

OBJECT

Challenging Objectification

The impact of lap dancing on relationships – ‘Lea’ *

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* Please note that ‘Lea’ is a pseudonym and that all names have been changed

“In April 2007, my then fiancé (O) was to attend the stag weekend event for his closest friend, John.

O advised me that John wished to go to a lap dancing club during one of the stag weekend evenings and although it was not his (O’s) sort of thing, he felt he had to go along with how his friend wished to celebrate his stag party - especially as he was the ‘best man’. I did not put up any argument about this. At the time I had never actually encountered (in my then twenty-eight years of life), the issue of strippers/dancers, where it actually affected me, my life, my relationships.

Upon O’s return from John’s stag weekend I discovered that as O was best man, the entire group had put money in the ‘kitty’ in order to pay for a lap dance for John and also his best man, O. O apparently had no choice but to sit through a lap dance. I discovered this dance took place in a private room, separate from where the rest of their party were sitting/drinking. John had one lap dance on a stage for all to see, then a private one of his own. O felt that the other members of their stag party were not getting into the spirit of the event, so opted to pay out of his own pocket for a lap dance in order to encourage the others to join in the spirit of the event (again, this took place in a private room). I do not believe that this action encouraged any additional interest from the other members of the party. O also insisted that he felt pressurized to buy a dance because the girls were quite ‘full on’ and even after buying them a drink, they would not go away, so buying a dance would rid him of the pressure.

Upon O’s return, I of course asked how the weekend went, where they had been, what they had seen, etc. He filled me in on the food, drink and boating and of course, the lap

dances. I asked lots of questions about this latter matter, because it was the first I had heard of it - that the dances took place in private rooms. I am not sure why, and I am not saying it is any better or worse, but the fact they had lap dances taking place in private rooms really disturbed me. For some reason, I thought they were performed where the man was sat drinking, with his friends around him, etc. (I have also discovered that most of my female friends, relatives and acquaintances thought the same and upon discovering the private room issue, were taken aback).

In the present day, I am sickened at the thought of putting any female through either dance performance type, be it a more public dance or a private dance. Neither seems a good option; but in spring 2007 when the world of lap dancing was all new to me, I felt that the private room made it much worse.

Following on from John's stag weekend, I began to assess the lap dancing issue in my own mind and it upset me greatly. It really made me fall apart, and I was not altogether sure why. I had lots of things buzzing around my head, i.e. treating a woman like a piece of performing meat; men that have this disposable income to throw about in such a gross fashion feeling they can impose their buying power in this way; allowing a female to demean herself in full naked view of a man, yet she would go about her normal day in full clothing; likening a dancer to a female relative, such as having daughter who might become one, or a sister, or if your mother might have been one and how O, or any man, would feel about this.

O was witness to my upset and the thoughts I was processing and tried to justify himself, as described above. He apologised for his behaviour and insisted that in all his thirty-seven years, he had only been to a strip club once (again on a former stag party, in Berlin) and at that time he actually walked out because the females looked so bored and the club seemed very run down.

Although I was sickened with his behaviour (and John's and all men that visit such establishments), I could see that he felt the peer pressure to join in, etc. Furthermore, I felt that because I did not state my case beforehand, even though I was well aware they were planning to visit a lap dancing club, I had to accept the situation and move on. However, I impressed upon O that if he wished to have lap dances in future, or attend strip clubs and the like, he should continue in life without me, as I do not have any respect for such behaviour and I would rather he left me out of his life if that was the manner in which he wished to conduct himself.

O and I were to be married in July 2007 and in June 2007, O organised his own stag weekend to Budapest. John was asked to be best man, although he had no dealings with the organisation of the stag weekend, nor much part to play in the wedding as it was much smaller and low-key than his own.

O assured me before he left for Budapest that he would not be visiting / taking part in any lap dance / strip clubs, or the like. He advised me that one of his good friends, Alex, together with his (O's) brother Ed, were notified that should there be any whisperings of setting-up such a visit, they were to put an end to it. I happened to see Ed the night before they were to leave for Budapest. We were having very typical, general conversation, and for some reason, he blurted out to me that they would not be visiting

any lap dancing/strip clubs. I was not expecting this to come into the conversation at all and was rather taken aback, as I had not made any such mention to Ed during our conversation. I had O's word and I trusted him.

Upon his return from Budapest, I asked O how it all went, where they went, how the food, the city, the race driving event he had planned went etc. He responded and spoke generally about the trip.

Two weeks or so after their return from Budapest, I happened to ask, quite out of nowhere and for no particular reason, as I was sincerely expecting the answer to be 'no', but nonetheless, I asked O, 'so, did you visit any girly bars?' (referring to lap dance / strip clubs). O admitted that they had. I understood why he did not tell me immediately upon his return – so I did not labour the point, although of course, my trust was entirely broken.

O told me that he had a lap dance, in a private room, paid for courtesy of the other members of his stag party. One of the other members also had a lap dance. Apparently, the waitresses were all topless, so some of the members of the stag party did not feel the need to pay for a private dance as they were more than happy with the view within the bar, so to speak. O said he was more or less hurled out of a cab, directly into this lap dancing club and put in line, strong-armed by his friends. He had no time to think or act and was far too drunk to make his own feet/legs or brain work.

O also said that he could not remember what the girl even looked like; what colour hair she had; nothing. This appalled me. What kind of respect can a man have for a fellow human being, to allow her to demean herself in such a way, that he cannot even remember what she looks like? This female is somebody's daughter, possibly sister, mother, partner – and she dances naked for men so drunk and pathetic they do not have respect enough to acknowledge her as a fellow human being and recognise her physicality, her worth, her feelings.

I thought I needed time to forgive O for this, but did not know how long it might take. We had the wedding fast approaching; our respective parents had given us a large sum of money to put towards the wedding and our future home, etc. Invitations had been sent and I could not let everybody down by cancelling, after all, I was sure I just needed time to forgive him.

As it happens, it took almost one year, after counselling and the idea to move out from our shared flat, to actually forgive O and have an understanding for how he had allowed it to happen.

But to this day, I still cannot forget that he did actually allow it to happen, and this is what haunts our marriage still. In truth, I have no regrets about how I have lived my life, perhaps what mistakes I have made, etc, as they are what have shaped me today. However, I do regret going through with the wedding. It was not the right time; I was thoroughly let down by the man I loved, he showed no respect for me, our relationship nor human kind. From this, I do not know yet how we are to move on”.