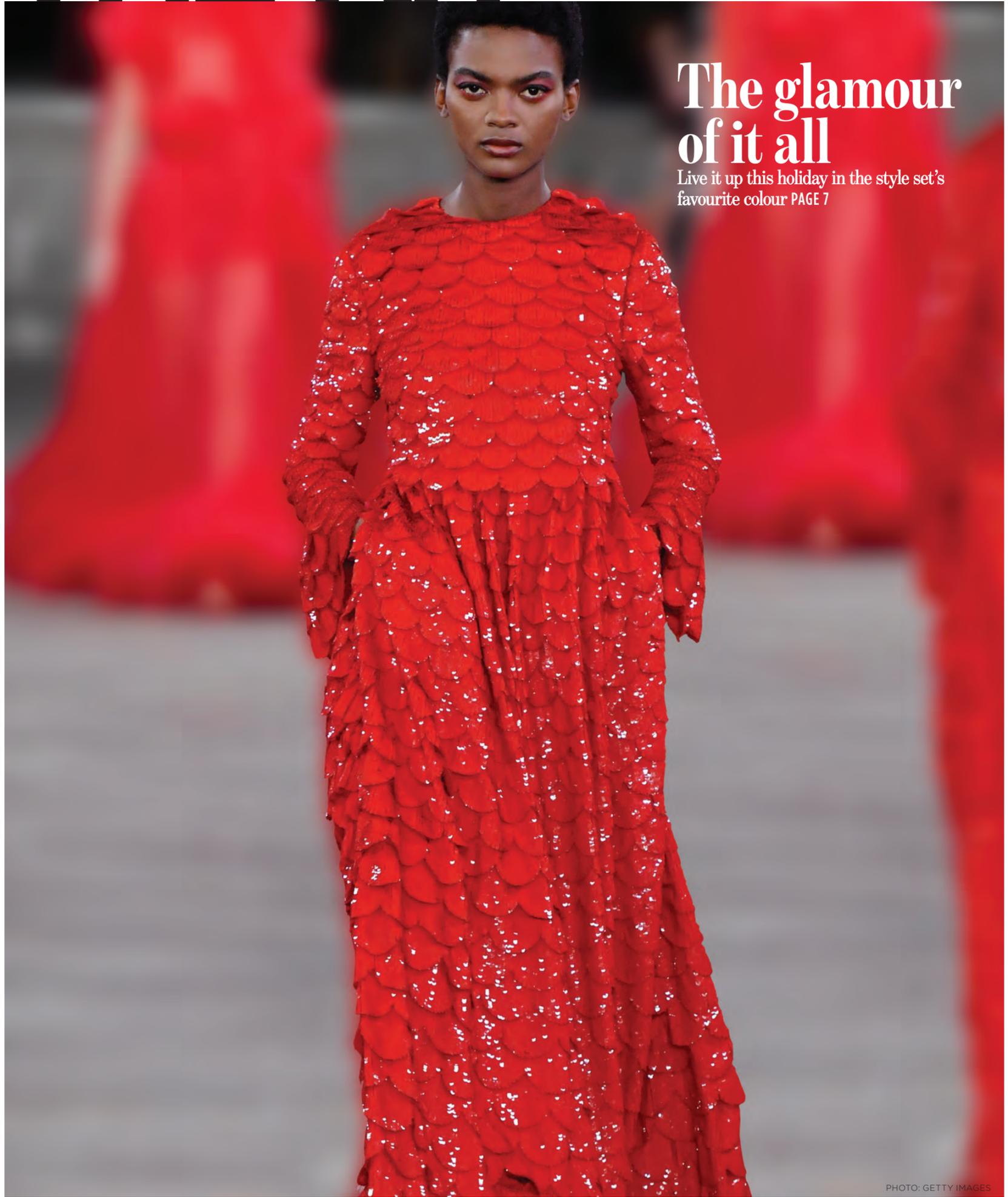


THE KIT

*Jet-Setter Special: The cruise is cool again.
Our writer sets sail* PAGE 4

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The glamour of it all

Live it up this holiday in the style set's favourite colour PAGE 7

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES



Investment skincare

The luxury products worth the price tag PAGE 3



Reality bites

Special report: Are your teeth aging you? PAGE 6



Stylish shelf

Three books you'll devour in one sitting PAGE 5



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SCENTS OF THE SEASON FOR HER

GIVE THE GIFT OF POSSIBILITY WITH OUR PICKS FOR THE LOVELIEST HOLIDAY FRAGRANCES AT SHOPPERS DRUG MART



1. YVES SAINT LAURENT Black Opium Eau de Parfum, 90 mL, \$156
Sweetness and sensuality combine in this addictive gourmand floral, a provocative mix of black coffee and white florals.

2. DIOR J'Adore Eau de Parfum, 100 mL, \$165
This deservedly legendary fruity floral offers more to discover with each spritz, thanks to vibrant ylang ylang and warm, enveloping orange blossom.

3. GUCCI Bloom Nettare di Fiori Eau de Parfum, 100 mL, \$168
The epitome of enigmatic sensuality, this scent is a darker interpretation of the classic Bloom.

4. DOLCE & GABBANA The Only One Eau de Parfum, 100 mL, \$145
Violet and bergamot lend intrigue to this sophisticated scent, an olfactory expression of hypnotic femininity.

5. DIOR Joy by Dior Eau de Parfum, 90 mL, \$165
Refinement gets a joyful twist with this elegant fragrance spiked with rose grasse and warm and creamy sandalwood.

6. CHLOE Eau de Parfum, 75 mL, \$154
Intimate and sensual, this powdery floral is the perfect scent for the confident creative.

7. VIKTOR AND ROLF Bonbon Eau de Parfum, 90 mL, \$195
Pleasure is the defining principle of this caramel-driven scent, the last word in modern self-indulgence.

8. CAROLINA HERRERA A Good Girl Eau de Parfum, 80 mL, \$148
The instantly iconic bottle houses a sexy oriental fragrance ruled by tuberoso and roasted tonka bean.

Caught on film

How feminist are your favourite holiday movies? We rated five holiday classics to see if they really are feel-good flicks after all

BY BRIONY SMITH

Even the grumpiest grinchers among us aren't immune to the charms of a holiday classic. But just how feminist are your favourite Christmas flicks? We put eight of the best Christmas movies to the Bechdel test, which assesses films' inclusivity by asking the following: Does it have at least two (named) women in it? Do they talk to each other? Is the conversation about something other than a man? So, which holiday movies will actually make your yuletide bright? The results may surprise you.

LOVE ACTUALLY (2003)

Premise: A bunch of interconnected Londoners (including Keira Knightley, Liam Neeson, Hugh Grant, Laura Linney and Alan Rickman) fall in and out of love.

Does it pass? Technically, Karen (Emma Thompson) asks her daughter what part she is playing in the nativity play. (Answer: the lobster.)

Demerits: Far too many to count: Alan Rickman sleeps with his assistant. Andrew Lincoln obsesses over his best friend's girlfriend (including focusing their entire wedding video on her face), ignores her in person and then confesses his love in a silent pantomime that would, in real life, be more chilling than sweet. Colin Firth proposes to his housekeeper despite never having had a single real conversation with her. And, hold tight here, the prime minister of England fires his assistant for being sexually harassed by the president of the United States. (She writes to confess her love, anyway, and they end up together; She doesn't mind his constant fat-shaming, apparently.) Liam Neeson encourages his son to break about a dozen terrorism laws to chase his crush through the airport. Grotesque sex tourist Kris Marshall heads to America for the express purpose of bagging women, where he is instantaneously rewarded with a four-way comprised of models—and it is not a dream sequence. This film should, in short, be titled Men Actually (Are Trash). **Bonus marks:** Emma Thompson tells off

her imperious, cold cheating husband, at least. (Then stays with him. Sigh.)

BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY (2001)

Premise: A 30-something publishing PR gal (Renée Zellweger) spends her days bemoaning to her diary about her weight, single status and disastrous affair with her boss (Hugh Grant, again).

Does it pass? Yup. There is a moment at the end where Bridget's friends ask her if she is coming to Paris with them (and a scene between Bridget and her mom referenced below). **Demerits:** Bridget doesn't seem to have many interests beyond men and fat-shaming herself. She also has inherited her mother's racism, cheerfully repeating her mom's referring to the Japanese as a "cruel race." Her mother also tells Bridget she'll never get a man looking like she "just wandered out of Auschwitz." Yes. She actually says those things in a rom-com. Also: Bridget's response to her boss's sexual harassment is to sleep with him, then profess her love after 10 minutes or so.

Bonus marks: The mother bravely opens up to her daughter about how she feels like she has not had much agency in life: "I spent 35 years cleaning his house, washing his clothes, bringing up his children. To be honest, darling, having children isn't all it's cracked up to be. Given my chance again, I'm not sure I'd have any. And now it's the winter of my life, and I haven't actually got

anything of my own. I've got no power, no real career, no sex life. I've got no life at all." (Spoiler alert: She goes back to her husband in the end. Double sigh.)

ELF (2003)

Premise: A human adopted by elves and raised in the North Pole heads to New York to re-connect with his birth father.

Does it pass? No.

Demerits: Jovie (Zooey Deschanel) has a fun name, but few lines and seems generally uncomfortable in her supposed love interest's presence (probably because she is expected to show inexplicable interest in a towering, shouting man-child who behaves like an unhinged toddler at all times.) There is also a bizarre running "joke" during the finale where the female newscaster reporting on the events is repeatedly harassed by a bystander. **Bonus marks:** None.

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE (1946)

Premise: George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart) gives up his dream of travelling the world to stay in his hometown, raise a few kids with his wife, Mary, and run his family's bank. A series of setbacks spurs him to consider suicide until an angel steps in to show him what life would be like without George Bailey.

Does it pass? Technically, George's daughter, Zuzu, catches cold walking home; Her teacher, Mrs. Welch, calls

Mrs. Bailey to chat about whether Zuzu is okay—until George rips the phone out of her hand to yell at Mrs. Welch. Typical. **Demerits:** Pint-sized Mary slut-shames town badass Violet, accusing her of liking "every boy." (Props to Violet, who responds "What's wrong with that?") **Bonus marks:** Housekeeper Annie, fed up with the boys' malarkey around the house, eye-rolls to George's mom. "That's why all children should be girls."

THE FAMILY STONE (2005)

Premise: Everett (Dermot Mulroney) brings his uptight girlfriend, Meredith (Sarah Jessica Parker), home for the holidays to meet his large—and somewhat rude—family. Hijinks ensue.

Does it pass? Yes. Matriarch Sybil (Diane Keaton) discusses her illness with her kids. The women of the family also obsess over how much they hate Meredith. (Rude!)

Demerits: Meredith is concerned that Everett's gay brother adopting a kid could turn the kid gay. She claims that means that life could be harder for a gay kid, but she comes off as a true homophobe. Despite this film's being somehow enshrined as a new Christmas classic, virtually everyone in it is rude and selfish. **Bonus marks:** There is queer representation, as well as people of colour (the deaf gay son is married to a dude of colour, and they adopt a black baby), but the film certainly doesn't make any great leaps toward breaking stereotypes.



Face first

Safeguard your glow through winter with the latest in luxury skincare

BY KATHERINE LALANCETTE



This highly concentrated elixir stimulates cellular activity to lift and redefine facial contours.
CHANEL SUBLIMAGE L'ESSENCE FONDAMENTALE, \$675, CHANEL.COM



Infused with snow algae and aloe, this moisturizing mist instantly smooths and soothes.
CÉLA ESSENTIAL FACE MIST, \$28, THISISCÉLA.COM



Two anti-aging superheroes, retinol and vitamin C, come together in this powerhouse serum.
KATE SOMERVILLE +RETINOL VITA C POWER SERUM, \$127, KATESOMERVILLE.COM



Dubbed TTT (thick-to-thin-to-thick), the velvety cream melts into skin, then plumps from the inside.
LANCÔME ABSOLUE REHYDRATING BRIGHTENING SOFT CREAM, \$260, LANCÔME.COM



Micro-nutrients recharge and illuminate skin while the cooling ceramic tip relieves puffiness.
DIOR PRESTIGE LE MICRO-SERUM DE ROSE VEILUX, \$310, SAKSFIFTHAVENUE.COM



The brand that pioneered dry sheet masks presents a revolutionary revitalizing treatment.
NANNETTE DE GASPE VITALITY REVEALED FACE MASK, \$145, NANNETTEDEGASPE.COM



A brightening cleansing balm so lavish, you'll actually look forward to nightly face washing.
RODIAL PINK DIAMOND CLEANSING BALM, \$59, MURALE



Daub on this whipped concoction before bedtime and wake up to a dreamy, dewy complexion.
FRESH LOTUS YOUTH PRESERVE DREAM FACE CREAM, \$60, SEPHORA.COM (AVAILABLE IN JANUARY)



This is neat: a peel-off mask packed with antioxidants that tones and tightens in only 20 minutes.
BEAUTYBIO THE PEEL SMOOTHING MASK, \$57, HOLTRENFREW.COM

My skip-the-shampoo secret

This leave-in conditioner is beauty director Katherine Lalancette's Holy Grail

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUIS MORA



Here's a list of things I'd rather do than wash my hair: cook perfectly runny eggs, have morning sex, read a juicy profile, watch an episode of *The Office*... See, 20 minutes of deafening blow-drying just feels like the most uncivilized way to start the day. (My cat seems to agree.)

That's why a huge chunk of my beauty routine involves trying to avoid it. There's the grease-soaking dry shampoo, the frizz-fighting silk pillowcase, the collection of snazzy scrunchies to distract from the filth... Sometimes, when I need to look presentable but can't stomach a full blowout, I'll shampoo only the front part of my hair in the sink and pretend the back doesn't exist. Oops.

But one dirty-hair woe I've struggled to solve is that dull, limp look my lengths take on from day two onward. The roots may appear convincingly clean, but the scraggly ends give it away. That's where this bottle comes in. The leave-in conditioner is meant to be misted through damp hair pre-styling, but I go off-label and spritz it on my dry strands. It's completely weightless and works

like a charm reviving post-shower shine and body.

That's because the dual-phase formula (you've got to shake it before spraying) relies on feather-light acids rather than heavy oils. There's lactic acid, an ingredient commonly used in skincare for its smoothing abilities; malic acid, which functions as a humectant; and a little something called 18-MEA. It's a fatty acid found on hair's outer layer that protects it and keeps it manageable, but withers away as our manes suffer damage. By smoothing hair's surface, this formula makes up for the loss

And so, armed with my trusty spray, I treat my hair to a hearty dose of hydration before twisting it up in a topknot using one of my many aforementioned scrunchies. I let it do its thing while I nibble on poached eggs and luxuriate in my pyjamas. After a quick swipe of mascara and a slick of rouge, I'm ready to unravel my bun and marvel at the bouncy bends it's left behind, along with a relaxed smile that can only be achieved through a little morning indulgence. Let the day begin.

You deserve a vacation

This was the busiest year yet, no? Get inspired with our ultimate getaway guide—must-visit hot spots and cool flight essentials—and book a trip somewhere wonderful

In praise of the do-nothing getaway

Sometimes, as Caitlin Kenny learned on her mini-moon, you need to toss your itinerary

The only thing my now-husband Colin and I knew when we started our wedding planning was that we absolutely wanted to take off for an Italian honeymoon right after we tied the knot. The first thing we learned once we actually started planning: There was no way that was going to happen.

As my to-do Excel sheet grew, it became obvious that there'd be no time for discovering Airbnb's cutest Amalfi Coast suites or finagling reservations at every Bourdain-approved trattoria. I had seating charts that needed solving, a rehearsal dinner that needed booking and vows that needed writing. Even if I did manage to carve out time to plan a trip, would I have any energy left to enjoy it?

As I vented to an already-married friend that my honeymoon would have to wait, she took a firm stance: "No, you have to do something." She and her husband had escaped to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, for a few days after their wedding—an easy but essential break, she said. I considered the appeal of a "mini-moon," and how simple my criteria would be: gorgeous beaches, no time-zone change and minimal packing required. Soon after, Colin and I booked a five-day retreat to an all-inclusive Cuban resort, and then all but forgot about it in the lead-up to the wedding, as playlists and place settings sapped our brainpower.

Months later, on my fourth morning as a newlywed, I slowly started to understand my friend's advice. With no alarm set, I gently roused from a deep sleep when the sun, peeking between the wooden blind slats, cast a bar code of light on the king four-poster. Late the night before, Colin and I arrived at the Royalton Cayo Santa Maria, a five-star, adults-only resort on a sandy splinter off Cuba's north coast. Without disturbing my new husband's light snores, I reached for the pillow menu, entertainment schedule and activity list on the nightstand. By the time Colin woke up, I had plans for à la carte omelettes at 9, a beach walk at 10 and kayak rental at 11.

By 10:10, I had forgotten the agenda. The beach walk turned into more of a beach viewing, as we watched the blue froth sway from loungers under a thatched-roof cabana. We chatted about our wedding highlights, played our travel-sized backgammon, sipped mojitos, snacked on quesadillas, and eventually, I dozed off—a delightful pattern that we repeated in some form every day of the trip. I napped each afternoon, on the beach, by the infinity pool, in the catamaran's hammock-like netting while everyone else on the excursion went to explore the nearby shore. It was a level of relaxation I hadn't allowed myself during the past nine months of wedding planning—or, arguably, in the past decade.

With no schedule to stick to and no expenses to deliberate (an bonus of prepaying for an all-inclusive, especially for budget-weary newlyweds),

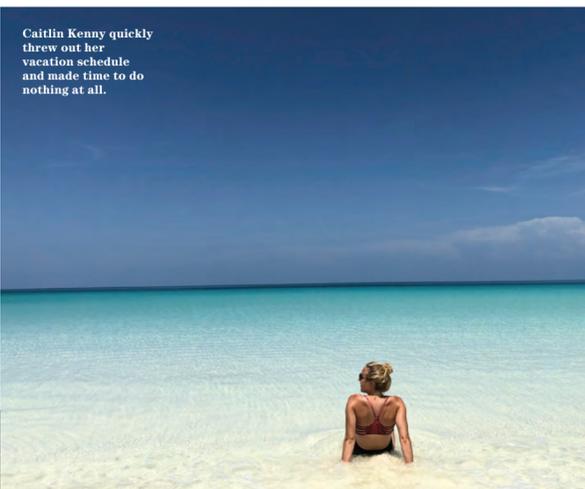
Colin and I found ourselves fully present. We hopped up to dance with the salsa band after dinner one night; we imagined the names and life stories of our fellow travellers. We made room for the silliness that had cemented our bond during one of our first weekends away together, six years ago.

On our last night, the resort arranged a private dinner for us on the beach. The sky flashed pink and purple before giving way to a blanket of stars, while we ate fresh lobster and talked about what we wanted our next five years to look like: a house, kids, that trip to Italy. All those plans may not fall into place—but we've learned that the rerouting can be just as beautiful.

It turns out that the swaying hammock-like net in a catamaran makes for an ideal afternoon nap.



“By 10:10, I had forgotten the agenda. The beach walk turned into more of a beach viewing, as we watched the blue froth sway.”



Caitlin Kenny quickly threw out her vacation schedule and made time to do nothing at all.

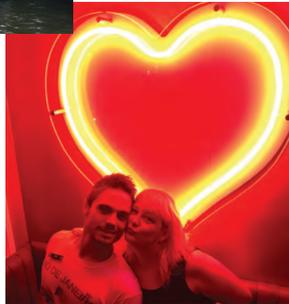
The beach at the Royalton Cayo Santa Maria is worth the trip.



Briony Smith sets sail on a next-gen river cruise.



The sleek ship is targeted to a younger demographic, complete with Instagram-ready photo opportunities at every turn.



Rolling on the river

Think river cruises are just for retirees? Briony Smith hopped aboard a boat full of millennials for deckside yoga, a late-night silent disco and foodie-approved brunch



is painted matte black, with her new moniker emblazoned in tasteful white typography: The A. She looks a little dangerous, a sleek black swan lurking among a flock of anonymous white seabirds.

DAY ONE: FIRST DAY AT CAMP

On board, the decor has the low-key glam of King West or Yaletown; everything is black or gray—black velvet club chairs, marble flooring, mirrored walls—with the occasional neon heart art or technicolour Andy Warhol Marilyn Monroe print to jejuje up your 'gram backgrounds. The beaming Eastern European crew sports minimal black Henleys and jeans and leather Converse-esque sneakers. I am not laden down with a five-pound itinerary folder upon checking in—the A is paperless, instead beaming out all activities via daily email blasts and a WhatsApp group. I open the door to my cabin, which is small but cozy: There's just enough room for a super-soft queen-sized bed, a flat-screen TV, Bluetooth speakers to pump your playlists and a tiny marble bathroom. Oh, and a mini balcony to watch the scenery roll by.

I stagger onto the dock in Amsterdam a jet-lagged mess ready to board my first-ever cruise. A line of senior citizens snakes its way right down to the water, and I'm momentarily confused. I thought I had signed on for a cool cruise: Rolling on the Rhine is curated for millennials (or, rather, folks aged 21 to 45, so Generations X, Y and Z) and run by Uniworld's cute new brand, U by Uniworld. We will be wending our way to Germany via the Rhine through Cologne, Bonn and Düsseldorf, to Frankfurt. But, it turns out, the older cruisers are en route to a glistening white behemoth crammed with gold chintz and tufted dining chairs.

As I wheel my suitcase further down the dock, my ship finally peeks into view. Once named the Ambassador, she has been given the *Queer Eye* treatment, and, now, she

is painted matte black, with her new moniker emblazoned in tasteful white typography: The A. She looks a little dangerous, a sleek black swan lurking among a flock of anonymous white seabirds.

DAY TWO: BRUNCH, I LOVE YOU

One of the greatest annoyances of travel is the obscene breakfast times enforced by so many establishments. U by Uniworld has cracked this problem—they serve a leisurely brunch at an hour much more palatable to us lazy Generation Y folks. (Early-morning fitness freaks are still catered to, however, via exercise classes offered up on deck every morning, from Lu Jong Tibetan yoga to circuit training.) Freshly made omelets, a rotating selection of local cheeses and a different fruit smoothie every morning were the stuff of hangover heaven. (Jake

Flight essentials that guarantee a first-class experience no matter what your boarding pass says

BY KATHERINE LALANCETTE

For uncharted levels of comfort, wrap yourself in an oversized cashmere scarf that doubles as a sumptuous blanket. **ACNE PONCHO**, \$630, **ACNE-STUDIOS.COM**

Arrive in style with this sleek carry-on. It features an unbreakable shell and an integrated battery to charge your phone. **AWAY THE CARRY-ON TRIPKIT**, \$225, **AWAY-TRAVEL.COM**

Before landing, wake up your gaze with these hydrating rose gold patches. They soothe and brighten in 15 minutes flat. **BAGGAGE CLAIM ROSE GOLD EYE MASKS**, \$33 FOR SIX, **NET-A-PORTER.COM**

Memory foam cushions and advanced noise-cancelling make for cozy movie watching and disturbance-free sleep. **BANG & OLUFSEN BEOPLAY H91 HEADPHONES** IN NATURAL, \$399, **BANG-OLUFSEN.COM**

Whether you've got a window or aisle seat, trust this plush pillow (it twists every which way) to give you the support you need. **INFINITY PILLOW TRAVEL PILLOW**, \$50, **INFINITYPILLOW.CO**

No more fussing with plastic cutlery or creating unnecessary waste. This handy three-piece set brings new elegance to airplane dining. **ROSTI MEPAL TRAVEL CUTLERY SET**, \$20, **THEBAY.COM**

Let a silky mask transform your snooze into a deep, restful slumber. Bonus: It keeps the delicate eye area hydrated and protected. **SLIP SILK SLEEP MASK** IN CARAMEL, \$70, **NORD-STROM.COM**

Cleanliness never looked so cute! Housed in a charming patterned pouch, these wipes keep screens and cellphones germ-free. **WELL-KEPT SCREEN CLEANSING TOWELETTES**, \$8, **SEPHORA.CA**

Complete with elderflower syrup, a recipe card and a linen coaster, this kit packs everything you need to craft the perfect mid-flight pick-me-up. **W & P CHAMPAGNE COCKTAIL KIT**, \$32, **WANDPDESIGN.COM**

I make my way to the lounge for orientation, plucking a handful of candy out of the huge jars arranged in front and swiping a glass of

Andrae did not make it, sadly; they did not emerge until 2 p.m.)

Later that day, we hop on the bus toward Keukenhof, the world-famous tulip garden open for eight weeks every spring. There are seven million flowers there—beds bursting with the country's trademark tulips, plus hyacinths and daffodils. The fields of pink and yellow stretch on for miles; the hardier influencers pick their way to the middle to take faux-casual pictures of themselves relaxing in the dirt. I opt instead to buy a traditional Dutch snack of raw herring and onion with pickle. The onion breath is legit, but it doesn't stop me from befriending more fellow passengers, including a couple on their honeymoon, and Tasha, a lifeguard from Fort McMurray, Alta: "I just like not having to lug my suitcase everywhere." That's the nice thing about a river cruise: You wake up and you're there.

DAY THREE: NO DISSENTION ON THE DANCE FLOOR

After a night spent in the Red Light district checking out the surprisingly informative and sex-positive sex work museum with Cullen and Jake, my new BFFs from Missouri, I am ready for today's Netherlands food tour through the leafy Jordaan nabe. We sample Holland favourites like herring with eye-wateringly strong Bols Corenwijn grain wine, warm stroopwafel, Surinamese peanut chicken skewers and goudas both sharp and sweet, then slip onto another boat for a sunny canal tour with Dutch beers and deep-fried cheese balls. True to vacation gluttony mode, we get back to the boat just in time for a hearty penne dinner. Sitting at the staff table, I befriend the very nice—and very handsome—DJ, Freek, who my boyfriend later tells me, is signed to a very chic label. He shares his new banger with me ("In Arms" by Ferreck Dawn & Robosonic.) I blast it while pinballing around my cabin, squeezing into my clubwear.

Boris does not tolerate any dissension on the dance floor. Those who protest are placated with vodka shots or a 10-minute trip to the photo booth for a full-blown shoot. I make friends with Christina and Brittany, two journalists with the bizarre occupation of cruise ship critic. Freek plays "In Arms" for me once more, the perfect ending to a wild night. That night, I dream of herring.

DAY FOUR: HITTING SNOOZE

All activities are cancelled today due to hangover: I snooze in my cozy cabin, watching Slovenian nature documentaries, sipping over every picturesque village we float by—and lounge on the sundeck with pina colodas, restoring myself with perfect little sliders.

DAY FIVE: NEW BFFS

Pep intact, I venture out for the "morning espresso walk" into the charming city of Cologne. Painted pastel houses nestle at the foot of a

beautiful old church, its countless spiky spires stabbing the obscenely blue sky. Towering above it all is the Cologne Cathedral, a gorgeous Gothic beast begun in 1248 and completed 632 years later. Back on the boat that afternoon, I quiz my new friends Christina and Brittany, about their lives as cruise critics. That evening, the three of us head to Rheinstein Castle. I almost stroke out clawing my way up the near-vertical hill the castle perches on, but the view at the top is spectacular.

DAY SIX: THIS CALLS FOR A SINGALONG

I squeeze in a massage before the night's excursion. Rene, the jacked trainer/yoga instructor/bike tour leader/bongo enthusiast/DJ is, yes, also the massage therapist. "Are you in pain?" he intones. "No," I answer. "You will be," he replies. The Eastern European sense of humour is a true highlight of this cruise. Later that day, Rene will lead the 60-km bike ride to Eberbach Monastery where some *Game of Thrones* scenes were filmed. (They are not messing around when it comes to long-haul bike rides on this cruise. Now I know why every crew member is monumentally jacked.) As I can barely bike to the corner store, I choose the cheese-making excursion instead. At Fucking Good Cheese in the quaint riverside village of Rüdeseim, we set to work swirling a milky liquid until it turns into tangy ricotta-esque soft cheese. "Cheese is like a new love," the cheesemaker crows. "You must go slowly!"

En route back to the boat on the bus, someone plays "I Want to Dance with Somebody" on their iPhone, and everyone begins to sing along. Soon the bus is rattling with everyone belting it out, and I am brought back to my camp days and the warmth and camaraderie between strangers who will never see each other again. It has been a while since I've felt community like this, so carefree.

DAY SEVEN: SAYING GOODBYE

Finally, we ease back into civilization with our final stop: Frankfurt, a business city bustling with a no-nonsense Teutonic energy. Docked on the river, we have the best view of the waterfront green space. Here, Germans lounge day and night with drinks, watching the river and the world go by. That night, Christina and Brittany and I take in the scene from the deck of the ship, final few drinks in hand, feeling a little sad that this is our last night together. Behind us, in the Ice Bar, Rene tinkered with the DJ controls, slightly cranky that no-one was partaking in the silent disco. "C'mon," I say to the girls. "Let's go." And so we each grab a set of headphones and tune into a different channel: red light for jungle, blue light for techno, green light for house. We each hear a different tune, but we dance, under the moon, together.

Travel and accommodations for Briony Smith were provided by Uniworld. U by Uniworld did not review or approve this story.

The joy of solo travel

Kate Carraway went to Guatemala by herself—and it changed her life

In my mid-20s, my essential self was still a melting cup of vanilla soft-serve, formed by the suburbs, my sweet parents and the floral spray of privilege. I'd been through first jobs, boyfriends, roommates and apartments, but I was still a girl, at ease only within the borders of my relatively limited world. I wanted to be the kind of woman who had seen it all (or seen something), who could take care of herself, who was legitimate—so I decided to backpack, alone, through Central America.

I chose the region for the ironically childlike reasons that it was warm and beautiful and the people were supposed to be nice, which all turned out to be true. I'd also taken Spanish in high school because the French teacher was mean, and it was cheaper to fly there than anywhere else I really wanted to go. I'd read the travel advisories and guidebooks that warned, vaguely, about danger—"pickpocketing" and "murder" were often, bizarrely, considered together—but I'd also read Aldous Huxley comparing Guatemala's Lake Atitlán to Italy's Lake Como; Como, he wrote, "touches the land of the permissibly picturesque," while Atitlán "is Como with the additional embellishment of several immense volcanoes." I wanted to see that. I wanted to see the markets, the chicken buses, the jungle, the temples and ruins. A harder, more legitimate version of me—my future self—would go despite the risk I'd been warned about, so I went.

I flew from Toronto to Houston to Guatemala City, then took a bus to Antigua, and then in the morning, rode in the back of a pick-up truck, bouncing around beside my enormous backpack, which I had kicked around at home to suggest a patina of use, and hopefully with it, un-f-k-with-ability. I arrived at a farm where I slept in a tree house, overlooking three volcanoes dotting a green valley of coffee farms. It remains the most incredible view I've ever seen.

I spent most of my time alone, reading and doing yoga in San Marcos, a town known as the destination for tourists interested in more mystical or metaphysical journeys; shopping, mostly for fruit and used books; and eating tortillas, avocados and my favourite breakfast of eggs, queso fresco—the love of my life—black beans and plantains. I spent hours just walking, sometimes with loose packs of street dogs, often past flats of drying coffee (and often through the clouds of the acrid, indelible smell of coffee being processed.) A few lucky times, I walked past one of the hottest guys I've ever seen, this wildly dishevelled backpacker with a Black Flag tattoo behind his ear. I made my own travel plans, negotiated my own cars and boats and rooms. I started to sound like my mom, who is small and kind and has never once accepted the first hotel room she was offered.

Like I did throughout my 20s, I felt, simultaneously, a false sense of confidence, believing people to be good and trustworthy, and an acute but abstract sense of terror. I had enough life experience to be cautious and smart but not enough to always know what that meant. I found solace in the newly familiar internet cafés and the English-language movie theatre. I wore a fake wedding ring on the advice of better-travelled friends, then felt stupid and took it off, and then felt stupider and put it back on.

As local political machinations seemed to intensify in Guatemala, everyone—from other backpackers to smug ex-pats—wanted to talk about danger, trading stories about where not to go and what had happened where, like it was celebrity gossip. I was told often that I was "brave" to be a young woman travelling alone, and I hated what was either a compliment or a warning. Thinking that whatever I'm doing might be somehow exceptional, while I'm doing it, makes me drop the ball.

I sent long emails to my friends that were specific to that era: post-WiFi and pre-Instagram. After a boat I was travelling on was rejected at the dock due to civilian protests (or, that was the word on the lake), I wrote in a mass email that I'd "obviously put a great deal of thought into things like 'relative safety'" (no, I hadn't) and "I feel totally fine and safe and as if my dad would generally approve." (No, he wouldn't.)

Despite everything, after three months of travelling by myself, I'd only gotten into trouble once: My laptop and some cash were stolen after I'd stupidly left my backpack

hidden under my bunk in a hostel. My passport was safe, a saving grace.

But soon before I left Central America, an ear infection—the kind that feels like wet cement was poured into your head and left to harden—sent me to a doctor I didn't understand, with a friend translating over the phone, and then to an unfamiliar version of a pharmacy, requiring more translation. I checked myself into a hotel that night, where I could sleep in a room by myself, on proper pillows instead of the concrete pancakes that are ubiquitous at hostels. It was among the least cinematic or enchanted moments of the trip—just an expensive, administrative moment—but it was also, I think, when I became a woman who takes care of business and takes care of herself. That's the person I'd wanted to be when I left.

“I slept in a tree house, overlooking three volcanoes dotting a green valley.”

Carry-on essentials

These page turners are riveting enough to distract you from the fact that your plane has been delayed for more than an hour



The read: *This Will Only Hurt a Little* by Busy Philipps
The scoop: Actress and late-night talk show host Busy Philipps recounts her 20-year Hollywood career in this can't-put-it-down memoir.
You'll like it if: You are hopelessly addicted to Busy's Instagram stories where she shares everything from her sweaty workouts and movie set nostalgia to red carpet behind-the-scenes moments and mom-life mania.



The read: *Rage Becomes Her* by Soraya Chemaly
The scoop: Feminist activist Chemaly's book is about the power of female rage and how it is can be a catalyst for change in correcting the disparities that are making women angry in the first place. Like wage gaps, discrimination, harassment and violence.
You'll like it if: You want to feel empowered to act.



The read: *Becoming* by Michelle Obama
The scoop: In this memoir from the former FLOTUS, she shares about everything from her fertility struggles to how she and Barack embarrassed their daughter Malia on prom night.
You'll like it if: You're a forever Momma fan (we can relate).
—Jennifer Berry



Crimson tide

Fashion has long been in love with the colour red. **Leanne Delap** reports on why the obsession could be a key to fashion's future

An arresting collection of romantic red gowns cut through the fashion noise earlier this month. All in Valentino's signature crimson, the powerful dresses were wrought by contrast in delicate tulle and silks and chiffons. The Pre-Fall collection, shown in Tokyo, drew raves for designer Pierpaolo Piccioli. He nailed the classic Valentino look, with just the right upbeat modern tweaks: This is exactly where sexy meets elegant.

Red has been a signature for the label since Italian couturier Valentino Garavani set out on his own in 1959. Legend has it that the designer, who had chosen dressmaker as his future job at the age of nine, was transfixed by a woman in red at the opera in Barcelona. Seeing her, in his words, as "unique, isolated and fiery," he pledged his devotion to the colour.

"Red is a visual stimulant connoting power, passion, love, strength."

Red is a colour of emotional intensity—viewing it actually soups up your metabolism, your heart and respiration rates. It's like a visual stimulant connoting power, passion, love, strength (think red lips and nails, an almost Pavlovian sexual call and response). It represents sin in Hebrew culture, and threats and danger in the Middle East. In South Africa, it represents sacrifice. In India it is associated with purity, fertility and prosperity. And, of course, red is most famously linked to prosperity, luck, long life and happiness in Chinese culture, where it is the colour of holidays and celebration, especially at the New Year. Think of the tradition of red money packets, which are given for good luck.

Priyanka Chopra's traditional wedding lehenga at her recent Indian wedding-a-ganza is a stunning example of the power of red. The couture piece, by Sabyasachi, was a long, embroidered skirt with a matching cropped top

and veil. *People* reported it took 110 embroiderers some 3,720 hours to finish the piece. (Cute note: Her fiancé and parents' names are all sewn into the waistband.) Priyanka's multi-day bridal wardrobe may well single-handedly boost couture traditions around the globe.

Fashion needs any boost it can get. The traditional Spring and Fall biannual runway schedules have been struggling with general irrelevancy, so brands may be looking to Pre-Fall collections as an opportunity to grab the off-season spotlight. Over the past few weeks, we've seen lots of global destination shows. Valentino and Dior both showed in Japan (while Dolce & Gabbana cancelled its show in Shanghai). Versace, newly acquired by Michael Kors's parent company for \$2 billion, took its Pre-Fall show to New York where Kim Kardashian and Kanye West were posted in the front row. They took in a parade of Donatella Versace's greatest hits, including a version of J.Lo's 2000 Oscars dress that cut down to her pubic bone (done in a heart print, rather than the original palm), as well as a supercharged play on the label's famous Liz Hurley safety pin dress.

Going forward by going backward is becoming a safe bet in uncertain times on the luxury market. But the Pre-Fall Valentino red gowns—perfect for the red carpet—make much more sense than these other tribute collections. They fit into Pierpaolo Piccioli's vision to modernize the label, a tricky feat given that its founder is very much still alive.

Piccioli took over the label upon Valentino's retirement in 2008, along with his long-time design partner, Maria Grazia Chiuri. For eight years, they revamped the offerings together and added bestseller accessories such as the Rockstud shoes that made the label covetable for a younger clientele.

But it is since Piccioli took over solo (Chiuri left to head up Dior in 2016), that he has really risen to the occasion. His most recent haute couture show inspired a standing ovation. And the Spring 2019 ready-to-wear collection also drew gasps. *Vogue's* Sarah Mower called it "utterly, lusciously all-round gorgeous." There were some Valen-



"A perfect, clear red without undertones": The classic Valentino colour makes a major statement at the brand's celebrated Pre-Fall show.

tino red (known in Italy, of course, as Valentino *rosso*) dresses in that outing as well. But there was also a fully formed conversation around volume—ball skirts and puffy sleeves—mixed effortlessly with the tailoring backbone and playful sportswear pieces that a modern fashion brand needs.

That volume play in evening gowns was seen in a number of other Spring runways, including Erdem, Marc Jacobs, Gucci and Rodarte. But that Valentino red is almost Pantone-protected: Some call it crimson, others call it poppy, but regardless it is a perfect, clear red without undertones, so that it looks flattering on every single skin tone.

The Tokyo Pre-Fall show included menswear—a recent addition for Valentino—and indeed, the boys looked just as good in that red. It almost feels that as Piccioli's confidence grows in his role alone at the helm that he has chosen now to claim the brand's pulsing red heart. Turns out it is flattering on him, too.

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Are your teeth aging you?

A trip to the dentist—not the derm—may be the key to reversing the effects of time

BY SYDNEY LONEY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFFREY CARLSON

A few months ago, my mother and I were out for lunch when I caught her studying my face. She chewed her penne arrabiata thoughtfully for a moment, then informed me that my teeth were starting to make me look old (a comment only a mother can make). This observation was immediately followed by some intense scrutiny in the mirror in the ladies'—and a hastily booked date with an orthodontist.

Sadly, Dr. Christine Hibberd confirmed that my mother is right: My teeth are aging me. It seems that I've been stress grinding, and it's not only wearing down my molars, it's also changing the shape of my jawline. An overbite that didn't exist in my 20s has slowly materialized, and my teeth have begun leaning in—and not in a

"You go girl!" kind of way. All of this movement has ultimately made my lips look thinner and my face look less full (read: old).

I was horrified. I'd never needed braces as a kid and now, in my mid-40s, it felt as though my days of smiling for the camera were over. If things were this bad now, what

would they be like in 10 years? I pictured the episode of *The Simpsons* in which Lisa is told she needs braces—and a sinister cartoon dentist uses a computer to show her the terrifying path her teeth will take if she doesn't get them.

Hibberd used a similar, computer-generated technique when I visited her sunny clinic in Oakville, Ont., but in this case, it was designed to show me how the state of my smile would improve, frame by frame, as my teeth slowly straightened back into place. She was also quick to reassure me that I wouldn't be the only 40-something walking around with railroad tracks—far from it, in fact. These days, 30 to 40 per cent of her patients are adults. (When she started out five years ago, it was 20 per cent.)

"A lot of patients will say, 'My teeth

were a little crooked when I was a kid, but now they're really crooked,'" Hibberd explains. "I also see people who had braces when they were 15, and their teeth are a mess now. The problem is that your teeth always move." Fortunately, Hibberd says, it's never too late to do something about it. "I have an 82-year-old patient who came in and said, 'I want straight teeth.' We did it, and she looks fantastic."

There are a lot of factors that can alter the appearance of your smile as you age: Maybe you sleep with your mouth open (when you breathe through your mouth, your teeth move); Maybe your teeth are always touching because of the way the muscles in your mouth work; Maybe you're a grinder, like me. All of these things can add more years to your face than a few crow's feet do.

Hibberd says women don't usually notice that their teeth have changed. Instead, they notice their lips. "They'll tell me that their lips look thinner," she says. "Once your bottom teeth start to slope inward, the top teeth follow, which changes the drape of your upper lip. Your teeth are like scaffolding, and if the support isn't there, your lips look less full."

Often, women head straight to a cosmetic dermatologist, hoping that an injection of some kind will solve the problem. But it won't, says Dr. Ed Philips, a cosmetic dentist in Toronto and author of *Your Guide to the Perfect Smile*. Philips explains that teeth also get shorter as we age. "They just wear down," he says. "By the time you're in your 40s, you'll have lost anywhere from one to three millimetres of the length of your top teeth. While injections might help fill your lips out again, your top teeth won't show, making your lips look overdone because your top teeth aren't visible when you speak naturally."

Philips believes anyone can age gracefully with wrinkles and laugh lines, but teeth are a deal breaker. "Aged and worn teeth have a huge impact on your appearance," he says. "After 35, there's nothing that will make you look younger more than a healthy smile."

For some, the solution might be veneers, which can lengthen the top teeth or improve the "architecture" of

a misshapen tooth. (Philips charges roughly \$1,800 per veneer, which is a thin porcelain shell that is cemented to your existing tooth.) However, if your teeth have moved or become crooked (like mine), the only option is to straighten them.

Before I committed to braces, Hibberd sent me to a periodontist. ("If I'm moving teeth around, I want to make sure the gums are in good condition," she says.) Then, I was given the option of braces or Invisalign, which is essentially braces for grown-ups. While both methods achieve the same result, you can eat and drink whatever you like with Invisalign, and they're far less noticeable (they look almost like a clear bleaching tray that you wear 22 hours a day and switch every seven days as your teeth begin to shift). Having a good dental plan helps, as the treatment ranges from about \$4,000 to \$8,000. Cosmetic dentistry, on the other hand, isn't covered unless a tooth is badly decayed or weakened, in which case some plans will cover a crown.

In the end, I decided Invisalign was worth it. If I didn't address my dental issues, my teeth would be more prone to cavities, further recession and cracking. Straight teeth are also healthier for the gums and easier to clean. Most of all, straight teeth are a huge confidence booster, Hibberd says.

"We so often worry about that little wrinkle on our foreheads," she says. "But once I've straightened someone's teeth, they're more confident. They walk in smiling and showing their teeth. They look younger and more vibrant."

Hibberd told me to keep my first "tray" and promised I would be amazed by the difference between it and the final one, which I'll remove once and for all about a year and a half from now. On my way out of Hibberd's office, I ran into a woman in her mid-50s who was close to the end of the Invisalign process. She told me that the biggest change she's noticed in her appearance so far has been getting "volume" back in her face. Then, she flashed me a bright, confident smile that would dazzle anyone—even my mother.

WHITE OUT

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