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**HEALTH**

**SKIN DEEP - PART TWO**



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POSTED BY: Editors  
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Under the insistence of a friend, I check out the [Elements Wellness Centre's website](#). It is an upper-end work of video-making, depicting an impossibly beautiful, and highly privileged

woman escaping the hectic cry of a busy city for the solitude of the elements. She walks past the meditative buddha into the cooling running waters, the warm fires and the peaceful surroundings of the Elements waiting room. I can only assume she's there for the spa, for she needs not a speck of work as one can surmise from the hungry look she gets from the only gentleman sitting in the waiting room with her. She is above acknowledging him. As handsome as he is, he doesn't stand a chance.

It's a somewhat misleading introduction to the facility in that Elements is more welcoming than the video suggests. Of course, there is a price tag to all of this, which eliminates any casual storefront walk-ins. And no question that cosmetic surgery tends to appeal to a clientele belonging to a distinct financial bracket. But as medical procedures improve and advance, affordability is slowly becoming less of an issue.

I was aware after my first consultation with Dr. Bray, that I was going to go through with the procedure no matter how the finances were arranged.

And now today is the day. Whatever excitement and anticipation I had prior to arriving has given way to concerns about pain, risks and the possibility that I will go through all of this and yet nothing will change.

My wife too has gotten cold feet. She's acting in ways that make me think she's growing nostalgic towards my body fat, as if prepping to say good-bye to a love that can no longer be. And I can't help but feel that I am in some way betraying her, that I am letting part of my body go without her consent. She's even become a bit distant with me and finally admits, the night before the operation, that it's a silly thing to do, that she likes me the way I am. I tell her it's not too late to back out, both of us knowing, of course, that I have no intention of stopping now.

**TORO** *The New York Times*



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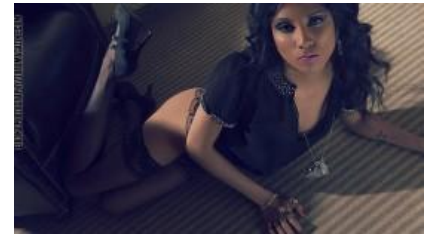
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But whatever separation anxiety she might be experiencing, I'm experiencing it too. I walk around the house shirtless, once even answering the door without so much as towel over my shoulders, which, by the way, is a great way to get rid of door-to-door canvassers. Perhaps I am giving my middle-aged flab one last look at the world or letting the world have one last look at it — after all, we've been tight with each other for at least 10 years.



The night before surgery my nerves may not have surfaced in any noticeable way, but they were wreaking havoc on my subconscious. I decided to eat alone that evening. I neglected the courtesy of calling my wife who had dinner at home



Priya Panda, lead singer of Canadian metal band Diamonds, is no shrinking violet. But during her ...



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waiting for me not knowing that she was hoping that I'd show up and dispel any last remnants of her doubts and fears.

Instead I selfishly gorged on steak smothered with blue cheese, escargot, freshly baked bread dipped in butter, two bourbon sours and a Kit-Kat. What does it matter, by tomorrow it will all be gone?

It was a restless sleep. I wondered about the pills on the shelf ... My medicine cabinet is now crammed with little blue containers of painkillers: Ratio-Lenotec No 3, Ratio-Oxycocet, Oxycodone/Acetaminophen, Ativan Sublingula and an antibiotic, Apo-Cephalex.

Would any of these help me relax? Would one of them get me through the night? Was this how Charlie Sheen started?

The past several days were spent researching the effects, side-effects and dangers of each drug, for it does seem like I have the makings of a great little chemical playground, but I'm cautious when it comes to prescription drugs, and as if fate is helping me along, I happen upon an episode of *Dr. Phil* coaching someone through their addiction to prescription drugs. It appears that an addiction to painkillers is a nasty path to take, and with no access to Dr. Phil, it's not a path I want to travel. I vow to take them only as directed.

But it is the drugs on the counter that are making everything suddenly so real. I am really going to go through with this. I am really going to voluntarily go under the knife to appease some ridiculous vanity I have about my body shape.

It's 7:30 a.m., Thursday morning. An unseasonably warm February. With such little sleep, and so much uncertainty ahead, I am surprisingly relaxed. I credit the Ativan.

I arrange for someone to drop me off and pick me up at the hospital. Oddly enough, the person who agrees to do this is the person who has been vocal against the procedure. She calls herself a cynic, but she's more than that. It almost seems political to her, as if cosmetic surgery is a slap in the face to a God that she doesn't believe in. She made it clear to her boyfriend that it would be would be a deal breaker should he attempt anything similar. Most of her sentences begin with, "It's none of my business but..."

Happily, I am able to supply her with enough information about the clinic and the doctor to ease much of her concern — even to the point that after checking their website she almost allowed herself to consider what work she would have done — if she wasn't so vehemently opposed to it, of course.

Her boyfriend is intrigued by the idea, which surprises me in that he is the most cautious person I know. It does, however, confirm my idea that vanity is perhaps a stronger motivator in men than any of us are willing to believe.

The facilities beyond the waiting room are even more tranquil. I'm led to a room where overnight guests stay. It has all the fineries of a five-star hotel. I opt to forgo the luxury and return to my home where my four-year-old daughter thinks daddy's getting his bad cold looked after.

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My guide, Paulette, is not in sight, instead I'm greeted by Sharon. Sharon too has a manner about her that immediately instills confidence. There is some truth to the concept that as you are being led to surgery you start falling in love with the people who guide you there. Either that, or you've conceded to a level of trust that allows you to put yourself completely in their hands. Who knows? Perhaps that's what love is — trusting a person enough to put you to sleep and operate.

As I'm lying on the gurney, drifting off to sleep, I'm aware that I have never been so phenomenally well cared for. "Please have a nice sleep," Sharon tells me. The anesthetist tells me in his own pleasant manner what he's doing, all the while I breathe in fresh oxygen through a mask. Dr. Bray is there too, he apologizes for the cloudy day that hampers the picture window view of the park. I tell him I like my views a bit dark.

It's all so very nice. I tell myself I will remember falling asleep. But I don't.

Watch for the third part of the series, SKIN DEEP, next Friday where our intrepid writer shares the results of his surgery.

**Related: Skin Deep, Part 1**

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POSTED BY: Valerie Freund  
March 31, 2011

Wow, great work. I await part 3 anxiously! It certainly opens a door otherwise closed for most people.

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