



## Pity the straight man in yoga class: *Daniel Pembrey's* focus strays from Om to OMG

Yoga is a delicious duality within a duality – a yin-yang ethos passed down male lineages in the East, now practised mostly by women in the West. Granted, there were female pioneers alongside the Indian gurus, just as there are male teachers in the West today. Yet it is striking how few men practise yoga in London now. After all, it was cultural icons such as the Beatles who popularised its westward transition.

Not that I'm complaining. I was lucky enough to discover yoga in my early 30s. Living in Seattle, I dated an American woman who was mad about yoga. When my body started to seize up because of long-haul business travel, she suggested I try a class. We broke up, I went on a retreat in Baja Mexico – which combined yoga with surfing – and finally I gave it a go. I've never looked back.

Well, not until now. For was it that guy-friendly surfing retreat in Baja Mexico where I truly discovered yoga, or was it before?

Confession time. A hot yoga class in Whistler, British Columbia, which a friend persuaded me to join during a ski holiday. It's a haze, a montage of feminine curves and undulations shimmering with sweat in a dim, hot room. I'm in the back row of the class, where I've been before, but not in any class like this. Never have I beheld so many

ravishing women in one place, in such revealing attire. The woman on the mat next to me. She is pretty, for sure, but it's her body that's the distraction. A first, side-glance: cleavage softened by low light and a sheen of sweat. Her yoga attire is fitted, thin and soon plastered to her, stretching across her contours as she navigates those yoga positions with verve. Our mats are a tantalising few centimetres apart.

The deep breathing throughout the room is rousing; the class is increasingly moving as one, in a sequence that feels designed to give me every conceivable view of her in my peripheral vision. Is she aware of how aware I am of her? We're told to get on all fours on our mats for alternate cat-cow stretches, and that proves too much. My mind drifts into story-writing mode:

'I rest back on my heels, reach over to hook my thumbs around the waist of her leggings and peel them down over her glorious arse. There's a surprise for me too – no underwear. Briefly my hand traces her shoulder blades, then moves to her neck, my palm resting across her nape, encouraging

**'There's a surprise  
for me too – no  
underwear. Briefly my  
hand traces her shoulder  
blades, then moves to her  
neck, my palm resting  
across her nape'**

her to stay exactly how she is.

My other hand cups her perfectly rounded cheek, sliding into the slick crevasse. I stroke my finger down, deeper, towards her lips, swollen and wet as my forefinger probes; she'll be disappointed if I don't ease my thumb into her arse. It can only go one of two ways. A barely audible gasp. I push further still – a shudder, rippling up her to spine; first her head rears then bows, low, with an emptying exhalation convulsing her shoulders.'

This wouldn't have gone well in a crowded class if I'd attempted it, even in the back row with the lights down. These days, as a more practised yogi, I've trained my thoughts to stay within the sacred space of the mat, although that skin-fitting attire is still a challenge. Those Lululemons and their ilk flatter women to the point of distraction; it's sometimes impossible to follow the instructor's words 'close your eyes' or 'hold your *drishti*' (a gazing point on the wall or floor in front).

You'd think that men would be queuing up, but when I suggest to my guy friends that they try yoga, their responses range from: 'I refuse to wear leggings' to 'My gym time is limited to 30 minutes' or 'What goals are you measuring yourself against?'

The answer is, there are no goals, apart from advancing our practice in whatever way feels right for our bodies. Physically, yoga has given me the flexibility to avoid injuries, touch wood. It's my long-term health insurance policy. The mental benefits come from going into a studio for at least an hour, and being away from phones, apps and monitors.

As a novelist, many of my ideas have come while practising yoga. Yes, the conscious mind can chatter away inanely in the yoga studio as much as anywhere, but beneath it the subconscious is doing its thing, in a way that only otherwise occurs in my sleep. By the end of class, a scene I've been trying to fix for hours suddenly finds resolution.

That's the real benefit of yoga for me: its capacity to nourish my inner life – and the odd fantasy.

*Daniel Pembrey is an author and feature writer. His novella Vanishing Point is about a yoga retreat on the Mexican Riviera that goes wrong.*

## Going for gold

A class on blowjob technique  
delivers instant gratification for  
*Trixie Jones*



In control and loving it: Trixie Jones

I walk into Sh! in London's Hoxton for a 'Blow his Mind' class and am greeted by Renée, aka the blowjob mistress.

'Hello, Trixie, here is your penis.'

What have I just signed up for? I ask myself as I sit down. The lady next to me whispers 'You're in for a treat' while pouring me a glass of pink fizz.

I can't say I've ever deep throated a pink 'penis' with espresso martini lubricant on my hands, in front of an audience I didn't know, but what makes it exciting is that, even though we're a little freaked out to start with, we all end up feeling empowered.

**'I can't say I've ever deep  
throated a pink penis  
with espresso martini  
lubricant on my hands'**

Renée shows us how to put on a condom in a sexy way (that is a 'thing'!) and explains that everything is down to confidence. We giggle amongst ourselves like little girls that it's the lesson in school we wish we'd had, that you can actually go home and practise, and I'm not talking violin scales.

It's the perfect outlet for women to pose our dare-we-ask-it questions, the ones you'd surreptitiously google and then delete from your history. A droll mixture of penis and practice, plus laughing with other women who want to make their men feel good.

Afterwards I talk to my classmates about

their sexual experiences and hear back: 'There's always room for improvement,' 'It's not as simple as XYZ, but you hold so much power too, you're in control of making someone feel their best.' Departing into the dark streets of Hoxton, I'm feeling my sexiest despite smelling of orange-scented condom.

And when I see my man? Time to put the theory into action. Forever the 'shy-I-can't-look-into-your-eyes-girl', this time I find I can meet his gaze with confidence. For the first time I'm in control and I love it. Now I know what it feels like to win a gold medal. Top tips I learned are:

- How to make him feel amazing when you don't want to swallow: tell him he's so full of juice you couldn't devour all of it.
- How to put a condom on with your mouth: simply place the outside of the condom in your mouth and put it gently on his penis. Voilà! He'll be so impressed.
- How to make him absolutely crave you: blindfold him with a scarf that smells of you and tie his hands and feet so he's longing for you, but you're in control, whether it's stroking him with a feather or spanking him. Or both.

Blow his mind? Reader, it blew mine. Renée taught me that lovemaking is an art, and I would definitely go back for more.

## Unmask me

Inner nakedness is more  
exposing than nudity, finds  
*Belinda Bamber*

I'm a dating refusenik. I've always met lovers the old-fashioned way: at a friend's party, a dance class, a chance encounter at the cinema. It's rare for me to feel a connection with someone, but when I do it's immediate, overwhelming and unexpected. Somehow, even as a teenager, I evaded the dread notion of 'the dating game'. I dislike organised romance and I'm too impatient to navigate hundreds of online connections to find that elusive spark. There has to be another way.

So I sign up for Jan Day's one-day workshop, Meetings Without Masks, which offers the chance to meet people in a more instinctual way – 'naked' without removing your clothes. Jan is also an acclaimed tantra teacher, and the first advice she gives is not to

seek out our usual 'type'. 'The ones you find difficult or strange are the ones you learn from,' she explains.

It's a warmly organised day of playful games and encounters, in a group equally balanced between men and women, of all ages. 'You need to make yourself vulnerable, and visible as your true self, not presenting what you think they want,' urges Jan.

Invited to pair up randomly and ask candid questions of the opposite sex, I startle a man nearly half my age with 'Would you judge me if I wanted to sleep with you on the first date?' No, he says, and to prove it leaves me a message on Jan's noticeboard for secret billet-doux, inviting me 'to make wild passionate love'. Another asks me: 'What is it that women really want?' To feel beautiful and desirable, I reply.



'Naked dating' is about baring your soul, not your body

It feels good to make some sort of connection, albeit not erotic, with every man I meet. There are memorable moments of gazing into a stranger's eyes and feeling it's contained, safe and sometimes profoundly moving. I enjoy a tender moment with a sweet handsome man in his 70s, whom I partner for a gentle exercise in hand stroking.

But I go home convinced I'm terminally resistant to arranged partnering, no matter how spiritually handled. At least I don't have a type (unless there's a box I can tick for 'caveman poet'). But some deep DNA has programmed me for accidental love.

*The next Meeting Without Masks is on 25 June in Brighton. www.janday.com*