



The Myth of Mattel

Michelle Jenkins

Every feminist in the world will tell you that the Barbie doll is an unachievable, unattainable stereotype of what men think women should be. The tiny waist, the giant breasts, those sparkling plastic eyes of – what color is that? Indigo? She’s simply too perfect. She doesn’t exist. You just can’t be Barbie.

As for me, I’m not so sure she’s the ultimate aspiration. Let’s be realistic. Sure, those breasts look great, but no one’s ever mentioned Barbie’s chiropractor, and the seven different times her back’s been realigned...this week. It seems obvious those tiny feet would never support her height, and, let’s face it, arms that don’t bend are simply a nuisance. And must we make mention that Barbie isn’t physically capable of tying her own shoelaces, resulting in the daily battle with her too tall stilettos. Barbie probably wouldn’t seem so striking if she were to reveal those bunion-riddled toes.

I have to admit, however, that in all of Barbie’s faults, she seems to have found a good man in Ken. He seems to have a lot going for him, what with his glittering Barney-esque smile, fabulously tanned body, and his toned, shapely biceps. And Ken, with nary a preconceived Neanderthal notion in his pretty little latex head, seems an excellent catch for the feminists. Of course, therein lies the problem. In the inevitable break-up over intellectual differences does Barbie go to court over possession of the Dream House, or just ride off in a dramatic blaze of glory in her stunning fuchsia convertible? I suppose Mattel may have overlooked Prenuptial Agreement Barbie in their harried rush to meet the demands of preteen focus groups.

I say let’s make greater effort to recognize a more identifiable, albeit lesser known, individual – an equally timeless warrior of toy store shelves whose similar pink box has spent far too much time behind that of her predecessor. The role model for introverts everywhere, the far less glamorous, often overlooked, younger sister, Skipper. Cursed from her manufacturing birth with a bland, uninteresting name, encouraging the adolescent buyer to “Skip Her” and, instead, acquire the ever enchanting

Barbie, Skipper has overcome battles identifiable to the entire populace. Never hindered by her regrettably miniature chest or her underwhelming stature, Skipper has relied on personality alone, and never beauty, to preserve her status as an equally desirable plaything.

Barbie, though beautiful, simply cannot do justice to women, no matter how many surgeons are employed to alter their bodies. To these unfortunate lost souls, I say, "Look to Skipper!" Hail her as the Sovereign Ruler of Plain, and bask in all that is wonderful about her immense personality. Know that while vanity may always rule supreme, Skipper will forever be cherished as a paradigm of what women could aspire to be. And while Barbie will only be remembered for her dewy lips and enormous breasts, Skipper will be remembered for her heart.