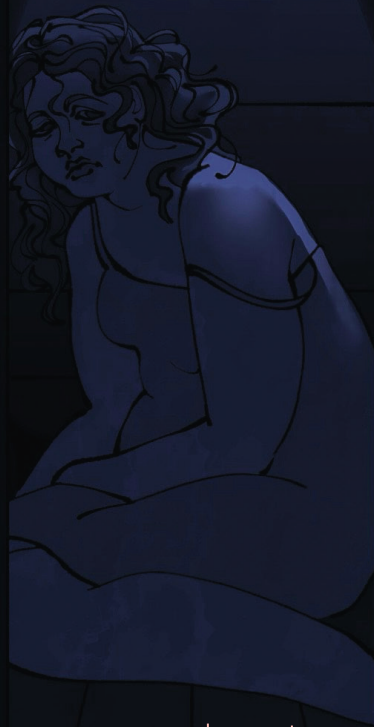


The Ugly Truth of Being Ugly



Everyone is insecure, but
not everyone is treated differently
because of their looks

I am ugly. My appearance is different from the norm and I am reminded of it every day; whether it's through glances from my peers, posts on social media, or my own mirror. Sometimes it feels like the standard of beauty is relentlessly reinforced in every aspect of life. Regardless of what people say, there is a distinct separation between beauty and ugliness in this world, and I have come to terms with that.

It's hard to believe the idea of beauty being in the eye of the beholder when your life experiences seem to always say otherwise. When someone suggests that I'm not ugly or tries to assure me that I'm not "fat", I am struck with the memories from 10th grade biology class, where upper-classmen boys would persistently pretend to desire me romantically all period. I vividly remember the snickers after one would beg me to attend a dance with him. Sometimes the jokes at my expense would border on sexual harassment. I tried everything to shake it off: ignoring them, shutting them down, and even playing into it. Nothing ever ended up working out.

Unfortunately, sometimes I kind of enjoyed the attention regardless of those boys' objective, simply because I don't get talked to. Seeing people my age entertained and happy as a result of my existence, even at my expense, felt almost gratifying. At the time, my feelings didn't matter because I was receiving a false sense of friendship. In retrospect, the thought of me being okay with their behavior breaks my heart.

Sure, this kind of experience could've happened to any girl. One might argue that I was just unlucky, was picked at random, and that it had nothing to do with my looks or weight. But someone approaching me seemingly out of nowhere and asking me out, or saying "my friend over there has a crush on you" has happened countless times. A girl can't help but feel like there's something wrong with her after experiences such as these. It doesn't matter in the moment, I say, as I tell myself those peers are idiots who will peak in high school. But every once in a while, after build up of these occurrences, I would lay in bed at night and break down, overwhelmed by self pity.

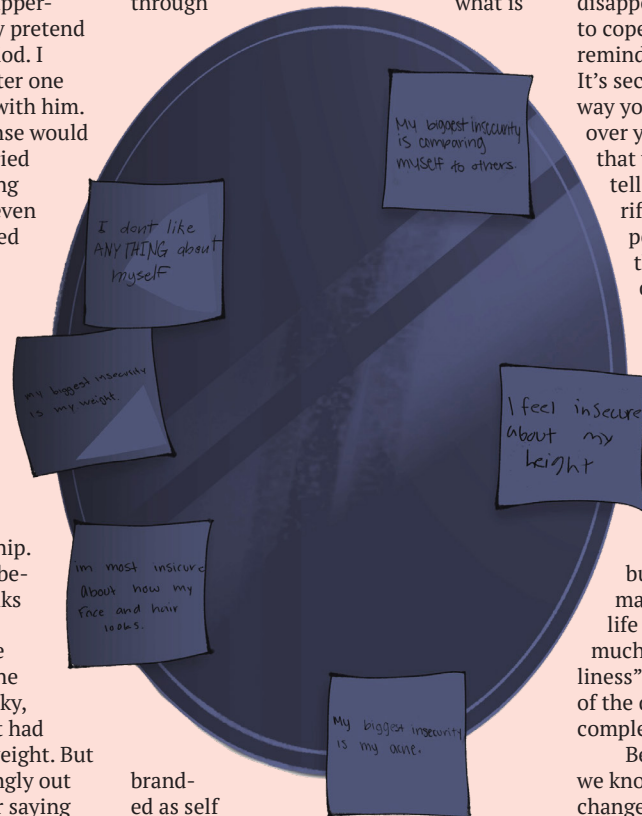
Is the idea of me being attractive or loved by someone so absurd? Apparently being loved is a laughable concept for anyone who looks different. The cruelty I have faced through this very question doesn't stop at highschool; it continues online.

It's a general trend among people on social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and Reddit to post or engage with women, speculating among themselves if the woman in question is attractive enough by their standards.

A popular saying around those parts

of the internet is "hear me out", which is usually said in regards to a person who others may deem undesirable. "Hear me out" posts are almost always replied to with laughing comments or the over analysis of a woman's appearance. This behavior has become quickly engrained in Gen Z's outlook on how beauty contributes to a person's worth.

Online negativity doesn't just stop there. Young women seem to become more and more dangerously obsessed with erasing physical flaws of all sorts in recent years. I have personally noticed the shift in girls my age creating solutions for insecurities that didn't exist a month ago through what is



brand-ed as self care. It feels like every week there's a new viral product invented to change things about a person that are completely natural. I don't worry myself with these things because I already feel like a lost cause visually, but it hurts to see my own generation grow consumed by vanity. As a direct result not only have I been picked on for my looks by boys, but young women too. It feels like the "girls support girls" narrative doesn't apply to me when I have to experience popular girls calling me "bestie" and giggling to their friends about me, based solely on first impressions. So in totality, not only are high schoolers fully comfortable judging you on appearances, consumerism in regards to beauty standards is skyrocketing. This attitude is only going to get more dangerous as general beauty ideals are regressing from what we grew up with.

In the 2010's there was a shift

toward body diversity, mainly focused on embracing a fuller figure. Now it's 2025 and "heroin chic" is clawing its way back into relevance. This term refers to the alarmingly thin standard for women in the late 20th and early 21st century. I, being 18 years old, missed out on a lot of this era, but still experienced the lingering effects. There's this distinct memory that nags at me of my very young self watching "America's Next Top Model" with my mom and thinking to myself: "I hope I'm skinny when I'm older".

I don't like to dwell on that memory too much because I know if my younger self could see me today she would be disappointed. That's not an easy feeling to cope with. Most of all, that memory reminds me of how hard I am on myself. It's second nature to hate yourself and the way you look, to self loathe and obsess over your appearance, but it's hard to feel that way about a child. The thought of telling my child self these things is horrifying and really puts everything into perspective. After realizations like this it really gets me thinking: "Why do I care so much?"

Yes, the way I look has real effects on my everyday life and has changed me negatively, but at the end of the day a human's body is just the vessel for their spirit. There is no reason that my body or my face should define who I am as a person. Truthfully, the worst part of being ugly may be the guilt that seems misplaced but feels inescapable. There are so many worse things happening in my life and the world, and yet I care so much about my looks. Although my "ugliness" has real consequences, at the end of the day beauty standards are fickle and completely made up.

Because the concept of beauty as we know it today is man-made, it has changed significantly throughout history. One of the most comforting things for me in regards to coping with my looks is the fact that I was the standard at some point. When revisiting old statues and paintings of goddesses such as Aphrodite, she notably resembles me more than she does an Instagram model. I've even noticed that sometimes, just every once in a while, I'll catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror before bed and actually feel pretty. Notably, this only ever occurs when I'm completely alone, which further confirms for me that the negative effects of me being unattractive are real, but undoubtedly the consequence of a social problem that everyone falls victim to.

I don't think I'll ever not feel ugly, but the average, conventionally attractive person won't always feel pretty either. So if this feeling of inadequacy is universal then how come people who look like me still get consistently mistreated?