**The confusing pursuit of beauty**

**令人困惑的对美的追求**

**1 If you're a man, at some point a woman will ask you how she looks.**

**如果你是一位男士，肯定在某个时候会有女士问你她看起来怎么样。**

**2 You must be careful how you answer this question. The best technique is to form an honest yet sensitive response, then promptly excuse yourself for some kind of emergency. Trust me, this is the easiest way out. No amount of rehearsal will help you come up with the right answer.**

**对于如何应对这个问题，你一定得小心。最好的对策就是给一个诚实但又谨慎的回答，然后借口有急事马上脱身。相信我，这是最简单的方法。对于她的这一问题，无论你事先练习多少次，都不会找到正确答案。**

**3 The problem is that men do not think of their looks in the same way women do. Most men form an opinion of themselves in seventh grade and stick to it for the rest of their lives. Some men think they're irresistibly desirable, and they refuse to change this opinion even when they grow bald and their faces visibly wrinkle as they age.**

**其原因是，男性和女性对外表的看法截然不同。大多数男性对自己外表的评价在七年级时就形成了，而且终生不变。有些男性认为自己有不可抗拒的魅力，即使随着年龄的增长，他们头发掉光了，脸上布满皱纹，他们仍然拒绝改变这种看法。**

**4 Most men, I believe, are not arrogant about their looks. If the transient thought passes through their minds at all, they like to think of themselves as average-looking. Being average doesn't bother them; average is fine. They don't affix much value to their looks, or think of them in terms of aesthetics. Their primary form of beauty care is to shave themselves, which is essentially the same care they give to their lawns. If, at the end of his four minute allotment of time for grooming, a man has managed to wipe most of the shaving cream out of the strands of his hair and isn't bleeding too badly, he feels he's done all he can.**

**我相信，大多数男性都不会对自己的相貌感到过分自傲。如果他们偶尔想到自己外表的话，他们愿意认为自己样貌中等。长相普通不会使他们有任何烦恼，因为普通就已经是很好了。男性不是特别注重自己的外貌，也不会从美学的角度去审视自己。他们的打扮方式主要就是刮刮胡子，就像打理自家草坪一样。对于一位男性来说，如果能花四分钟刮刮胡子，结束之后再把粘到头发上的剃须膏擦净，又没有出血太厉害，他就觉得自己已经尽心尽力了。**

**5 Women do not look at themselves this way. If I had to guess what most women think about their appearance, it would be: "Not good enough." No matter how attractive a woman may be, her perception of herself is eclipsed by the beauty industry. She has trouble thinking "I'm beautiful." She magnifies the smallest imperfections in her body and imagines them as glaring flaws the whole world will notice and ridicule.**

**女性可不是这样看待自己的。如果非要我猜测大多数女性对自己的相貌是如何评价的话，那肯定是：“还不够好。”一位女士，无论她看起来多么吸引人，她对自己的看法总是由于受美容业的影响而蒙着一层阴影。要她认为“我很漂亮”是一件难事。她把身体上的极小的不完美之处加以放大，并且幻想这些缺点十分明显，以至于全世界的人都会注意到并且嘲笑她。**

**6 Why do women consider their looks so deficient? This chronic insecurity isn't inborn, but created through the interaction of many complex psychological and societal factors, beginning with the dolls we give them as children. Girls grow up playing with dolls proportioned so that, if they were human, they would be seven feet tall and weigh 61 pounds, with tiny thighs and a large upper body. This is an absurd standard to live up to, especially when you consider the size of the doll's waist, a relative measurement physically impossible for a living human to achieve. Contrast this absurd standard with that presented to little boys with their "action figures". Most of the toys that young boys have played with were weird-looking, like the one called Buzz-Off that was part human, part flying insect. This guy was not a looker, but he was still extremely self-confident. You could not imagine him saying to the others, "Is this accessory the right shade of violet for this outfit?"**

**为什么女性会把自己的外貌想得这么差呢？这种长期的不安全感并不是与生俱来的，而是由许多复杂的心理和社会因素的相互作用造成的，从小时候大人们给她们买洋娃娃时就开始了。女孩成长过程中摆弄的洋娃娃，如果按照身材比例还原为真人大小的话，就会是7英尺高，61英磅重，大腿纤细，上身丰满。要达到这样的标准是很荒唐的，尤其是当我们想想那种洋娃娃的腰围尺寸，就知道其相对尺寸对任何一个活人来说都是不可企及的。与女孩玩具的这种荒唐标准相比，小男孩们得到的“动作玩偶”却是完全不同的模样。大多数男孩的玩具都样貌古怪，例如那个叫作“蜜蜂侠”的玩偶，一半像人，一半像会飞的昆虫。这个玩偶尽管样子不好看，但仍然非常自信。你肯定无法想象他会问别人说：“这个配饰的紫罗兰色和这件外套配不配呢？”**

**7 But women grow up thinking they need to look like Barbie dolls or girls on magazine covers, which for most women is impossible. Nonetheless, the multibillion-dollar beauty industry, complete with its own aisle in the grocery store, is devoted to constant warfare on female self-esteem, convincing women that they must buy all the newest moisturizing creams, bronzing powders and appliances that promise to "stimulate and restore" their skin. I once saw an Oprah Show in which supermodel Cindy Crawford dispensed makeup tips to the studio audience. Cindy had all these middle-aged women apply clay masks and other "wrinkle-removing" products to their faces; she stressed how important it was to adhere to the guidelines, like applying products via the tips of their fingers to protect elasticity. All the women dutifully did this, even though it was obvious to any rational observer that, no matter how carefully they applied these products, they would never have Cindy Crawford's face or complexion.**

**然而，女性在成长过程中却认为自己应该长得像芭比娃娃或杂志的封面女郎那样，这对大多数女性来说是不可能的。尽管如此，产值达几十亿美元的美容业，在超市化妆品销售专区的配合下，总是在不停地攻击着女性的自尊，使其相信自己只有购买最新的保湿面霜、古铜散粉，以及各种美容器具，才能“激发和恢复”肌肤活力。我曾经看过一期《奥普拉脱口秀》，在节目中，超级名模辛迪·克劳馥和演播室里的观众分享了自己的化妆秘诀。辛迪要求这些中年妇女在脸上敷上黏土面膜和其他去皱产品；她还强调一定要遵守这些方法，例如：往脸上涂抹这些产品时，要用指尖，这样可以保护皮肤的弹性。所有这些妇女都非常忠实地按照辛迪说的做了。可是对任何一个理智的旁观者来说，无论她们如何认真地使用这些产品，她们都不可能拥有辛迪那样的面容或肤色。**

**8 I'm not saying that men are superior. I'm just saying that you're not going to get a group of middle-aged men to plaster cosmetics to themselves under the instruction of Brad Pitt in hopes of looking more like him. Men don't face the same societal focus purely on physical beauty, and they're encouraged to reach out to other characteristics to promote their self-esteem. They might say to Brad: "Oh yeah? Well, what do you know about lawn care, pretty boy?"**

**我并不是说男性优于女性。我的意思是你不可能让一群中年男子在布拉德·皮特的指导下把化妆品敷到自己脸上，期望自己能看起来更像布拉德。与女性不同，男性的外貌美不是社会所关注的唯一焦点。人们会鼓励男性借助其他特征来提升自尊。他们也许会对布拉德说：“是吗？那么帅哥，你对草坪维护又知道多少？”**

**9 Of course women argue that they become obsessed with appearance as a reaction to pressure from men. The truth is that most men think beauty is more than just lipstick and perfume and take no notice of these extra details. I have never once, in more than 40 years of listening to men talk about women, heard a man say, "She had gorgeous fingernails!" To most men, little things like fingernails are all homogeneous anyway, and one woman's flawless pink polish is exactly as invisible as another's bare nails.**

**当然，女性会争辩说她们对外表的热衷追求是出于对来自男性的压力的一种反应。而事实是，大多数男性认为美丽不仅仅来自于口红和香水，而且他们也不会去注意这些额外的细节。四十多年来，我在听男性谈论女性时，从来没有一次听到过哪位男性这样说：“她的指甲真漂亮啊！”对大多数男性来说，像指甲这样小的东西看起来都一样，无论一个女士的指甲是用粉色指甲油涂得完美无瑕，还是光光的毫无修饰，男性都一概视而不见。**

**10 By participating in this system of extreme conformity, women are actually opening themselves up to the scrutiny of other women, the only ones qualified to judge their efforts. What is the real benefit of working this hard to appease men who don't notice when it only exposes women to prosecution from other women?**

**女性参与这种极端的从众行为，实际上是把自己置于其他女性的审视之下，因为只有那些女性才有资格评价她们所付出的努力。但是，如此费力地去取悦男性而他们却根本不会注意，同时又只是招致其他女性的指责，这样做究竟有什么好处呢？**

**11 Anyway, to get back to my original point: If you're a man, and a woman asks you how she looks, you can't say she looks bad without receiving immediate and well-deserved outrage. But you also can't shower her with empty compliments about how her shoes complement her dress nicely because she'll know you're lying. She has spent countless hours worrying about the differences between her looks and Cindy Crawford's. Also, she suspects that you're not qualified to voice a subjective opinion on anybody's appearance. This may be because you have shaving cream in your hair and inside the folds of your ears.**

**不管怎样，言归正传：如果你是一位男性，当有女士问你她看起来怎么样时，你千万不能说她看起来很糟糕，那样肯定会使她立刻迁怒于你，这也是你咎由自取。但是，你也不能慷慨地大放空洞之词，赞美她的鞋子和裙子是多么相配，因为她知道你是在说谎。她已经花费了无数个小时发愁自己的容貌不能和辛迪·克劳馥的一样。而且，也许因为你的头发和耳廓上粘着剃须膏，她会怀疑你根本没有资格对任何人的外表给出主观评价。﻿**

**Making the choice to be truly beautiful**

**选择拥有真正的美丽**

**1 Extreme makeovers are all the rage these days, with too many people addicted to Botox injection parties and reality shows. Plastic surgery is on the rise. Many people are trying to match the extraordinary measures actors and actresses go through to look perfect on the screen. Yet, the shortcuts to create biomedical happiness by having surgery, taking supplements or dieting don't usually fulfill their promise. Besides, beautiful people are not automatically happy people.**

**当今，过度追求相貌修整的风气无比盛行，太多的人沉迷于肉毒杆菌注射的宣讲会和真人秀，整容手术也日趋流行。许多人的做法堪比男女演员为了使自己在屏幕上看起来完美无瑕而采取的手段。为了获得生物医学标准下的幸福感，人们会走做整容手术、吃营养品、节食这样的捷径，但这些捷径并不总能实现它们所承诺的效果。而且，外表漂亮的人并不一定就幸福。**

**2 Attaining the highest degree of your beauty is not about looking good during social interaction, or physiological perfection, and you can't get there via technology. It's a growth process, a transformation of self through awareness and learning. It's about meaning, and being real. It's an emotional and spiritual walk, and it requires faith fueled with liberal doses of loving kindness.**

**最大限度地实现你自己的美并不是指要让自己在社交时漂亮或在生理上完美，况且这些也不是通过技术就能实现的。美是一个成长的过程，是一种通过意识和学习而达到的自我改造。美在于生活的意义，在于真实。它是一个情感和精神的旅程，需要人有信念才能获得，而且这种信念的动力来自慷慨和充满爱心的善良。**

**3 Every day, I have the delight and privilege of loving Richard, my husband, a real, human, emotionally accessible man. We're about the same age, and our looks have corroded a bit over time. After almost 20 years, though, we have grown together in ways that go far deeper than the surface of our skin. Our life is lovely even if it doesn't match the criterion of love in movie fantasies. We laugh together, we share the struggles of daily life together, and the thought that he might die before I do fills me with dread. All the muscle-bound male models in the world couldn't replace my very own, sensual, outgoing friend. It took me 37 years to find him, and I'm not about to replace him with the so-called "esthetic perfection".**

**能有幸每天爱着理查德，我感到很高兴。他是我丈夫，一个真实的、有人情味的、情感上可以靠近的人。我们年龄相仿，相貌已在岁月中有所消退。但近二十年来，我们共同成长，远超肌肤之表。尽管我们的生活不如虚幻的电影故事中描述的爱情生活那样，它却很美好。我们一起欢笑，一起分担日常生活的磕磕绊绊。如果想到他有可能先于我离世，我会充满恐惧。世界上任何一位肌肉发达的男模都不能取代我自己的这位性感、外向的伴侣。我花了37年时间才找到他，我决不会因为所谓的“审美标准上的完美”而另寻他人。**

**4 I work as a psychotherapist, and clients come to my office every day scarred with emotional pain because their lives aren't "perfect" enough. They feel inadequate, hopeless, and frustrated with jealousy because they can't attain life as they see it on the big screen. It helps when I preface our sessions with the mention that tens of thousands of dollars go into every second of media they see, that stars have dozens of people devoted exclusively to making them look good (even when they're naked), that the effort of maintaining their images is an exhausting, full-time job. The "beautiful" people in the media are under enormous pressure to maintain their looks, and for some reason, my clients don't realize that they're exempt from that predominant pressure.**

**我是一名心理理疗师。每天我都要接待许多客户，他们都是因为生活不够“完美”而倍受情感痛苦。由于无法获得大屏幕上所看到的那种生活，他们感到力不从心、绝望无助，并因嫉妒而陷于沮丧。给他们提供治疗时，如果在治疗开始前，我告诉他们，他们在媒体上所看到的每秒钟的图像都耗资数万，每个明星都有几十个人专门为其打理形象，使其外表悦目（甚至是裸体时也是如此），而且明星们保持形象是一件既费力又费时的事，这会对他们的治疗有所帮助。媒体上的俊男俏女们承受着保持形象的巨大压力，而我的客户却因某种原因，没有意识到他们有幸免受了这种强大的压力。**

**5 I underscore that all the face creams, physical workouts, dietary fads, Prozac capsules and meditation regiments in the world aren't going to make their lives, their bodies, or their mental state much better. In fact, they often hamper happiness by distracting from the things that lead to real inner beauty. Life is not about maintaining some young and stylish outward costume to hide behind. It's about growing and deepening your soul.**

**我要强调的是，世界上所有的面霜、健身锻炼、饮食风尚、抗抑郁症的百忧解胶囊，乃至许多人在一起打坐冥思等等，都不能改善一个人的生活、身体或精神状况。事实上，这些方法还常常阻碍人们获得幸福，因为它们会使人分心，不去关注那些能带来真正内在美的事物。生活的意义不在于通过维持某种年轻时髦的外表来掩盖自己，而在于精神的成长和升华。**

**6 The only way I know to develop my soul is through feelings. Witnessing natural phenomena — the star-lit galaxy, a centuries-old redwood, the symphony of birds' songs in spring — stretches it, making me feel humble and majestic, all at the same time. Human relationships bruise, collide and comfort, teaching me maturity and passion. Love urges my soul to blossom and glow, affection elicits feelings of eternity, and so I learn to accept others as they are.**

**我所知道的唯一的精神升华的途径就是通过情感。亲眼目睹各种自然现象——星光闪烁的银河，几百年树龄的红杉木，春天里鸟儿的叫声汇成的交响乐——这些都使我的精神得以延伸，让我觉得自己既卑微又伟大。人际关系中的摩擦、冲突和安慰使我变得成熟并充满激情。爱情促使我的精神成长并焕发光彩，亲情激发了我对永恒的感受，因此我学会了接受他人的真实本色。**

**7 The humans in my life are not the barren, self-absorbed "beautiful people" of the screen. We're ordinary, real, imperfect people. Together, we work hard stumbling through life, trying to be our best selves, knitting together families and friendships, and striving to illuminate the world with our personal ethics and aspirations.**

**我生活中的人都不是屏幕上那种思想平庸、迷恋自我的“美貌人士”。我们只是平凡的、实实在在的、有缺点的人。我们一起勤奋努力，患难与共，尽力完善自我，和家人及朋友紧密相处，努力用我们的个人道德和志向去照亮世界。**

**8 We come from numerous backgrounds and we don't always approve of each other's decisions, but we care for each other the best we can. We struggle to be less self-indulgent, more compassionate and understanding. We try to resist the lure of novelty fads, the manipulations of advertising. We survive through social phenomena that we don't agree with, through interwoven natural and unnatural disasters that take our loved ones and possessions, through fads and fancies that are often unhealthy. From each event, we learn, we stretch, we sometimes fracture, we process the emotional outcome, and we move on. These life events are the soul's workout, and though we may groan and complain, we can feel the growth eventually.**

**我们来自各种不同的背景，而且有时意见相左，但是我们尽力互相关心。我们努力消除自己的任性，努力使自己更具同情心、更宽容。我们努力抗拒新奇事物的潮流的诱惑及广告的操纵。我们会经历自己并不赞同的社会现象，经历那些夺走我们所挚爱的人和财物的错综交织的自然及人为灾难， 经历不良的时尚和幻想。但从每一例这样的事件中，我们都不断地学习、成长。我们有时也会发生分歧，也要处理分歧对感情所带来的影响，然后继续前行。这些人生经历是对我们心灵的历练。虽然我们会抱怨、发牢骚，我们终会感受到自己的成长。**

**9 The secret is that this growth is visible to others, and the effort registers on one's entire being. It becomes an authentic element that makes the spirit glow radiantly like that of a saint. Have you ever seen an elderly person like that, one whose wisdom shows in his eyes, and whose love is evident as he gently enquires about your health, or offers a brief sentiment that calms and affirms? The spirit that shines from within this person is true beauty, and it can't be bought in a jar.**

**这其中的秘密就在于这种成长是他人可见的，而且这种努力在一个人的全身上下都能得到展现。它成了一种真实的存在，使一个人的精神像圣人那样光彩四溢。你是否见过这样一位老者，他眼睛里透射着智慧，当他温柔地询问你的健康，或以简短的抚慰让你感到平静和放心时，他对你的关爱是那样显露无遗？这样的老者内心所散发出的精神才是真正的美，这种美不是瓶瓶罐罐的化妆品所能买得到的。**

**10 The miracle is that each of us has the total capacity to achieve this perspective, this fullest embodiment of the highest expression of soul, even as our mortal bodies wear out and degenerate.**

**神奇的是，尽管我们的肉体会老去并且衰退，我们每个人都完全有能力达到这个境界，即最大程度地展现最崇高的精神内涵。**

**11 In other words, true beauty is not about looks. It's about choices. As we move through life and grow through each of its checkpoints, we should seek out and build the kinds of experiences that reveal and purify our divine inner beauty. We must look at our own lives and decisions from a more valuable perspective than the media's shallow eye.**

**换句话说，真正的美丽无关外貌，而在于选择。在人生的旅途中，每当我们经过一个节点，都应该寻找那些能够展示和净化我们神圣的内在美的人生体验，并且将它们积累下来。我们必须从一个更有价值的角度而非以媒体肤浅的眼光来看待自己的人生和决定。**

**12 The decisions we make today affect the rest of our lives. We ourselves are ultimately the only people to whom we are accountable and for whom we are responsible. Each new decision we make can be a new resolution to build the beautiful future we long to have.**

**我们今天所作的决定会影响我们的余生。归根到底，我们自己才是唯一要对自己负责的人。我们所做的每一个新决定都可能表明了一个新决心，一个创造我们所渴望拥有的美好未来的决心。**