

Panning a Plastic Paradigm

by M.J. Hamilton

When I was a girl, I was fascinated by Barbie. She cooked, got dressed up, and rode around in a battery-operated, bright yellow Corvette. "So, this is how I am going to be when I grow up," thought I.

She even had a baby, once Ken came along. Ken had his own apartment and wasn't married to Barbie. Nevertheless, Barbie had a child. I guess I wasn't too unrealistic.

But most of all, Barbie was perfect - the perfect woman. Her breasts were "just the right" size, roundness and firmness. She didn't even have to wear a bra. Her long, tanned, slender legs and her hips were "just right" as well. Her facial features were flawless - she never had to put on make-up. She never had to perm or style her long, blonde hair to have that perfect quality every day.

I couldn't wait to look like her, and to have a boyfriend like Ken either. It didn't seem to bother me that Ken's genitalia looked bizarre and not exactly "all there". He was cute all the same.

Throughout puberty, I looked at my body every day to see if I finally had Barbie's breasts and long, slender body. I didn't notice that no one, not even my mother (who I thought was

perfect), looked like Barbie, let alone that I could never look like Barbie, since I do not have blonde hair and blue eyes. No human being could compare with Barbie's pure plastic beauty.

I was very disheartened Barbie had let me down. I felt deceived. She led me to believe that she was how I was supposed to be. I was waiting to look "the part" before I decided I was a woman. Only when boys started taking an interest in me despite my less-than-Barbie-sized breasts did I realize I didn't have to look like that plastic doll to be attractive.

However, every now and then, I still look at my body and feel disappointed that I do not look anything like Barbie. I feel I have not lived up to expectations (mine or society's), as if it is my fault, and I should have enough discipline to diet and exercise in order to mold my body any way I would like.

So now I swear off Barbie dolls, and feel they should be banned. Women, like me, have to stop the psychological violence they inflict upon themselves for failing to meet the criteria of stereotypical images constantly surrounding them - images created by television, movies, magazines...and dolls.



Reflections

*The air is calm, the water clear,
Reflections of love soon do appear,
The resonance builds as each other we hold,
The sun now shining - our love is as gold;*

*Pebbles drop and ripples do form,
Clouds blowing over, brining a storm,
The sun now blocked - reflections fade,
Leaving us behind, alone in the shade;*

*If we look in the water - sadness is there,
Reflections are gone the longer we stare,
Look up from the water - you'll see true,
What made the reflections ...*

-was me and

you.

Patrick Martin