

The Great Expectation

Those days, I also went on a lot of bad dates. And it was on one of those bad dates that I first encountered the Great Expectation. I am, of course, referring to men's expectation that women groom and/or remove their pubic hair. Truthfully, I don't remember when I got my first bikini wax. There have just been so many. I do recall trying to speak Portuguese with an actual Brazilian waxer while getting a Brazilian wax. My Portuguese skills are not that sharp. I know enough of several foreign languages to get myself into a conversation, but not to sustain one. After learning that I spoke Portuguese, the esthetician broke forth with a flood of guttural, musical language that I only minimally understood. The wax was over quickly, as all good waxes are, and I remember no pain, but that might be because my brain was so engaged in making sense of her words. I remember thinking that it wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be, and that I could certainly tolerate having this done to me once a month.

I cannot emphasize the strength of *Sex And The City's* influence on my generation enough. This is where, I am certain, my friends and I learned that we were to get waxed — not from men. Although they certainly supported the trend with their Great Expectations. Almost ten years later, we still can't stop talking about *Sex and The City*, although for this generation, Leah Dunham's "*Girls*" seems to have come along to fill its slot. Sarah Jessica Parker has kids now (twins by surrogate, of course: can you imagine two babies coming out of that body shaped like a stick of gum?) Cynthia Nixon refuses to commit to one sexual orientation. Kristin Davis is a lesbian with an adopted black son. And Kim Cattrall wrote a book about amazing sex with her husband and then divorced him. But to us, to a generation of adult women navigating life in the early 21st century, they will always be Carrie, Miranda, Charlotte and Samantha. To say that *SATC* was a big influence on me and my peers, in our early twenties at the time, would be quite an understatement. We used *SATC* as a guidepost, an advice column, a source of entertainment and wisdom. We sat around in groups

discussing which one of us would be which character. I even wrote an embarrassingly naive sex column for a major metropolitan newspaper, fancying myself a Carrie Bradshaw-in-training. No wonder books written after that time about body image or female sexual behavior, no matter how highbrow, can't help but refer to the show.

I had the pleasure of a research-related reason to go back and watch selected episodes. I sought out those episodes that depict anything to do with genital hair removal, and there are several. As Debra Gimlin says in her book "Body Work", "The shared attitudes and practices of social groups are played out at the level of the body."

One night, after many drinks on one of these mediocre dates, I found myself back at an apartment belonging to a man I called "The Swede." My friends and I had the habit of nicknaming men before we knew whether they were going to stick around, understanding intuitively that if you name the puppy, you've got to keep it. Also, monikers like "the Arrogant One" or "Your Boss" always provided more info up front than just "Dave" or "Allister." The Swede lived by himself, which is a marker of success in this overpriced city. We were rolling around like teenagers on the ubiquitous single-guy black leather couch and his hands were in my pants.

"Maybe it's time for a wax." He smiled. He fucking smiled. Since when did men get to be picky about the action they're getting? I mean, aren't they supposed to just be glad that you let them anywhere near your vagina?

That was the last thing The Swede said to me. Besides a bewildered "Wait! Where are you going?" I gathered my things and marched home, outraged. He didn't call me again, either because he wanted nothing to do with my not-groomed-enough vagina or because he knew how badly he screwed up.

I waited for a suitable amount of time to pass so I could tell myself it wasn't because of him, and then I went and got waxed.