



BAZAAR

LOLA ON LOVE: LOVE THYSELF

Lola Rykiel on a different kind of relationship—the one we have with ourselves.



By Lola Rykiel



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I've been writing for a while now about love, dating, guys, break-ups, romance. But I've never thought of talking about another relationship, one that's hard to avoid but not so talked about—the one we have with ourselves.

I started to get more insight when, like every summer, I went back to my favorite place for a week of detox, the Pearl Laguna. In my past trips, escaping to the Pearl has helped me figure out personal dilemmas, take distance from my everyday

What is wonderful there (in addition to a program of meditation, hiking, massage and a vegetarian diet) is meeting a new group of interesting people each time from all over the world who, like me, go there either to get rid of toxins, stress and extra pounds or just want to start the year on the right foot.

This time one of the guests, Ranaa, stood out from the group. She had beautiful posture, a radiant open smile and spoke English with an enchanting Arabic accent. She always wore long sleeves and long pants despite the heat and a delicate silk veil around her head, covering her hair. During our first hike, as we were chatting, I found out that she was from Saudi Arabia, and at 35, already had five kids. She never worked and had only known one man in her life, her husband.

She couldn't be more opposite than my usual type of girlfriends—mostly writers, lawyers, artists, PRs and stylists—young women addicted to their independence, obsessed with their career, dating actively or just recently married.

Something very strong and positive emanated from her, which made me want to be her friend. I knew the first thing to do (I've been PR for a while now) was to give a compliment and so I told her that she had a beautiful face.

"I know, thank you very much!" she answered, looking me back straight in the eyes, using the same tone she would have to agree that the weather was sunny with a breeze this morning.

I stayed silent and confused, while she climbed the hills at the same pace, radiant and sweating in her bright pink Stella McCartney workout suit, exhaling deep powerful breaths.

That was perhaps the first time I ever heard somebody react this way to a compliment, agreeing and honoring it instead of reacting how I or my girlfriends would have: "It's my new face cream," "You are such a liar, but thank you," or, "Really, do you think so? But I only slept five hours last night."

Why was I so shocked? Ranaa hadn't had been obnoxious and vain, she simply took a compliment that was given to her.

As she told me later that day, she came here wanting to lose a lot of weight (advised by her doctor for health reasons *and* to fit in a Dolce & Gabbana couture dress she had bought two sizes too small). Still, she was grateful to be exactly how she was right now.

I am not sure if the next time somebody offers me a compliment, that I will answer "I know, thank you" and remain serious. Let's be honest, how awkward is that? But, I must say that as soon as Ranaa replied with such confidence, her beauty got even more obvious and real. Her relationship to herself was not only unusual and foreign, but for me—who grew up and now works in fashion—it was also a relief to meet a woman who may not be what society would define as perfect, but who has a true sense of love for her whole being.