The Receptionist

My name is Melanie. I work as a receptionist at a women’s fitness center. I see myself as the average American woman. I’m twenty-five, five foot seven, weigh a hundred and fifty pounds and I love myself. I work at the fitness center four days a week and go to school in the evening. I plan on becoming a nutritionist, if I could manage to graduate. I like working at the fitness center mainly because I get to interact with many different women. It helps me to understand why so many of the women I see everyday are obsessed with visiting the center, some visit more than five times a week. I always used to think how stupid those women are for coming to the center so often. Taking time away from their families, their jobs and their personal time to come here, be greeted by me and then sweat for hours at a time. I just couldn’t understand it. Some of the women are my age, my height and have to weigh close to or no more than a hundred and fifteen pounds. I really couldn’t understand it, until one day I engaged in a conversation with a women named Alice.

Alice would probably come into the center seven times a week if she could. One day I decided to ask her why she came into the center so often. She looked like she could have been no older than thirty five and she probably weighed a hundred no more than a hundred and twenty pounds. She was toned and in pretty good shape from her everyday
escapades to the center. That day she came into the center I greeted her, just like I had done so many other times. On her way back to the locker room, I stopped her, told her she looked great and asked her why she came to the center so often. She looked at me and said that it made her vagina feel good. I gave her a confused look and said oh, have a nice day. After her work out, she came over to me and began to explain what she meant. She told me that she was married and had been for fifteen years and her husband would always tell her how bad she looked. First, it started with him saying that the looked tired all the time, then that she was out of shape, next that she looking like she was gaining weight and finally he just came out and said that she needed to do something with herself because she looked a mess.

When she first started coming to the center, she was only there because her husband had suggested that she get in shape and tone up her stomach and some other parts of her body. After a while, she said that it made her feel good, it made her feel like she belonged somewhere, something inside of her came alive each and every time she walked into the center. It was a feeling she could barely explain and I slowly began to feel sorry for her. I felt sorry for her because you would never think that she was being treated that poorly by someone that was supposed to love her. I just could not understand what he was thinking by saying all those hurtful things to her. She said that her husband even started complaining about her coming to the center so often. She told him that nothing would make her stop coming, he wanted her to go there in the first place and now he is complaining. She told me that her marriage is complicated and it goes way beyond her coming to the center all the time.
Alice and I had a nice long conversation, which lasted most of my day at work. I finally asked her what she meant when I asked her why she came to the center so much and she replied it made her vagina feel good. She said that through the counseling she was receiving at the center she realized that her past insecurities about herself all stemmed from her lack of knowledge of what it truly meant to be a woman. Pleasing yourself means pleasing your vagina, becoming a positive force in your own life means to think about all the mental and physical experiences that make you happy. At the end of our conversation I was still confused about her answer as I knew I would be, but I did gain some insight into what makes most of the women that come into the center tick.

Since that conversation with Alice, every time someone comes into the center I wonder whey they are there; if they are there because their husband made them come, or is it because they want to please themselves, or maybe it’s because they are fulfilling something deep down inside. I guess no matter what the reason is they are there because of something and they are gaining some sort of self acceptance from their experience at the center. Who would have thought that, coming to work out with a bunch of either under weight women or a group of over weight women would make one feel so complete? Now every chance I get, I not only work at the center, I am part of the growing number of women that visit the center, because something inside of them comes alive when they are there. I’m glad I had that conversation with Alice she made me look at myself in a different way. I used to think I loved myself but now I know I love myself and my vagina! Alice and I have become good friends and work out together every chance we get. She even got me hooked on this book by some lady named Eve Ensler
called “The Vagina Monologues”, it’s pretty good too. I guess working at the women’s fitness center is really paying off after all.

The stupid women that I thought I used to see coming into the center all the time are not so stupid after all. They are much smarter than I would have ever thought. They are doctors, lawyers, house wives, lifelong partners, CEO’s of companies, receptionists (me), nurses, chiropractors, psychologists, mentors and just plain old women. I no longer look at them and shake my head in disgust. I look at them and smile in admiration hoping that one day I would feel the way they feel when they step into the women’s fitness center.