

I. JR Line to Shinjuku, two girls with short skirts squeezed between a sea of businessmen. The man next to me is on his phone, in fact everyone's eyes are glued to screens. He's playing an anime game, his little character jumping up and down in motion with his thumb.

Rock evaded, Treasure captured, he trips, oh no, he dies.... The man takes a screenshot of his score, I should mention he is around 50. No ring on his finger, headphones on. He takes two more screenshots, his shutter is on. Not by choice though, in fact every picture that is taken on a Japanese phone makes a sound. The shutter is always enabled, by law. The Japanese government introduced this measure in 2004 as a consequence of the rising voyeurism complaints and issues regarding people's privacy. To be frank a lot of men take up-the-skirt pictures of girls on the metro, on stairs, etc. The mandatory sound was seen as a way to deter people from engaging in this type of behavior, as it makes it more difficult to take photos without drawing attention to oneself. To me, it seems like a band aid solution, a solution which addresses the technological aspect of the problem, instead of the root which is part of a larger cultural problem. Japan has a complex relationship with shame, as it is deeply intertwined with the concept of honor, social harmony, and conformity. In Japanese culture, the concept of "face" (*tatemae*) is highly valued, which refers to the public persona that individuals present to others. Maintaining this face is crucial for preserving one's social standing and relationships, and any action or behavior that risks damaging this face can be met with shame and ostracism. This seeps over into the way that society approaches sexuality. Since desire is so collectively repressed, subversive sexual subcultures have emerged that take place in a more lowkey fashion, out of the eyes of the public.

II. Star Pussy. The beige plastic sex toy in the corner of this sex store is dusted and the corners of its "star" are brown, old to the touch of passing gentlemen, curious to see what she would feel like it. She has thorns and all kinds of outrageous 3D shapes sticking out. I can hear the "You're so tight baby" turn into a "You're so spiky baby". It's funny, as humans we naturally try to make things easier, better and more optimized for us, in all domains; replacing human "faults" by robot perfection. It is the year 2023, and robots have not yet taken over our sex lives, but they have begun. A small butterfly vibrator over here, a rubber duck stimulator in the shower, a projection based sex partner calling you a loser all night long (because you programmed it too), while you masturbate - there are endless opportunities. I can't wait to welcome my son with his robot girlfriend to Christmas dinner in 20 years. Sigh. Indeed I am all for working with technology to optimize sex, if you can't win, you should join them after all. Just make sure your boyfriend is not insecure. He'll think that you using a vibrator is an attack on his oral skills. I'm kidding, fear and doubt towards womanizers such as the *Satisfyer Pro 2nd generation*, which will, as the name suggests, definitely satisfy you, are normal, after all he wishes he could make you cum (like they did in the middle ages). In reality, sexual pleasure is a complex and multifaceted experience that can be enhanced and explored, including through the use of sex toys and robots. The notion that a partner's use of a sex toy or robot is a threat to one's ego or masculinity/femininity is a narrow and outdated perspective that ignores the diverse and evolving nature of human sexuality. However since technology seeps and invades all aspects of our lives, it is natural for us to want

to protect the most sacred of them all, our sex life. Even that holy moment of banging body parts will be technologised.

III. I get stared at, and my presence is met with confused grunts that I attempt to interpret, but then I refrain, as I realize that of course, men in porn stores will look at me. Books full of beautiful women, written by men, sold by men, bought by men, how dare I be there, as a woman. I think of porn, how it started, its trajectory and where the industry is at now. The printing press not only enabled religious diversion, but also launched the production of erotica stories and the distribution of those. Erotica stores are great, filled with bizarre goodies of all kinds, strawberry flavored rings and glitter thongs to the brim. Gigantic Potential, especially with the amount of viagra pills available. Whether it be in New York or in Tokyo, I come to porn stores to get that tingle of curiosity, perhaps more than desire.

X. Desire. We all feel it. Some more than others. Some want burgers, some want boobs. Something for everyone. The word in itself comes from Latin *desiderare* meaning “long for, wish for; demand, expect”. Although the original sense being “await what the stars will bring,” from the phrase *de sidere* “from the stars,”. Listen to Messages from the Stars by Rah Band. As kids we desire things, such as pink barbies and our mother’s warmth. But the first time I consciously remember desiring something, it was associated with shame. A random moment, but I recall it perfectly, as the combination between desire and shame tends to be the most powerful. We may feel compelled to hide or repress what we are ashamed of; but in the end that leads us to desire it even more, to fetishes and obsessions. I can see eight year old me snooping through my dad’s nightstand, looking for books. I spotted an ugly cover, a bookmark, the title “The girl with the dragon tattoo”. I flipped through it nonchalantly; my thumb sliding over the pages, my eyes skimming for something to intrigue me. I halted the page and began to read: a girl walks in for an interview of some sort. He tells her that if she wants what she wants, she has to perform oral sex on him. Mind you at that point, I did a) not know what oral sex was and b) what consent was, the only thing I knew was that I was fascinated and that I was not supposed to be reading this. I kept reading.