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2016-2017

Article

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2017

## A Woman's World

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### Recommended Citation

Pottschmidt, Malayna (2017) "A Woman's World," *The Mall*: Vol. 1 , Article 19.

Retrieved from: <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/the-mall/vol1/iss1/19>

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## A WOMAN'S WORLD

*Malayna Pottschmidt*

"Ancient ploy: convince young girls they lack some undisclosed quality of such importance it's the only thing men and boys will ever want them for, to persuade them they're so defective they're lucky he's a cool guy who accepts all the flaws no one else would put up with, a nice guy who wants to help them feel beautiful by inserting his penis, often without warning, into their precious young bodies and use them, their whole dear romantic trusting selves"

*-So Much Synth, Brenda Shaughnessy*

### **Bubblegum Defense**

My Amazon shopping cart is a nightmare for potential rapists, murderers, kidnappers, and other types of scum that inhabit this earth. A one-and-a-half inch knife hidden into the guise of a house key to stab a perpetrator's face, or maybe his testicles. A canister of pepper spray to burn his eyeballs out, so he'll never be able to discern what or who his next victim would be. Last, but certainly not least, a stun gun to send twenty-five million volts of electricity through his body, each and every electrical surge sending an excruciating *fuck you* through each and every nerve in his body, especially the nerve he mustered up to attack me in the first place.

Did I mention every weapon is a bright, bubblegum pink? You know, the color of Bazooka bubblegum? The one that you chew so long it turns white and makes your jaw ache? After all, I have to send a symbolic message of 'girl power' when I'm roasting a rapist's chestnuts over the electrical, open fire of my stun gun.

But, this is all just hypothetical of course.

### **Insidious Companion**

One month, I've known this guy for ONE MONTH. We both got out of relationships recently; we used each other for comfort, attention, and revenge. He's an absolute psycho. I mean- I even took mental disorder quizzes online answering questions based off of the way he acts.

*\*big eyes staring\**

Yes, he is *that* crazy. I should have known something like this would happen to me.

*Well, what happened?*

He came over to my house one day. I was in the shower. He came into the bathroom to say hi. I told him hello, to wait in my room because I would be out in just a second. I could see him standing there for a little bit, and it already creeped me out. I went into my room and I could tell he was enraged. You know, that quiet yell. He was mad I was texting the ex of a girl who he tried to cheat on me with, well I don't know if it was cheating. We weren't official yet. I found it ironic, but like I said- the guy is crazy. It's not like I was flirting with the guy. He was just my friend, in my defense. He just overreacted. I put my clothes on, sat on my bed, and told him I was done. I don't care if he leaves, if I never speak to him again, and that was the truth. I didn't really care about him. He didn't like that too much, so he turned to a shelf in my room which carried a two week old bouquet of dead roses, picked up the vase, and threw the dead roses all over me and my bed in an act of anger. I mean petals, dead leaves, and thorns just covered my body. I told him to get the fuck out of my house. Next thing you know, he's arguing with me downstairs after I went down to throw the roses in the garbage. He's throwing pillows on the ground, stomping his feet like a two-year-old. I was still scared, though, after growing up with an abusive father and everything.

*\*head nod, sympathetic look\**

His eyes were huge and animal like, a lot like my dad when he got ready to go after my mom. I told him to leave. He acted like he was going to; he opened the door to go. I ran upstairs, angry, nervous, and scared. I heard the door close and felt a sense of relief. Next thing you know, I'm sitting on my bed and hear footsteps coming up the stairs. He never left. One second he was screaming, yelling, calling me names, throwing things. Now he has this wild-eyed look and he's hovering over me so close I can feel the heat radiating off of his body. He's whispering creepy things in my ear and I zone out. I'm gone. My body is there. My mind is somewhere else, Purgatory maybe. I thought he was going to beat me or forcefully rape me or kill me. I was so scared.

*\*fidgets hands\**

I freeze. I am paralyzed. He does what he wants with me and I'm just gone. No thoughts. I remember staring at the light on my ceiling. Light exists in darkness.

*What do you mean, he \*finger quotation marks\* 'does what he wants' with you?*

He had sex with me, or raped me. I don't feel comfortable calling it rape. I knew him. I didn't fight. I didn't say no. I didn't say anything. I was scared. I was paralyzed. After he was done, I resurfaced. I ran, naked in a blanket, to a closet in a locked room and cried. I bawled forever until I told my best friend to come over. He ran out of my house and I never saw him again.

*Why didn't you go to police?*

What would I tell them? “Hi officer, a man I have been having consensual sex with for a month just raped me... but I didn’t fight back... I didn’t say no.... and he was originally allowed in my house? That case would get thrown out. You and I both know it.

*\*partial scowl\* Well, you aren’t the type to just let things go.*

Well maybe I didn’t want to press charges. Maybe he didn’t know I didn’t want him to have sex with me. I was unresponsive. Maybe I don’t feel comfortable telling someone I was raped when I didn’t try to stop it, when I didn’t try to fight back. No one would believe me. The cop would make it look like my fault and wipe his hands clean of any wrongdoing. Plus, there are people who get raped brutally every day by complete strangers. I am not the same type of victim as them.

Or am I?

### Like a Possum

#### Tweet

**Layniebug** @malaynap

6/6/16

Tonic immobility-aka “freezing” is completely natural when you’re scared. Media needs to pay more attention to rape victims who “freeze”

**Layniebug** @malaynap

6/6/16

Just because you didn’t respond, didn’t fight, didn’t scream.. Doesn’t mean something bad didn’t happen to you. It affects you the same

**Layniebug** @malaynap

6/6/16

Screaming and fighting is just as much of self preservation as completely going numb and not responding at all

**Layniebug @malaynap**

6/6/16

And if you went through that I want you to know I believe you 100% no matter what other people say.

**Layniebug @malaynap**

6/6/16

Law & Order SVU:

Olivia: People know fight or flight, but there is a third response and that is, you freeze.

Tutuola: Good luck selling that to a jury.

Oh, the frustrations.

### **Dress Code**

Roaming the halls, I know there is a chance I will get busted. My hands are sweating as I'm scanning the halls for staff members. I managed to get through the first two classes by walking quickly in sync with other students, ducking when a teacher got close. Being shorter than everyone else helped, too. Now, though, it's just me. I'm out in the open like a lone gazelle waiting for a pride of lions to attack. At this point, it's inevitable.

"Excuse me, young lady. Those shorts are too short. What is your name? Go down to the office and have the secretary check the length," a short, stout man barks at me.

"Please, I just want to get to class. I'll pull them down. See? Fingertip length," I plead.

"I'm sorry, but rules are rules."

He takes my name down and threatens that he will call down to the office to make sure I went. Most male teachers never send girls down to the office for their clothes because it makes them look like creeps. Why are they looking at a twelve year-old girl's shorts anyways? This guy didn't care though. I surmise, after a short walk to the office, that he is a Grade A Creepazoid.

Hesitating, I pull the heavy glass door backwards and enter the danger zone.

I manage to choke up a "Hi, ma'am. A teacher sent me down here for my shorts."

She peers at me with her square framed glasses sitting low on the bridge of her nose, postured stoically in her rolling chair. Giving me a once over, she picks up the black telephone. I can hear the dial tone in the background and it sounds like the soundtrack to my demise. I start to wonder why she is putting an excessive amount of energy into pressing the numbers

on the keypad, but I figure all she does is make phone calls and she wants to put some dignity in her meaningless profession. Mumbling something to an unknown voice, she nods her frosted gray head to the door of the back office.

My legs feel like cinderblocks, yet I manage to pick them up one at a time. An eternity passes by before a tall, African American woman with freckled skin pulls out a ruler, which just happens to be the same kind I use for my pre-algebra class. She places it just under the bottom of my shorts, analyzing the length between my shorts and my kneecap.

“I’m sorry, hon’, but these are half an inch too short.” She looks regretful and apologetic, as if I’m a puppy she just played with for an hour at the shelter then put me back in a cement cage.

“I don’t get it. Why does it even matter if my shorts are half an inch too short? What is wrong with my shorts?”

She pauses, but eventually explains that I will “distract the boys” with my shorts.

I’m still not completely convinced, but I’m more concerned with the burgundy gym shorts I will have to wear if she makes me change. I’m not even wearing anything that matches those shorts. I make a half-genuine pout and shrug my shoulders.

That must have worked, because she grabs the bottoms of my shorts, pulls them down a little with a quick tug, and gives me a wink.

“Just keep them like this, and you’ll be okay.”

She says it as if she’s been told this herself one too many times, as if once, she didn’t keep her shorts long enough. As if once, she wasn’t okay because of that.

### **Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired**

Cover up. Take it off. You post pictures half naked? Whore. Hoe. Slut. You have no self-respect. Come on baby, he says, take that sweater off. Show me that sexy body. Stop being so modest. What are you, a nun? He pulls the shoulder of her sweater down. Stop. I don’t want to do that. Why not, you prude? Show some skin. Give me some leg. Oh, she got raped? What was she wearing? A short skirt and heels. She was asking for it. Who dresses like a slut if they don’t want to act like one? He high fives his pal. I would never let my girlfriend go out in that. I would never let my girlfriend post that. I would never let my girlfriend wear that, say that, do that. She has had sex with *how* many people? She’s such a slut she will let anything with a penis in her. But you have had sex with more people than her. So, I’m a guy. It doesn’t matter how many people we have sex with. The more, the better. For females, a lower body count means higher worth. Respect yourself. How insecure are you, to be showing your body like that? You think showing your body to whoever will give you love. You think attention will give you meaning, worth purpose. Why else would you show your body off like a product for sale?

How insecure are you, to be hiding your body like that? If you were secure with yourself, secure with your body, you would show it off. Brag. Be proud. No. You're wrong. It doesn't matter what she wears or what she shows. Women value different things. Some women feel empowered while showing their body. Some women feel empowered while covering up. I'm a girl, and even I think you're a whore if you show your ass, your tits, your skin like that. Free the nipple? Yeah, more like free to be a slut. It's okay, it's *encouraged* when an overweight female posts a body-positive picture, but if a female with what society calls a "sexy body" posts anything about body confidence- she's a hoe. She wants attention. She can't express her love of the vessel that holds her soul. Society: love yourself. Society: don't love yourself too much. Society: love yourself but don't show it. Or talk about it. Society: hide loving yourself until you hate yourself. Society: stop being so insecure. Society: you're confident in yourself? No, you're cocky. You think you're better than everyone. Noise. Do this. Yelling. Do that. Don't do this. Wear this. Say that. White. Fucking. Noise.

### **Liberation**

I am an independent, confident, beautiful, funny, intelligent woman. I am a multifaceted diamond. I work my ass off. I love myself. I am professional. I can talk about sex. I can show my body and respect myself simultaneously. I will make you laugh until you cry. I can pay my own bills. I am ingenious. None of these contradict because I am everything. You can't stop me. You can't define me. I define me, and damn it- I love the diamond I refined from some worthless rock to a precious jewel you could only dream of being able to hold in your filthy hands. I'll be damned to let a man tell me who I am or what I value or the level of respect I have for me.

### **The Three Wise Women**

#### Gold

She gets ready for work, painting her face for the mask she wants to present tonight. Pulling on her tight, spandex orange shorts, she realizes the bottom of her butt cheek is exposed. *Good*. Next, she puts her arms through the holes of an equally tight tank top, careful to not get her makeup on the cocaine-white shirt. The tops of her breasts are exposed and smooshed together like the food on a Thanksgiving dinner plate. *Excellent*. She steps out onto the floor of the restaurant. *Game time*. Four hours of heaving heavy trays full of wings, fries, and beers. Four hours of constantly checking her appearance in one of the full-body mirrors that cover the walls of the servers' break room. Four hours of taunting the men who get the "girl sized" beer until they order three "man sized" beers in hopes to preserve their ego in front of a pretty lady. Four hours of getting paid a little for her work, but a lot for the way she looks. Four hours later, she is four hundred dollars richer.

### Frankincense

This wise woman is adorned in a see-through bedazzled G-string and pasties that don't quite cover her nipples fully. Her heels make an assertive clicking sound whenever she walks from one end of the room to the next. She is someone else, with a different identity. Her name could be Candy, Lola, Crystal. She could be whomever she wanted. It's eleven at night, her time to shine. It's her time to put on a show. She's not nervous, not anymore, at least. Every single night, hundreds of men come to watch her and the others. A woman and an erect metal pole that shines brighter than their wives' wedding rings. All she sees is the lights, shining on her like a movie star. All she sees is the sweat trickling down the forehead of a man with a receding hairline, and she can't help but chuckle. It's exhilarating. *They think I'm an object, but I'm laughing at them while they throw their whole paychecks at me. I am invincible.* Dollar bills swept away like trash, counted up by the ladies as they discuss their use of the cash. One is going to school to be a nurse. One is paying for her children's shelter, clothes, food. One just wants so much money that she will never have to depend on a man. *They're such suckers. They'll never get it.*

### Myrrh

Goddess, Mistress, Owner, Princess. She's a professional dominatrix. Never does she give a man pleasure. One calls, *please let me serve you.* Financial domination, it's called. She sticks her perfectly pedicured feet in her midnight leather boots and plans on making him kiss them later. And he'll pay a hundred for each toe. He meets her in the parking lot of a bank. *Go to the ATM, withdraw one thousand, get on your knees in front of me, and beg me to take it.* Humiliation, these 'men' pay for it. To be degraded. To be used by a beautiful woman for nothing but his bank account. Sure, he may be crazy, but she gets paid. *Reparations, this money is reparations for the bullshit women had to go through. The only man worth a damn is a man on his knees and his wallet open.* She didn't have to touch him. She didn't have to kiss him. She didn't have to stroke his ego. All she had to do was tell him that he was only good for his money, and the safety deposit box full of cash was hers. *Iconic.*

Some women abhor and reject the stereotypes men put on them. They cover up, brag about their conservative job as a dental assistant and their lonely nights at home watching soap operas. Some women know the stereotypes are complete bullshit, yet entertain them to make a check off of the ignorant men that think these women are degrading themselves. That, my friends, is the real scam. That, my friends, is one way pussies grab back.