

The beauty spot

What women really get up to inside the beauty clinic

SO THERE I AM, LYING ON THE BED, GENTLY PERSPIRING IN THE SUMMER heat, naked apart from a little top and what passes for a G-string, legs spread wide and a girl I hardly know – head down – fiddling with my pubic hair.

Now, such an image may conjure up highly exciting thoughts. Indeed, having had a large number of women before her, I have often wondered – while gazing at the ceiling or helpfully pulling my panties to the side – what guys would think if they could see me like this. But far from being sexual, it is actually rather a tedious, undignified and, at times, painful experience, all done in the name of beauty. I am, of course, referring to the bikini wax.

I consider myself an intelligent, independent and informed individual, so I am ashamed to admit that I have fully bought into the media propaganda of what makes a woman beautiful. Excess hair, therefore, is an anathema to me and I go to great lengths to remove as much of it as possible. In doing so, I have contorted myself into positions normally saved for gym class and kinky sex. After all, less is certainly more in this instance.

I refuse to shave. I hate the stubble that grows after only a short while and I inevitably cut myself. And it's not always the hangover: I just don't have a steady hand, that's all. But it's something more than that. I've always thought it cheap to shave, more sophisticated to wax. Of course, I've tried waxing myself at home, but despite the purred promises of soft-focused women in silken slips on the home shopping channel, I burnt my leg with the liquid wax and walked around for hours with strips stuck to me until my housemate came home to pull them off because she was more sadistic than I was masochistic. And so I have always returned to the relative safety of the beauty clinic.

The beauty clinic is about the only bastion of the female ego we women have, the equivalent of private men's clubs in its gender exclusivity and curiosity factor for those not permitted entry. Generally, the only men to penetrate this sanctuary are gay and, therefore, not a threat.

I once had a boyfriend who was terrified he'd get an erection if he went to my beautician for a much-needed, stress-busting massage. And while the idea of him trying to hide his excitement under the towel was hysterically funny, the thought of the beautician sniggering about my man wasn't, so I let him go into spasm, rather.

But most of my boyfriends have been curious as to what goes on behind the haloed doors of a beauty clinic, and my current boyfriend often asks probing questions that he obviously hopes will lead to sexually-biased answers, eyebrow raised in anticipation, a leering smile over his wonderfully naughty face. "Do you take all your clothes off? Does she ever touch you – you know, there! – by mistake? Do you want her to?" All roads lead to lesbianism.

But boys, let me be the one to burst your bubble. These houses of veiled repute are not draped in white voile and full of flax-haired Venuses programmed to pamper. Sure, the atmosphere is generally relaxed and the girls friendly, but along with all the physical pain that is an integral part of any girl's 'beauty' regime, I have met more than a few beauticians who clearly don't practise what they preach. In some sick, twisted way, though, I feel much better about myself when I look thinner, more toned and clearer skinned than the person I pay to make me look good. Perhaps it's a deliberate marketing technique on their part that I haven't clicked onto yet.

My regular visits to worship at the temple of the body beautiful are met with bemusement – or is it amusement? – by my boyfriend. Smirking to himself as I dash out the door, I think he likes this softer, singly feminine activity, because it's incongruous with the rest of my personality. I normally don't bother with make-up, tying my hair back in a ponytail is my idea of doing it up, and I can swear more impressively than anyone I know, so I don't really consider myself a 'girly' girl. And yet I'd miss a date with Antonio Banderas before I missed my wax. Because, let's face it, no self-respecting girl would go on any date without prior and complete depilation of some kind.

Although, if truth be told, I have used my hairy legs as a contraceptive by abstinence on occasion. If I don't want to appear too forward on the first couple of dates, or don't really like the guy, but worry that he might appear more attractive after a couple of glasses of bubbly (I know you know what I mean), I deliberately don't wax, knowing that the horror of him grating his hands on my stubbly legs is enough to keep my libido firmly in check.

But waxing is just a small part of the beauty regime required to make me look, if not the way nature intended, certainly the way *Elle* magazine did.

Facials, manicures, pedicures, massages, lymph drainage, cellulite treatment, seaweed wraps, tanning and a new, God-given anti-wrinkle injection that can make your face as smooth as a Stuttaford's mannequin. Aaahhh...

Narcissistic? Maybe. Time consuming? Definitely. Expensive? Hugely. Worth it? Well, judging by my boyfriend's reaction – absolutely!

By Deleen Wilson **MH**

