

Happiness: Just a Makeover Away
by Ana Tajder

My Bimbo was born with the body of Giselle Bündchen; perfect long legs, big round breasts, blond hair and a pretty face. She wore tiny white underwear and her birth information said: "127.6 lbs. The target weight 127 lbs." I named her Tiger Banana and tried to fulfil the ultimate goal of every Bimbo's life and turn her into "The sexiest, richest and most famous Miss Bimbo in the world."

Pretty cool, huh? Well millions of girls across the globe think so.

Miss Bimbo is a new online computer game targeted to 9-16 years old girls. It was created by two young British (male) computer nerds and first launched in France where it now has over 1,2 Mio users. Only few weeks after its launch in Britain, 300,000 little British girls were trying to collect enough Bimbo Dollars for a pair of silicones.

I am 33 and not 9 and I know that this pink world does not necessarily represent a programmed mirror of real life. But frighteningly, it could.

To perfect my Bimbo, I had to take her to a clinic for a breast enhancement, plus a little of nip & tuck. I also had to buy her diet pills, take her shopping for fashionable clothes and accessories, take her to a beauty salon and hook her up with a rich and famous boyfriend. To do that, I had to send her to Club Bimbo: "Here you can dance, flirt and maybe meet a handsome Boyfriend. Your boyfriend will (hopefully) give you some money every day. Because he loves you." The sign on the door read.

Well, it was hard enough growing up with Barbie and her impossible figure. But at least we were stuck with wishing for balloon breasts and 48cm waist. Miss Bimbo players do not wish. They buy. After all, having enough dollars is all it takes.

While little girls are playing "Miss Bimbo", big girls are playing "The Swan", a U.S. reality show in which average-looking women are given "extreme makeovers" and within only few months are transformed into "new" women through plastic surgery, fitness training and hard diets.

What we don't see is the "Post-Swan" reality show, showing how the real lives of those women have *not* changed with their new appearance and how happiness is *not* just a makeover away. Of course, nobody will make this programme - the plastic surgery industry has grown too big in earnings and influence. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, in 2007 the spending on plastic surgery increased to \$12.4 Billion. Nine patients out of 10 were female. While statistics for Europe stay unavailable, they are easy enough to imagine.

We have a real problem here. The idea of female body being a modifiable object has started endangering lives. According to The Alliance For Eating Disorder Awareness, up to 24 million Americans and 70 million individuals worldwide are suffering from eating disorder. Nearly all (90-95%) are women. And 5-20% will not survive.

In mid April, the French government felt it was necessary to pass a law intended to protect people from self-opposed starvation. 300,000 girls in France are suffering of Anorexia; this disease of starving yourself to bones (literally) became an epidemic.

What is shocking is that in 90% of cases Anorexia it is self-opposed – healthy girls chose to turn their bodies into skeletons without teeth and hair, wishing to achieve the über-svelte female figure glorified by the media. It has even become somewhat of a cult: its followers even have a nickname for it, “My friend Ana”. If you google this sweet-sounding phrase, you will find hundreds of “fan” websites full of information such as “Ana in film, arts and literature”, “Famous Anas”, “Diets and Contests” and tips on how to throw up.

How did we get here?

Only a few decades ago, our mothers were out on the barricades, demonstrating against the beauty dictatorship and trying to make the world finally accept the fact that women are not objects. They stopped wearing girdles and sleeping with rollers in their hair. And today we are back spending fortunes on water-padded, silicone-padded, whatever-makes-your-breasts-look-larger padded bras. And even wear them to work. That is, if we don't already have implants.

And just for the case we don't have them, we shouldn't worry – the Internet, the truest mirror of our society, can become our fairytale godmother in just one click.

www.MyFreeImplants.Com is an online community established in 2005. Its goal is to bring two groups of people together: 4,500 women that want to enhance their physical appearance through cosmetic surgery but cannot afford it and men (“benefactors”, as they are called on the site and currently ad up to 30,000 people) who are willing to help achieve this goal. The girls send men custom videos or photos, chat with them “and more” (as stated on the site). Men donate to the girls of their choice money for plastic surgery.

I see you scowl. Believe me, absurd as it is, the idea works: the site has helped tens of thousands of women raise over \$2 million dollars towards their plastic surgery goals.

So it's all come back around, and with a vengeance: We played with Barbie, we denounced Barbie and now, we are becoming Barbie. We modify their bodies, and even worse, hunger to disappear.

What has happened to us? “You've come long way baby” used to imply women's freedom, emancipation, and empowerment. Yes, true, we've come long way. But then an even longer way backwards.

In the mean time, I am afraid that Tiger Banana is dead. She either died of lack of silicone and diet strawberry shake, or she was murdered by Bimbos in designer outfits for her lack of style. May she rest in cyber peace. Where she belongs.