

# The Roller Coaster

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by Pete

Step on my roller coaster ride. It begins with the easy flat roll out of normality as thoughts drift in of my imaginative self-creation; I'm in something soft and flowing, with perfect makeup; my body being clean, smooth, and smelling sweet.

The heart rate climbs, almost imperceptibly at first, just like the car ascending the main incline.

If we don't look over the side, keep our eyes straight ahead, there's little sense of what lies ahead, just a building excitement. It's a long hill and there's no hurry. The higher the climb the more the exhilaration to come later. Now the experience and thoughts are getting clearer: the black dress, black stockings, sandals with 3 inch heels, black bra, red lipstick, enough eye liner to be obvious. We've reached the crest and now comes the heart pounding thrill of feeling the clothes go on and seeing the makeup come together. The car is rolling fast and free and the ride is exhilarating. It's off with the soft and flowing and on with the tight and revealing. Yes, ever more revealing.

But there's a sharp turn at the bottom, a ligament stretching jolt. The realization that all these feminine touches, haven't replaced the man staring back from the mirror. He's there waiting for us. For now, the car is rolling and there's more to come. Enjoy the moment! Forget him. More inclines and plunges, less thrilling than the first but better than life back on the ground. Then finally one last bank of the car with stomach turning force, and a sickening sensation from the turn, then feeling the car lurch to a stop. The mirror reflects a freak. An obvious man, looking more like a caricature than a goddess, more clown than woman, and that sick feeling in the gut is growing. But it will pass and the exhilaration will draw me to the back of the line for another ride.

The sensible person would say, "If you enjoy the thrill more than you hate the nausea, go for it; if not, stop getting back on, you moron!" Why can't it be that simple to me? Why can't I decide which is worse, missing out on the thrill or the nausea that follows? Why do I keep getting back on?

I think we all ask ourselves that question and the answer is as diverse as we are, but there are some commonalities between us. I may be reading something into the story but whenever I see Jesus coming into contact with someone who needs healing, He asks them, "What do you want?" A simple and reasonable question but this is The Lord of All Creation asking it. Surely He of all people can see the obvious need and He knows all so He knows the need. Then why the question? Is it His aim to cause those coming for healing to stop and consider what it is they most want, where they most hurt, what is their deepest need? My sense is that is just what He was doing ... and is doing with us today. He is able and ready to heal us, but He wants us to come asking specifically. We're not left alone in this. His Spirit is within us converting our groaning into sensible prayers.

So I'm back to my question with renewed hope and urgency. Why do I keep getting back on the roller coaster? The simple answer is, "it feels good." Some of you will stop there and go away and enjoy the ride in spite of the nausea that follows. But nausea is a warning of greater sickness to come. Others of you will stop there, denounce your rebellious and lustful nature, and muster up the resolution to seek something higher than temporary pleasure; a good response if you can maintain the determination. Few of us can for long. I choose to look for an explanation of why it feels so good. After all, it is anything but obvious to most men and nearly all women that it would feel good for a man to go prancing about in women's clothes. And even if the sexual release that often follows is the goal, why is women's clothing so provocative?

As already stated, the answer is as diverse as we, but we share some things in common.

None of us feel truly at home among men.

We sense we are inferior in some ways to most men, be it physically, intellectually, competitively, skillfully, whatever, we don't measure up.

We feel ashamed as men.

We may even hate men.

At the extreme, we are convinced we are biologically different from normal men, lacking something male and/or possessing something female, like hormones or brain waves or some other undetectable divergence.

Our outward anatomy doesn't match our inward anatomy.

So there's a small crack into our thinking that can be chipped at and maybe lead to an opening into the cavern of our hearts. Why do I feel inferior? Am I truly inferior? Was I a mistake, a freak of nature? No evidence supports an organic cause of my feelings. Much as I would love to find some, there is nothing to confirm that my chemistry or biology is anything but male. I'm not even somewhere on a continuum between male and female. I am woefully well within the confines of normal maleness. Drat! The inferiority then must be psychological, not anatomical. Oh, I may not have the anatomy of a professional athlete, the intellect of a professor, or the skills of a craftsman, but few men do — and still most don't find it compelling and thrilling to step out in high heels. I'm left with life's experiences, most beyond my control, that have brought me to believe I'm not much of a man. And here is where we diverge. Our experiences are unique to each one of us and we walk this part of the path alone as we seek an answer.

Accompanying our sense of inferiority as men is a sense of comfort and acceptance with women. We believe their world to be a welcome haven from the crude, competitive, harsh world of men. They express feelings, love beauty, nurture rather than discipline, console rather than ridicule. In the extreme, we want to become women. To put off all that is male, the body hair, the sweat, the protruding and dangling anatomy and to put on all that is female, the flowing hair, the full breasts, the soft curves, the smoothness, the receptive anatomy. Again, there is no organic explanation for these desires; I'm left looking for the psychological explanation. Life's experiences have convinced me I would have been better off if I had been born a female. I would have been accepted and loved in that body instead of rejected in the one I'm living in.

So here I am, stuck in a body trying to play the role expected for that body, but feeling all the while I'm unsuited for that role. I'm ashamed of myself. I practiced denial most of my life, trying instinctively all kinds of strategies to cope. I am a perfectionist, trying desperately to measure up, but that's impossible and leads to frustration and greater shame at my inability to perform.

I withdrew, choosing a profession that I thought would isolate me in a world where I could cope only to find that world full of better men as well. I practice condemnation of others trying to hide my shame by making them feel ashamed — but that just drives away the ones I need to love me.

I practice anger, lashing out when the shame of not measuring up boils over in me and I want to scream. Again, I drive away those I need. So I'm left with exhibiting my shame, pretending to be the woman they wanted me to be, trying to hide my shame by flaunting it for all to see, claiming it doesn't bother me, this is who I was meant to be. But that finally drives away those who can't understand why I would live in such shame. I'm left alone and condemned and still more ashamed.

The roller coaster is my life. Come on! Get on the ride, enjoy it while it lasts. It will provide a numbing respite from the shame for a time before the shame comes back with crushing force. The only other line available has no waiting but I'm reluctant to get in. It's the one that leads to Jesus' face. He's going to ask me, "What do you want?" Am I ready to tell Him, to ask Him?

Am I ready to allow Him to go with me back into my past, the family/societal disappointments and hurts; the many unresolved memories ... and show me the lies, tell me the truth, and prove to be the Man I needed to convince me

...I am a man? Am I ready and willing to be loved when I seemingly can't love myself?