

I'VE JUST GOTTA HAVE IT. I'M A SLAVE TO ITS CHARMS. UNHEALTHY OBSESSION OR GENUINE LOVE? I CAN'T GO WITHOUT MY — MAKEUP. I HAVE ALL SORTS OF POTS FILLED WITH CREAMS, LIQUIDS, AND POWDERS IN A MYRIAD OF COLORS. I WOULDN'T DREAM OF STARTING MY DAY WITHOUT A SMATTERING OF EACH SKILLFULLY APPLIED TO MY SKIN, SHIELDING ME FROM THE HORROR OF FACING THE WORLD PALE-FACED.

Even though men have worn cosmetics up until the 1850s, it has been a female addiction. Perhaps, I should blame the women from the first dynasty of Egypt who painted their eyes and darkened their lashes with kohl. And what about the Romans who whitened their skin with chalk and added a twinge of pink to the cheeks? Did the Victorians have the right idea when they deemed all face painting women harlots? No one would accuse Sophia Loren and her sexy black outlined eyes of looking anything less than vava voom. And, please, don't get me started on the sheer perfection of Audrey Hepburn's gaze due to the subtle enhancement of black liner. And then there's Norms Jean, who, thanks to the miracle of color, fashioned the legendary character we still emulate today.

Are women simply blank canvases that need to be recreated each day before facing the world? Is this the downside of being labeled the fairer sex?

I cannot even step out to the gym, grocery store or laundromat without a full glam face. Often I'll notice women blissfully going about their lives, some with men hanging off their arms that do not succumb to the temptation

of color. Yes, a few do look wishy-washy, while others appear lovely in a fresh sort of way. Occasionally, pangs of envy dart through me, wishing I, too, could be brave enough to go bare.

My memory flashes back to New Year's Eve when I was six years old. I remember munching on Hershey's kisses, watching my mother dress for a cocktail party. She sat in front of an art deco vanity, skillfully applying her evening face. Nothing screamed "exciting grown up woman" more than the wondrous tube of fuchsia lipstick she used to shape a whole new mouth over her nonexistent upper lip. Next, she opened a tin of sparkly gold powder, and I watched, fascinated as she dabbed it on her cheeks and eyelids. Before my innocent eyes, she was transformed from blasé Mom to dazzling glitter queen.

How I longed to be old enough to participate in this fabulous feminine ritual where I, too, could be turned into a living, breathing goddess. Despite numerous attempts to steal mom's cosmetic case and give myself a makeover complete with heels and a pink feather boa, alas I had to wait until my teens to be of legal painting age.

When I first began wearing cosmetics, it was originally a tool to attract men. But as I began to date, a pattern emerged: boyfriends would try persuading me to tone down my color, claiming facial nudity was sexy. Why didn't they understand? It wasn't about them, it was about me. I had fallen deeply and hopelessly under the spell of makeup and the power it possessed. The textures, the aromas, and ooooh the amazing pigments. I was hooked, and the truth was I didn't want to go bare anymore. Once I'd experienced the lure of foundation and mascara, there was no turning back.

What would the earth look like today if men had never stopped painting their faces? I imagine couples would leisurely stroll over to Barney's together and bond over lipstick shades. Perhaps the sexes would be closer. It would be a totally different world, one I doubt any of us will ever experience in our brief lifetimes. Until then, embrace the beauty that is the female face. Whether a woman goes bare or decides to bring out the flecks of green in her eyes, she will always remain a work of art. Thankfully, women, unlike men, have a choice...to paint or not to paint.