misconceptions I hear about sexuality. Comments such as "bisexuals are just greedy", "a pansexual could never be faithful" and even "there's no such thing as being asexual" shouldn't be commonplace in today's society. Ultimately education is the key. If schools offer broader sexual education that covers all sexualities then future generations will have a more informed understanding of sexualities outside of their own, making for a more open and accepting society. Yet while being educated on various types of sexuality is one thing, sadly accepting it is another altogether. After all it has only been two years since the UK legalised gay marriage and it is still not accepted as a lifestyle choice globally.

In 2014 The Office for National Statistics ran a survey exploring sexual identity in the UK. When asked how people identified themselves 93.5% answered heterosexual, 1.1% identified as gay or lesbian and only 0.7% of people asked chose bisexual or

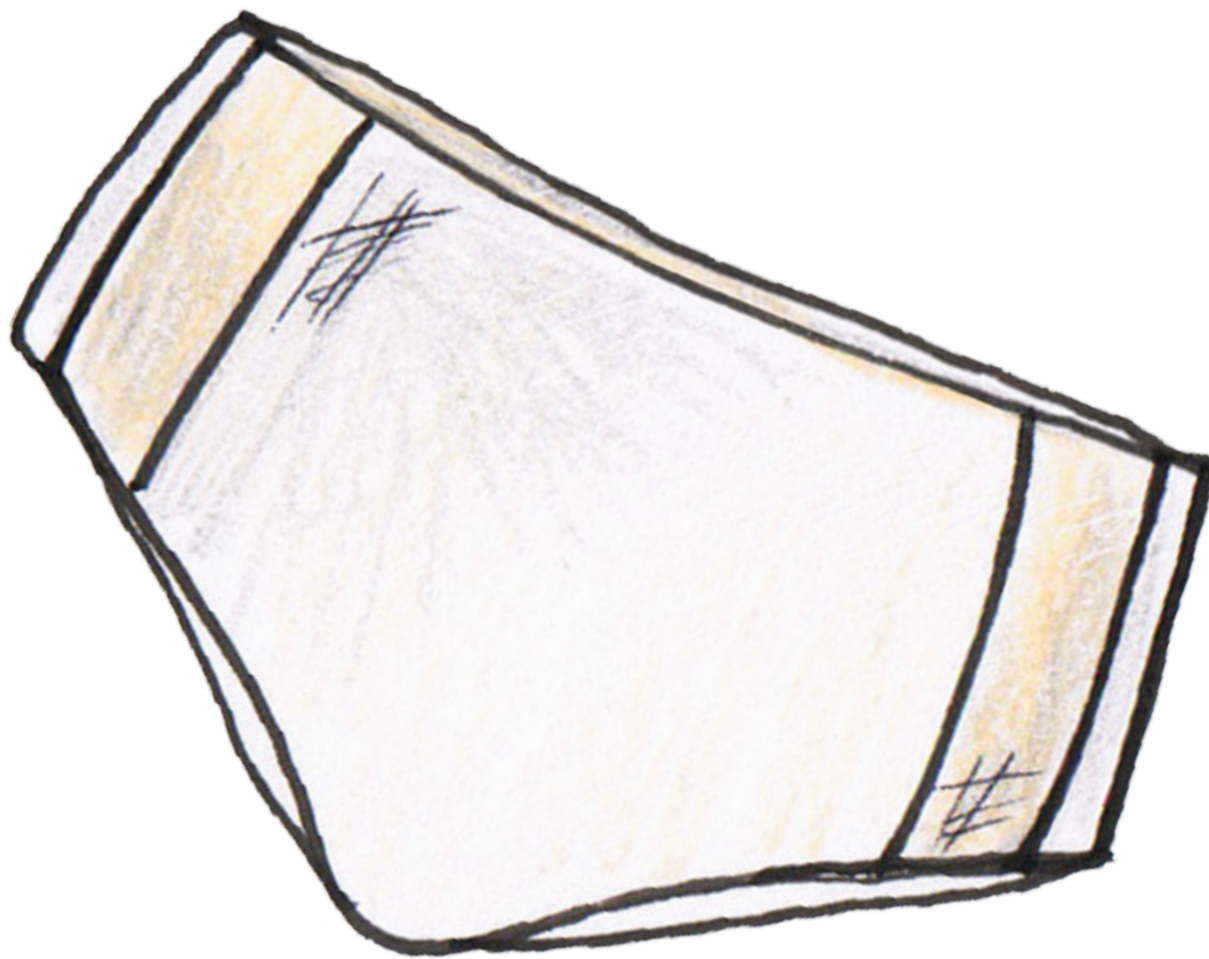
'other'. However of the 180,000 people surveyed 4.7% refused to answer. Could this possibly be an indication of the fear some people still feel about coming out, even within the anonymity of a survey? However the survey did show that adults between 18-24 years of age are more likely to identify as queer. Perhaps a sign that young adults feel more able to explore who they are without fear of prejudice due to a much better understanding of all types of sexuality through social sharing and open access to relevant information. Whereas older generations who haven't had the same influences may feel it's too late to reidentify themselves.

***Asexuality - a person who generally does not experience sexual attraction (or very little) to any group of people***

One of the easiest and most effective ways we can prevent sexual prejudice is through our own lives. Try not to immediately decide upon someone's sexuality because of who they are currently dating or who they've dated before and just accept others for who they are. We can't force the media to produce more LGBT inclusive material but we can begin to talk more openly about sexual minorities and look to educate ourselves, our friends and our family. As humans we have an incredibly diverse capacity for love and that is something that should be celebrated every day, not just at annual Pride events. There is an endless stream of information available as well as a great number of people willing to talk about their experiences. So open your eyes, you'll see there is more love in this world than you previously thought.

\*Queer - although once used as a derogatory term, it is now widely accepted and embraced by the LGBT community





# Letting it all hang out

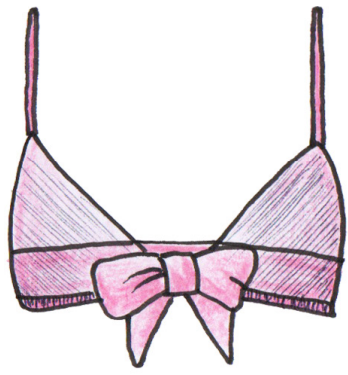
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LIZZIE BENTON

The early stages of a relationship are a rose tinted blur of date nights and exciting sexual escapades that leave you feeling besotted and blissfully unaware of the world around you. We end up acting like love struck teenagers; kissing in public and hand holding in a bubble that only contains the two of you. And in this infatuated state that is known as the 'honeymoon period' we do our best to only show the perfect side of ourselves. Editing anything out that may make them think we're an unsuitable match. From rushing out of bed in the morning to ensure they don't smell your morning breath, to always adding a touch of makeup even if it's what you're classing as your 'natural look'.

Our need for perfection in the early stages of a relationship is nothing short of a big fat lie that we're not only telling ourselves, but misselling to our future partners, and don't think for a second that your other half isn't just as guilty! Fast forward 3 to 5 years, and it's safe to say that the show of perfection you were both putting on has dwindled as the years have gone by. Where once mornings were filled with spearmint scented cuddles, they are now replaced with arguments about snoring, and a competition to see who's making the tea. Expensive negligees have been replaced with sweat pants and the only time you wear a full face of makeup is for a special occasion.

Evolving to 'comfortable relationship' status can often creep up quite unexpected and before you know it, reality has come along and swiftly removed those rose tinted glasses. It's safe to say that 90% of relationships start to 'let it all hang out' sooner or later, and



FIRST DATE



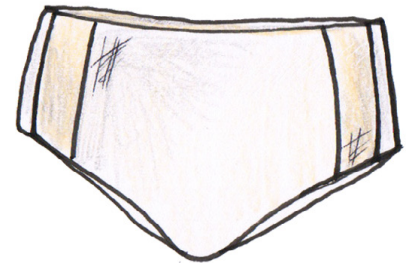
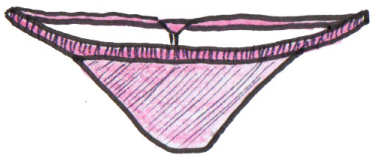
1 YEAR



3 YEARS



5 YEARS



Illustrations courtesy of Dulcie Pryslopski

if you're still making as much effort as you did in the early days then you deserve a medal. Maintaining that level of perfection shows that you really care about how your partner perceives you, and even shows how much you care about yourself. There's nothing wrong with taking pride in your appearance, especially if it gives you the confidence to live your life. But the simple fact is, keeping up that unrealistic facade is exhausting and time consuming. In a dream world I'm sure we would all love to look as flawless as the Stepford Wives, but why should we feel the need for perfection, when life itself is imperfect in so many ways. Maybe it's down to the way we were brought up or the influence of modern media, but the truth is that there are often huge misconceptions about what the perfect relationship should look like and how to play the part.

A new relationship seems so perfect because it hasn't been tainted by reality yet. Once you've been through sickness and a few spats, there's a real sense of freedom in not having to put on a show anymore. Feeling comfortable around each other can bring a new dimension of love because you're not limiting the relationship to how things look. But as with all things in life there has to be a balance. Pyjama days together cuddled up on the sofa do just as much good as date nights in your glad rags. Making an effort is not just about getting the handsome catch in the first place or showing the world that you're in a perfect relationship. It's all down to your confidence, and when you look and feel good about yourself, you'll have the confidence to bring a deeper, more honest love to your relationship.

I've heard many women complain that there's no point in making an effort anymore as their significant other rarely notices the

difference, but that attitude can often be the start of a slippery slope. It's true that after a certain amount of time some men stop putting in the effort that they took to woo you in the first place, but that doesn't mean you should lower your expectations and self worth simply because a man isn't justifying it. The effort you put into yourself shouldn't be for him, it should be for you. I'm not saying that everyday should be a beauty pageant, but taking pride in yourself only helps you feel better about you. And if you can't feel good about yourself, how can you let someone else in?

Nobody has ever said that relationships are easy. Finding the balance between those comfortable days of laziness and just the right amount of effort from both of you takes time. So by all means let it all hang out, just don't forget your game face altogether.





# Borrowed from the boys

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SOPHIE SEYMOUR

To me, there's something unexplainably appealing about clothing and accessories inspired by typical menswear pieces. I'm not suggesting selecting clothes straight from your boyfriend's wardrobe; which I find surprisingly hard to pull off, despite what blogs, films, and well-styled fashion shoots would imply. The items that frequently feature on my Pinterest boards, in my Tumblr posts and then eventually my wardrobe, are those that have been created by taking everything that we love about classic male style, and considerably re-working the piece with a feminine twist.



Images courtesy of Charlie May

For example, I think that Hackney based footwear brand Miista have achieved this balance perfectly with their 'Rylie' brogues, and I absolutely must own a pair. The same goes for wardrobe staples such as blazers, biker jackets, oversized t-shirts and, of course, a lot of denim. To help pinpoint the precise allure of 'borrowed from the boys' style, I turned to designer Charlie May to discuss her eponymous clothing brand.

After studying Fashion Design at UWE in Bristol, Charlie gained experience with both Louise Goldin and Thomas Tait. She later launched her own label in 2011, which has since continued to attract the attention of several heavyweight fashion publications. The womenswear line has an unmistakably sophisticated, minimalist theme throughout. When asked about the process that goes in to her collections, Charlie explains: "I design how I like to dress, which is usually pretty laid back. Leaving detail to the fabrication of the pieces and design details is much more my style. I've always been very inspired by androgyny, as it just seems more exciting than overt femininity."

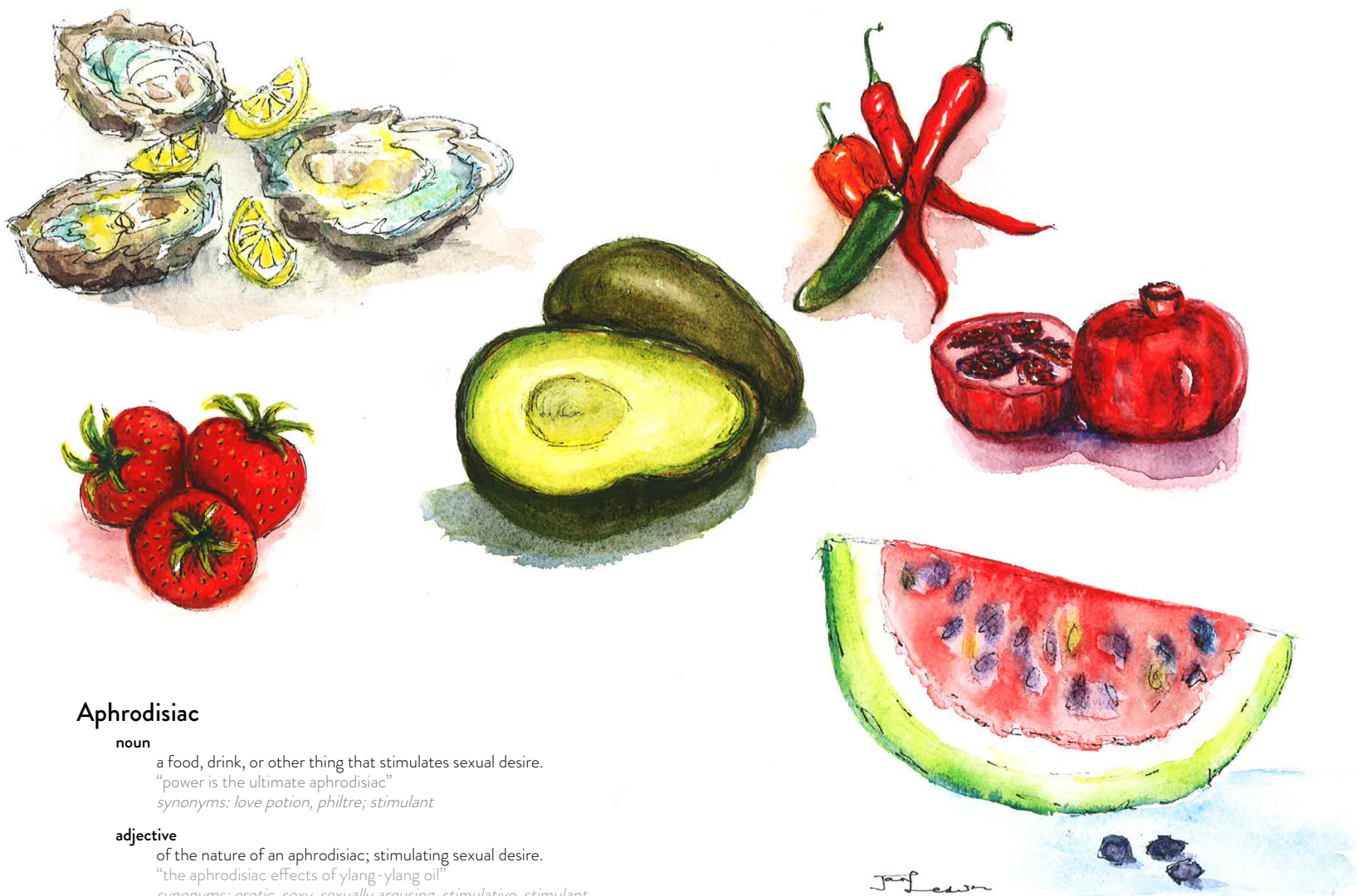
According to Charlie, one of the most popular garments within the collection has proved to be "wide leg pants in various fabrics. They're super long so they bunch on the ground ... very 90s hip hop and RNB inspired. Of course we hem them to the length the customer requires, as that style isn't for everyone, but I think you just can't buy trousers like that now." Charlie has completely embraced androgynous styling, to the point where her masculine inspired designs have even led to men purchasing from the womenswear brand. Success.

So how exactly can we explain this desire to own classic menswear pieces? "I think it's about their laid back appeal," says Charlie.

"These garments are usually unfitted and hang looser on the body. To me it's much more about comfort than about power dressing," she adds. We are also in agreement that it's vital to add feminine touches when styling masculine garments. Charlie explains that "jewellery is key. I like to wear a loose white shirt with a great watch and gold rings - it looks super sexy and confident," in particular recommending timepieces by Larsson and Jennings, which provides me with more items to add to my never-ending wish list.

If we didn't require any further encouragement to invest in classic menswear inspired pieces, Charlie concludes by telling me that she believes "a woman is at her most beautiful when she's comfortable. I think that the modern consumer wants something that's timeless, which you just aren't going to get with a trend driven piece. I reject any idea that a woman isn't attractive when she dresses this way." And with that, I'm off to the checkout.





## Aphrodisiac

noun

a food, drink, or other thing that stimulates sexual desire.

"power is the ultimate aphrodisiac"

synonyms: love potion, philtre; stimulant

adjective

of the nature of an aphrodisiac; stimulating sexual desire.

"the aphrodisiac effects of ylang-ylang oil"

synonyms: erotic, sexy, sexually arousing, stimulative, stimulant

# I love you, I love you not

MARNI BANKS

Butterflies flying, stomachs churning, legs twitching and toes curling. These are just some of the emotions we feel when we meet that special person that spins our world around. Taking away our ability to look at things with a straight and clear mind, the feelings we experience when we meet someone are fuelled by idealisation and projection, where we see what we want to see and hear what we want to hear. This is lust, an altered state of consciousness programmed by the primal urge to procreate. But when does this turn into love and what really is the difference?

## Lust for You

Based largely on physical attraction and a heightened sense of imagination, lust is everything we feel at the beginning stages of a relationship. It's exciting, unexpected, passionate and spontaneous. Lust throws our emotions into a whirlwind, driven

by the sex hormones testosterone and oestrogen, which causes those embarrassing moments of flushing cheeks, a racing heart beat and clammy hands. It can cause a loss of appetite and a lack of sleep, and if these feelings continue to develop, you begin to fall into what's called the attraction phase, and this is when you're really in trouble.

## Law of Attraction

The attraction stage is when you start to become overwhelmed with emotions for the other person and they begin to consume a huge amount of your consciousness. Those inevitable text games of who is going to message the other first and how long you are going to leave before replying. Spending hours replaying your last date in your head and giggling to yourself out loud on the tube as you relive the first kiss. Sound familiar? Well, this is all





caused by a group of neurotransmitters which are the important 'love' chemicals that get our hearts racing and blood levels rising. Adrenaline is what can cause us to sweat and make our mouths go awkwardly dry. Dopamine is another neurotransmitter that stimulates what we define as desire and rewards, triggering an intense rush of pleasure. This is where we go googly eyed and can lose control of what we're saying and thinking. Finally, a rush of Serotonin can affect our mood and social behaviour, as well as our memory, perhaps explaining why we can't stop thinking about anything else but them. All of these neurotransmitters play a vital role in generating feelings of lust, and can actually sometimes send us temporarily insane. I wasn't joking when I said that you're in trouble.

### ***Together Forever***

So long as we haven't lost you at the attraction stage and you're not tattooing their name onto your arm before your second date, you're about to get to the really exciting bit. The more time you spend with that person and the more your understanding of them grows, your mind begins to rationalise things and your hormones change once more. A bond is formed and you fall into what's called the attachment phase. This is a much more grounded feeling, where two key hormones are released by the nervous system.

Scientifically known as Oxytocin and Vasopressin, these hormones help to cement the strong bond between partners, in the same way they do with a mother and her child. You begin to feel committed to that person, and they become a part of your life. Often released after sex or even a cuddle, they deepen the feelings of attachment and make couples feel much closer to one another.

The key to the heart of this question is that falling in love happens over time and the journey you embark upon, from the initial attraction stage to those deep romantic feelings, is a manic whirlwind, but boy is it fun! The real secret to it all is about learning as much as you can about that other person and understanding them entirely in order to really love every ounce of them. Go with it and enjoy the ride.

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# Forever in fast forward

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JENNA JONES

I remember my first bra like it was yesterday. It was 1998 and I was eleven years old. Like many a peer pressured adolescent, I watched as one after another each of my pre-pubescent friends strutted into school, chests puffed out like birds of paradise, bragging about their all new grown up underwear. Standing there, tugging at the elastic of my pretty pink vest, I struggled not to let the jealousy get the better of me. Like some elite private members club I knew I wanted in and at that moment nothing in the world was more important than owning my own bra. So that afternoon face to face with my mum I plead the case for my first - very much wanted, but definitely not needed - bra. And despite the quite frankly ridiculous question my understanding mother took pity on my ever so serious tone and agreed to my request.

The bra in question was perfect. Colour: dark red and bottle green tartan. Brand: George at Asda. Size: 28AA. Quite possibly the biggest, or should I say smallest, waste of material, but to me that pointless and unnecessary scrap of material was my one way ticket to womanhood. It didn't matter that its unpadded cups were essentially filled with fresh air or that it was quite possibly one of the most uncomfortable things I'd ever worn. It was mine and I loved it. By now you are probably wondering why on earth I'm waxing lyrical about my very first bra and the reason for my nostalgia is this...







Illustrations courtesy of Jan Lewin

As I type these words I'm sitting in the window of Starbucks on a Saturday afternoon and the eleven year old girls of today's generation are out in force. You know the types: hair straightened to within an inch of its life, faces unrecognisable through inches of makeup as each acrylic nailed finger furiously taps the screen of a bejewelled smart phone. Unlike in the late nineties when for me something as trivial as winning the surplus bra battle was seen as the pinnacle of grown up behaviour, pre-teens of the noughties seem to be fully fledged young women before their young bodies have even reached puberty. Of course I'm aware that it's all superficial; wash away the makeup and remove the costume jewellery and you would be met with a fresh faced adolescent, yet I can't help but be horrified by the drastic change in youth culture as young girls of today seem to be bypassing their younger years in a mad bid to grow up.

I know it's nothing new for a child to want to grow up before their time, hence my very first bra, but for me at that age that was where it stopped. Sadly what is becoming more and more apparent these days is how easily accessible it is for children to press fast forward on their youth. From high street stores and tabloids to music videos and social media; pre-teen minds are saturated by over sexed and explicit content that is of course bound to have an effect on their lifestyle. Clean cut pop stars like the Spice Girls have been replaced by Miley Cyrus and her wrecking ball. We've exchanged girl power for Twitter rants and rehab and I can't help but feel slightly shocked at the state of affairs.

Back in 2010 there was a crack down on TV advertising, magazines and clothing, as premature sexualisation of children was depicted in the sale of Playboy stationery and high heeled shoes for girls as young as ten. Yet five years on what has really changed? In the eyes of a pre-teen social media is king so ultimately it is content

posted on celebrity Instagram accounts and Twitter feeds that will impress the most on young minds. The government may well have cracked down on stores and tabloids, but we live in an all consuming digital age that young girls can access at the click of a button. So while the controversial merchandise in question may not be as readily available in stores the whole exercise becomes null and void all the while our younger generation has a constant stream of online access.

It's scary to think that so much of our lives is now dictated by the Internet. It seems that every problem known to humanity is more often than not caused by, or some way affiliated to, one social media platform or another, but sadly that is the price we seem to have to pay as by-products of the digital age. Thankfully some people are taking to social media in an attempt to infiltrate a more positive message on the kids of our generation. Take Tasmanian artist Sonia Singh who uses her Tumblr page 'Tree Change Dolls' to promote the sale of recycled Bratz Dolls that she has given a make-under, in the hope that a more natural, fresh faced appearance will have a more positive effect of young girls growing up. Yet sadly for every Sonia Singh in the world there are a hundred celebrities or hungry fame seekers ready and waiting to influence the masses. From Kim K and baby North's inappropriate matching lace Givenchy outfits to Suri Cruise's obsession with makeup and high heels, it seems that sadly the youth of today will forever grow up in fast forward. Here's hoping that sooner or later something will happen to make them pause long enough not to miss their childhoods completely. Because I don't know about you but I wouldn't trade my tartan bra in for anything in the world.



## *We can do it*

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TALIA MAGUIRE

What a feminist is: a person who advocates social, political, legal and economic rights for women, equal to those of men. What a feminist is often confused with: a man hating, bitter woman whose only goal is to triumph over men in every way.

Recently the backlash that self-confessed feminists face daily has come to my attention. It's ludicrous that such a positive idea - that both men and women should, and could, be seen as equals - is scoffed at and ridiculed as being a pointless attack on the male race. Through wider online access to information and an increased acceptance of social sharing, we are now more than ever, able to actively become a part of the feminist debate. And while it's extremely encouraging that people world over can discuss and share view points, the online community can also have a negative impact on such matters. As more often than not information circulating the Internet surrounding feminism can be inaccurate, biased and edited. Such misinformation and hearsay is what ultimately ends up causing an adverse reaction to feminism.

Social media has an incredible impact on current issues within society. Research completed by First Bank in 2013, exploring Britain's social media habits, concluded that we spend an average of 62 million hours on social media every day! With so much of our time being spent on social sites it is of little wonder that how we communicate, and what we are exposed to, is so adversely affected. A quick search on Facebook will reveal multiple anti-feminist pages and groups each offering their own warped opinion on the subject. An active participant of one such Facebook 'Anti



A photograph of a person's hairy legs and feet against a pink background. The word "FEMINISTS" is overlaid in large white letters. The image is framed by a white border.

# FEMINISTS

Feminist' public group even went so far as to claim that "natural order of things is needed, women [need to know] their place and role in society."

Sadly it has got to the point, in my early 20s, that I am no longer shocked by such statements. I feel for women that encounter this man each and every day, whether it be at the office, on public transport or in the gym, he is everywhere. Have you ever been told to smile by a stranger 'because you look prettier when you smile'? Or had someone honk their horn as you're walking down the street? As a woman being treated as if you're a spectacle for the enjoyment of men is no new concept, but it is one that we can fight against. We are repeatedly too scared to retaliate, whether this is in the real world or online, through fear of a verbal backlash. So in what other ways can we express our need for equality and show our support for feminism?

Feminist Apparel may sound like women's only territory, but it's not. Their unisex t-shirts with witty slogans and quirky designs could be the talking point we desperately need in order to start discussing feminism in a different way. Their 'Girls Just Want to Have Fun-damental Human Rights' slogan is making an important statement, one that does not belittle men and leaves no room for a counter argument. This not for profit organisation is fuelled by the passion to start a real conversation.

"We are of the opinion that the negative connotations of feminism are unwarranted, misinformed, and stem from a present and mainstream culture of dominance; one that does a disservice to women, men, and all of humanity." – Feminist Apparel

Thankfully Feminist Apparel aren't the only ones seeking to change the perception of feminism for the better. A new wave of celebrity is starting to stand up and speak out – most notably British actor and Goodwill Ambassador for UN Women, Emma Watson. At just 24 Watson is swiftly becoming a trailblazer for young women across the world. Last September she aided the UN in the launch of their HeForShe campaign, encouraging both women and men to support the cause – because after all this

is not just about women! "We don't often talk about men being imprisoned by gender stereotypes, but I can see that they are. It is time we see gender on a spectrum, instead of two opposing ideals." said Watson.

Feminism is for everybody. It's about being free of society driven expectations and challenging biased gender roles. And despite still often encountering sexism in my daily life, I believe that opinions are changing. The media is talking about these issues more openly and the more we are exposed to worldwide inequality, the more likely we are to combat the problem. Businesses are also beginning to understand the importance, and positive influence that equality can have on their company. Always have re-launched their 'Like a Girl' inspirational advertisements; Sport England have set in motion the 'This Girl Can' national campaign; and Dove continues to promote their 'Self-Esteem' project. Most notably recognised is the 'Women in IT' campaign, launched by IT services company FDM, encouraging women to pursue careers in a currently male dominated industry. These progressive steps in the right direction will hopefully shine a much needed light on the importance of feminism and dispel any myths, making the world a better place for everybody.

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# The Hollywood guide to sex

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LIZZIE BENTON

We've all had a little blush over the love scenes that the movies like to show us. You simply can't deny that you've not felt a little awkward when watching a film with friends, and before you know it you're having to look away, make a joke, or find the closest cushion to stifle your giggles. Because deep down you know that in reality it's never as spontaneous or glamorous as they make out. Of course this is Hollywood after all so realism is not their forte.



If you happened to watch a movie sex scene before you'd ever felt the warm touch of skin, then unfortunately there would be a lot of disappointment. First and foremost you would be pretty lucky if your partner is as easy on the eye as Brad or Angelina, but then there's everything else about the act that's so unfeasible too.

### ***The Clothes Just Slip Right Off***

When the lust takes over and they're about to get down to the deed it seems that everything just comes off in seconds. Where are the awkward 'can't get this damn bra off' or the 'trying to pull my socks off' moments that are a lot more silly than sexy? In Hollywood it seems that clothing must be attached by nothing more than velcro, as it not only comes off easily, it comes off in record timing. In reality of course, such an operation would be awkward, uncomfortable, and take at least ten times as long. You never see Matthew McConaughey keeping his socks on during sex, or Kate Hudson getting her bra clip stuck in her hair. Oh no. They're ready for action quicker than you can say sex scene.

### ***Mood Lighting and Romantic Music***

Edited to perfection with dimly lit bedrooms and soft music playing in the background; the illusion that this scene is all done by coincidence is hilarious as we all know that setting this scene in reality would take a lot of time and effort. Much of which would involve hiding piles of dirty washing under sofa cushions and shooing the cat away from strategically placed candles! No matter how much you plan the perfection that the movies create so easily, there's always something that doesn't quite go right.

### ***Casually Wearing Victoria's Secret***

Spontaneous sex scenes are full of passion and pulse racing sauciness and when the moment takes over, of course the leading characters are wearing their best undies. Because we would all be casually wearing the hottest underwear we own when we happen to stumble upon the object of our desire. Back in the real world, underwear like that rarely sees the light of day, and when it does, it's been planned so that the extortionate amount of money we've spent on it, will ensure the best effect possible. I.e. it is definitely going to be seen and it's certainly going to be noticed. Pants like that don't just happen to be on for no reason. Pants like that get planned.

### ***Contraception Doesn't Exist***

Have you ever seen a sex scene where they've all of a sudden stopped and checked the methods of contraception before continuing on the pleasure train? Nope, me neither. And the only time they do is if the storyline is based around a baby. Because of course in Hollywood babies come when you want them to, and passionate one night stands never lead to STDs. That would be so unglamorous!

### ***Declare Your Love Before the Deed***

Sex is not sex in Hollywood until the besotted lead characters have declared their love for one other. And only then may their passionate 'lovmaking' commence. So eager to put their hearts on their sleeves, the characters in films are anything but realistic. When it comes to heartfelt confessions in the real world, it's like getting blood from a stone.

But despite Hollywood giving us all unrealistic expectations for most things in life, it's sometimes good to have the unedited version in our bedrooms. Because even when things don't go as smoothly as the movie, those little mishaps can make for the most memorable moments.

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# Ode to a muse

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JENNA JONES

Staring at the blank page I'm lost.  
The bright white space consumes me with each and every blink.  
Will there ever be an end to this torture?  
Without her here to coax my phrase I'm nothing but an empty shell,  
An original mind suppressed,  
Yearning for inspirational guidance.  
Like a creative drought my words evaporate,  
Destined to escape my grasp until her return.

Once she's back by my side my thoughts flood the page.  
She flicks the switch, the speakers blow,  
The world is in vivid colour once again.  
Everything makes sense as the words dance across the page,  
So eager to be unleashed.  
The sound of her voice, the curve of her frame, her inner beauty,  
Her very presence the key to my creative speech.  
Each and every unique nuance,  
Combines to create the journal of my mind.

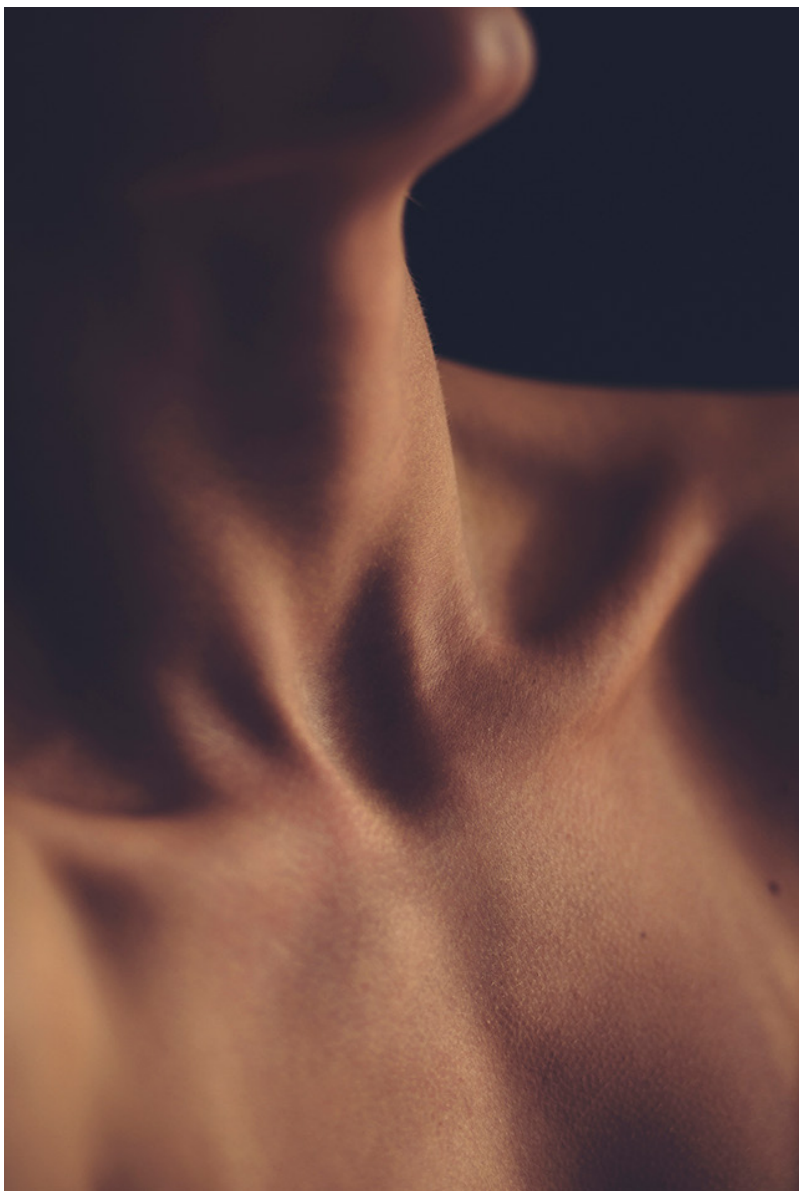
The source of my inspiration,  
The catalyst of my craft,  
The force that guides my thoughts,  
My muse.

# The Female Form

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEANNE DIXON



















































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