

The Prettiest Woman in the World

Close your eyes. Picture the prettiest woman ever. It doesn't even have to be a real woman. It probably isn't. It could be a video game character or an actress. It could be someone you made up. Let me describe her: she's tall, but not too tall. She's very slim, but not too muscular. No cellulite. She's got substantial breasts, but they're pert and perky, without sagging or stretch marks. Her hands and feet are well-kept. Her hair is long and straight, probably blonde, falling in silky strands around her shoulders. The thing that really pulls you in is her face. It's symmetrical, almost perfectly so. Her eyes are clear and alert, probably blue or green, fringed with luscious lashes. Her skin is clear and smooth, with a healthy glow, and — that smile, its straight, white teeth, like a toothpaste commercial.

You might know this woman. Maybe she's your wife or your girlfriend, your best friend or your sister. Maybe she's someone you just passed on the street once. Hell, maybe she's you. She's just one of those women who leaves a wake of people staring after her. She seems to be in her own world, oblivious to her admirers, looking naturally perfect. But she's not. She knows you're looking at her. She's made sure of it in the following ways:

Feet & Hands: manicures and pedicures weekly

Legs: hours on the treadmill; all hair removed; daily use of firming lotion; spray tan or sun tan; wears heels even though they hurt her back (they make her calves look better)

Butt: hundreds of squats; skips dessert every time

Breasts: maybe implants; never sleeps on her stomach even though it's most comfortable for her

Hair: coloring every six weeks; haircuts monthly; straightening treatments; expensive

shampoo and conditioner; 30 minutes of blow-drying every day

Skin: monthly facials; daily use of cleanser, exfoliant, toner, serum, moisturizer, sunscreen; possibly Botox or a facial filler; foundation, blush, eyeshadow, eyeliner, mascara, lipstick

Eyes: wears sunglasses constantly to prevent crows feet from squinting; lash growth serum; laser eye surgery; colored contacts

Teeth: full set of braces in adolescence; whitening strips weekly

The return on her investments? The barista gives her free coffee. The bus driver lets her pass when she's a dollar short on the fare. The bartender serves her, even though the woman next to her got there first. The lady at her corner store knows her name, makes sure they always have her favorite chardonnay in stock. The salesgirl at the snotty boutique has a smile just for her. The interviewer comes away from their meeting saying, "I've got a good feeling about her."

We are socialized from birth to understand that pretty is good. When people feel attractive, they feel good. When I feel attractive, I feel good. Attractive is successful; attractive gets the guy; attractive is in the club. Attractive does not have hair where it's not supposed to be. That is the cultural standard under which we operate. If Helen of Troy was the face that launched a thousand ships, I'd bet good money her face didn't have any errant whiskers.

I make a living off vanity. I am a Licensed Esthetician, an expert in skin care and hair removal, a specialist in the art of Brazilian waxing. I look at people's bodies and faces all day, every day. They talk to me about how they feel about their bodies and faces and about how they want them to look. Then it's my job to make that happen. Not only do I think about beauty and aesthetics all the time, I produce it.

I've been doing bikini waxes for five years, between four and six days a week. Assuming that I only see one new vagina every day, that's 1300 vaginas. So let's call it a

thousand. I have removed some or all of the hair from a thousand vaginas. I think that gives me some authority to talk about women and their beauty practices.