

THE CURSE OF BEING FUNNY

BUSHRA ZAMAN

Mirror mirror on the wall, who is the funniest of them all? You? In that case, it may be a difficult attribute to maintain on account of the following:

Your humour is expected to break awkward silences

When present at certain social gatherings, one or two awkward silences may occur. Usually at times such as these, after a few seconds of silence, the guests may look to you for a solution, as though you're a vending machine that pops out jokes on demand, but for free. Either pay me in cash or gratitude, *please*.

It can be difficult to get your point across

Do you add random jokes to general conversations? Have you ever laughed while mentioning that you're going through stressful times? Welcome to the club. Similar to the boy who cried wolf, constantly being funny desensitises people to your emotional state, and can take their attention away from the message you are trying to convey.

People may automatically assume you understand/make all forms of jokes, including puns

God forbid you cannot come up with puns, what sort of a comedian would that make you? It is similar to walking into a bakery and not finding chocolate cake, being able to sketch but not paint; it is as though you are absolutely not permitted to have a talent unless you possess all forms of the said talent.

You may be asked for ideas on how to be funny
Let us be honest here, if you find yourself googling

how to be funny, chances are you are not funny. No number of YouTube tutorials or how-to articles can suddenly force an inherent quality to develop overnight.

People may steal your jokes

This should count as intellectual theft, in my opinion. While some jokes come to you spontaneously, others require thought and effort. Hearing a friend repeat a joke you made whether in person or on paper with no nod of appreciation to you or without your permission to repeat it, can have the potential to break friendships. In my opinion, if you steal my joke, appreciate that there is no such thing as a prison for fake clowns.

You may seem insensitive

As mentioned before, sometimes your humour can be a defence mechanism to hide emotions you do not want others to see. Spontaneously cracking jokes in serious situations to prevent yourself from having a mental breakdown or to help others feel better may make you seem slightly insensitive at times. As if coming up with anecdotes was not hard enough, now it has the potential to damage your image. Human beings are so complicated.

If you are funny, it is both a gift and a curse. Use your gift of humour wisely and appropriately, and give yourself a pat on the back for your efforts, because they will most likely go unnoticed anyway.

Bushra Zaman likes books, art, and only being contacted by email. Contact her at bushrazaman31@yahoo.com



The Curious Case of Women and Horror Movies

FATIMA JAHAN ENA

When people think of horror, low budget slashers with an overabundance of fake blood or movies saturated with poorly executed jump scares might come to mind. Moreover, horror has had a reputation for having female protagonists but being severely unkind to them. So, imagine my surprise when I realised most avid horror fans, who I knew personally or found on internet forums, were women.

The most obvious explanation for this might be that horror allows people to experience thrilling, suspenseful situations from the safety of their own homes. The situations can often be fictitious, like a zombie apocalypse in *Dawn of the Dead* (2004). However, a great deal of horror lies in amplifying what we experience in the real world, with *Get Out* (2017) being an example. For women, this can be a form of escapism as we can experience those emotions in a safe environment. In reality, the daily lives of women are filled with danger in every corner, so horror movies provide a safe outlet to escape those.

Another interesting reason would be "The Beast Within" theory. Professor Malcolm Turvey said the theory "...argues that an unconscious, repressed part of every human is actually savage; that the veneer of civility is very thin, and beneath that



is essentially a monster. According to this idea, although we consciously disapprove of what the monster is doing, deep down part of us enjoys seeing the murder and mayhem the monster unleashes — because if we could, we would do that."

That may not explain the majority's love for horror, but it may provide insight as to why women appreciate the genre. Women can project themselves onto the female protagonists who become monstrous and vengeful, like the premise of the 2007 horror-comedy movie *Teeth*.

Building upon the theory, another reason could be the evolution of the "Final Girl" trope in horror movies. As the name suggests, the Final Girl is the female character who confronts the killer and survives until the end of the movie. The name was coined by Professor Carol J. Clover in her book *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Clover's theory regarding the trope was very precise as most of the Final Girls of movies made in the golden age of slashers operated on a moral high ground.

For example, Alice in *Friday the 13th* (1980) finds out the antagonist drowned because his supervisors were partaking in "morally corrupt" activities. However, Alice survives and becomes our Final Girl because she refrained from doing all of that. Apart from *Halloween* (1978), other movies enforced the idea of the Final Girl being pious as well, which can have underpinnings in misogynistic ideals. However, in recent years, the trope has done a complete 180-degree turn. Nowadays, the Final Girl ends up becoming the very entity that she was fighting against. The most well-known example of this would be *The Witch* (2015). The movie follows the struggles of the traditionally pious girl and her evolution into becoming a monstress, freer and more powerful than she ever was. This particular evolution of the trope developed to cater more towards a sense of empowerment in a genre that has had a history of being brutal to people identifying as female.

Horror has always provided a space for women, which has evolved from its problematic underpinnings to masterful storytelling of empowerment. The genre will always continue to hold a place for the woman and the monstress.

Fatima Jahan Ena likes to complain about capitalism and her forehead. Find her at mail2ena@gmail.com