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VICTOR DE LEON
WARDROBE STYLIST:
WENDY WOODS





Miss
GiGi

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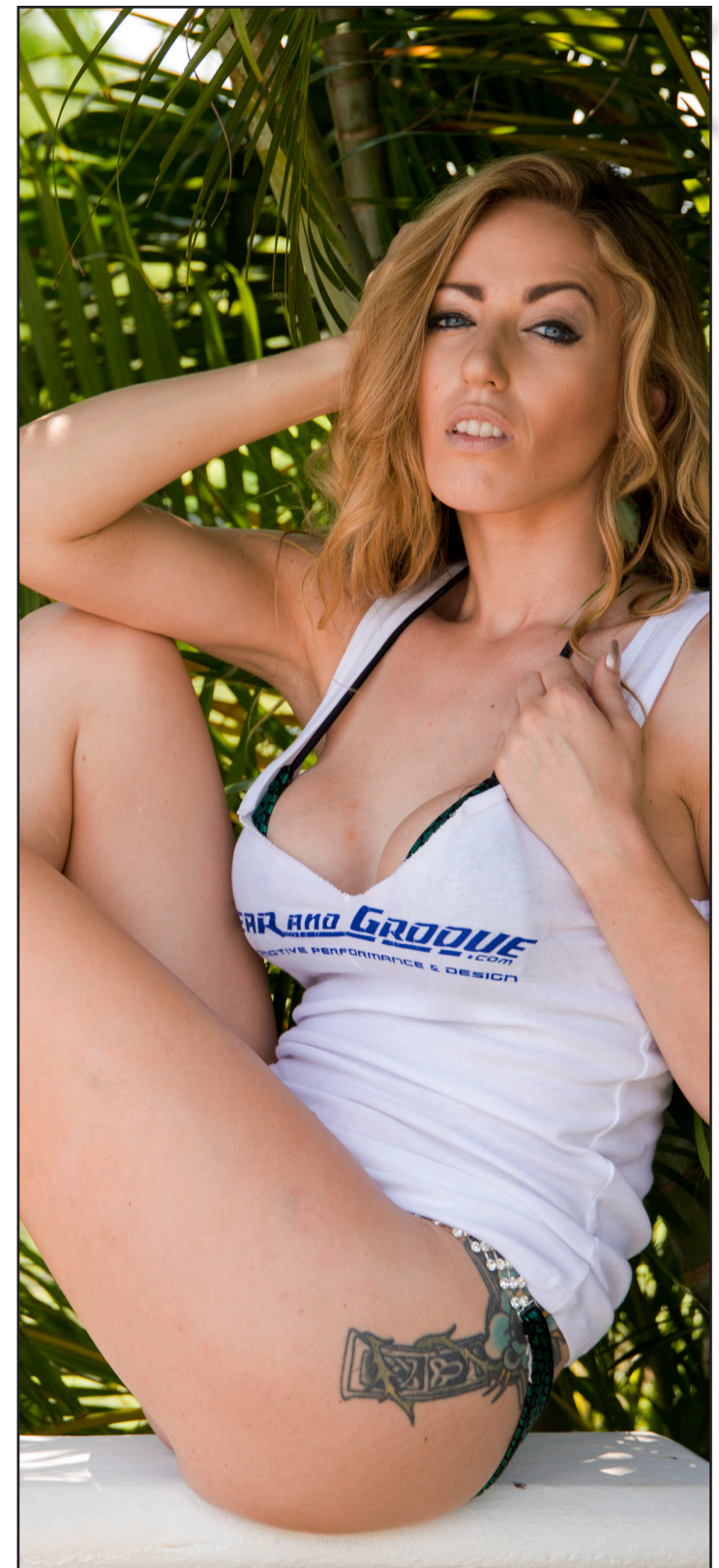
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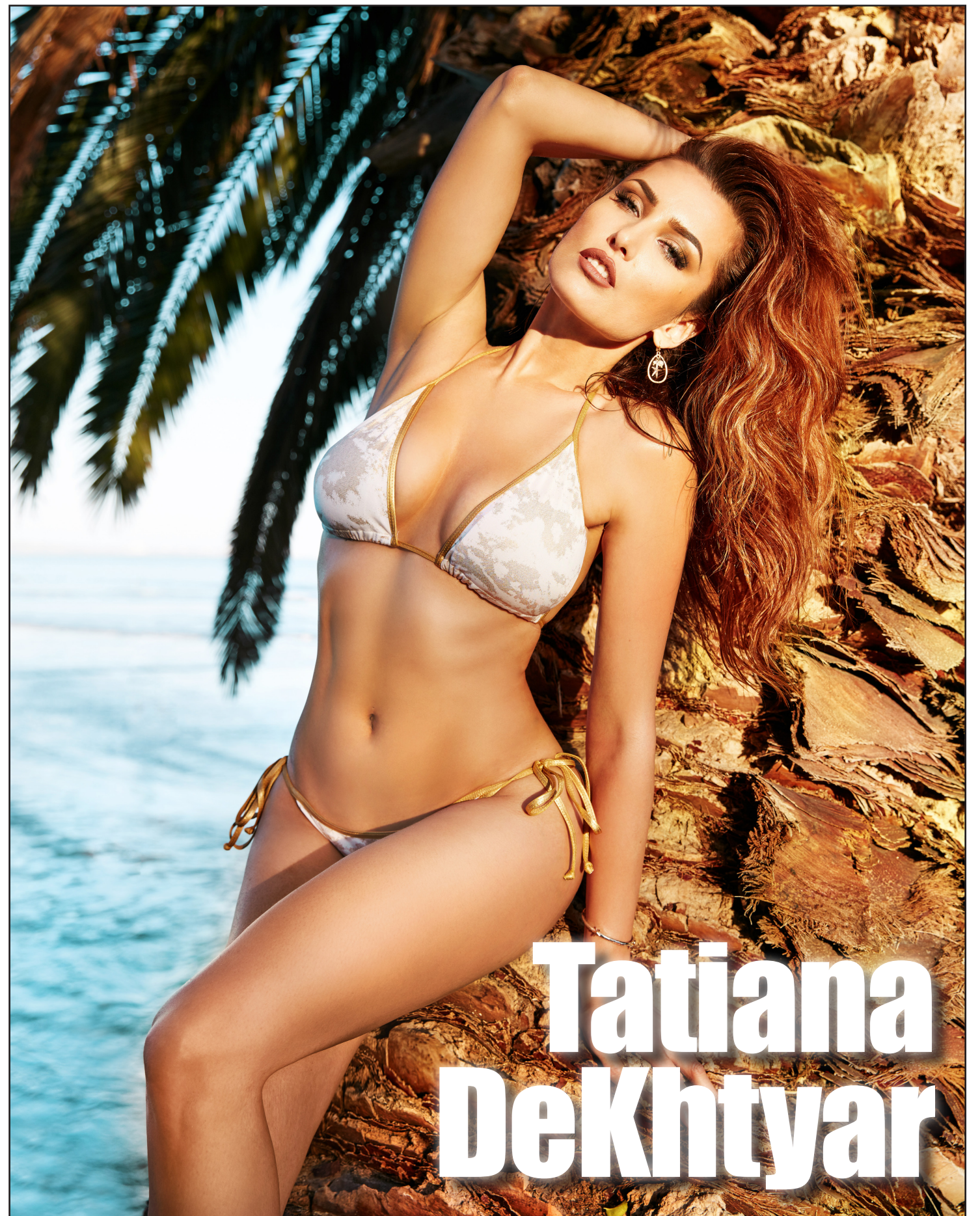
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Mikala
Maya
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SuzieDoll

LOVE: one of the most addictive substances on Earth

BY: CHRISTINA-LAIA VLAHOS

If I could count the times I've told my girl friends to 'dump him', and fastened a Dollar, a Euro or even a Yuan to it, I'd be out shopping on a daily. Although my advice over the past few years seems to have been disregarded, my Skype, email and twitter accounts have most certainly not. In fact, they continue to be over flooded with drastic, critical, and of course pressing issues pertaining to guys and relationships. I began to realize that I had become the sounding board of my friends, friends of friends, and relatives of friends of friends when it came to love and matters of the heart, particularly nasty break ups and distraught females. The most intriguing and perhaps most ingenious part of my new role was that I wasn't happily married with kids, engaged to prince charming or even in a relationship the man of my dreams; I was just the habitual single girl, continuously dating the wrong guys – and apparently that had made me a connoisseur of all matters relative to the big old mighty heart.

Deciding I had no other choice but to learn what the heck I was doing wrong, and why I had become the appointed psychologist for confused, dumped, and suffering single women everywhere, I began my own research on love.

I decided to seek out every love expert, self proclaimed matchmaker, and authority on human behaviour I could read about on the Internet. Amongst the chosen were Tony Robbins, Matthew Hussey, Matt Bogg, and Steve Harvey.

After viewing an infinite amount of videos, investing in several books, and listening to endless amounts of speeches from my chosen experts, I had shed a dim light on why, like these women, I had become a self deprecating, borderline bipolar, anxious mess, after every failed attempt at love.

My selection of love experts had taught me a great deal about how to 'get the guy', 'attend to the guy' perhaps even 'keep the guy', (much of which you will read about in future articles) but few had touched upon why I had consistently found myself in the same post break up predicament; an awful aftermath of sorrow, self loathing, restless, sleepless, agonizing pain.



Soon after I had concluded my research, I came across anthropologist Helen Fisher, courtesy of my favourite Uncle – a self-proclaimed life long bachelor (who eventually married at 47) and authority on all things manly. During a thirty-minute speech where the seasoned professional enlightens us on 'the brain in love', Fisher puts the vast of her findings in plain words; romantic love is one of the most powerful sensations on earth.

In her 'Brain in Love' discussion, Fisher outlines and attempts to examine why we crave love so much, why we go to such great extremes to find it, capture it, and hang on to it. Fisher's examination of the biology of love was enlightening to say the least, and I hoped it would lead me to understand the crippling after effects of love's demise.

Fisher explains how she and her research team used MRI scans to examine the brains of two different groups; people in love — and people who had just been dumped. She reveals the results of the scans along with her conclusions during her 'Brain in Love' Ted Talk, which was coincidentally viewed by over 2.1 million people. Put in simple terms, she describes the effect of love on the brain as something similar to drug Cocaine; only eventually, we come down from the rush of Cocaine.

The MRI scans of the people in love revealed activity in tiny little cells in the brain that actually create dopamine. Created in A pen cells, the dopamine sprays itself into many regions of the brain, actually the cognitive part of the brain (cognition has to do with how a person understands and acts in the

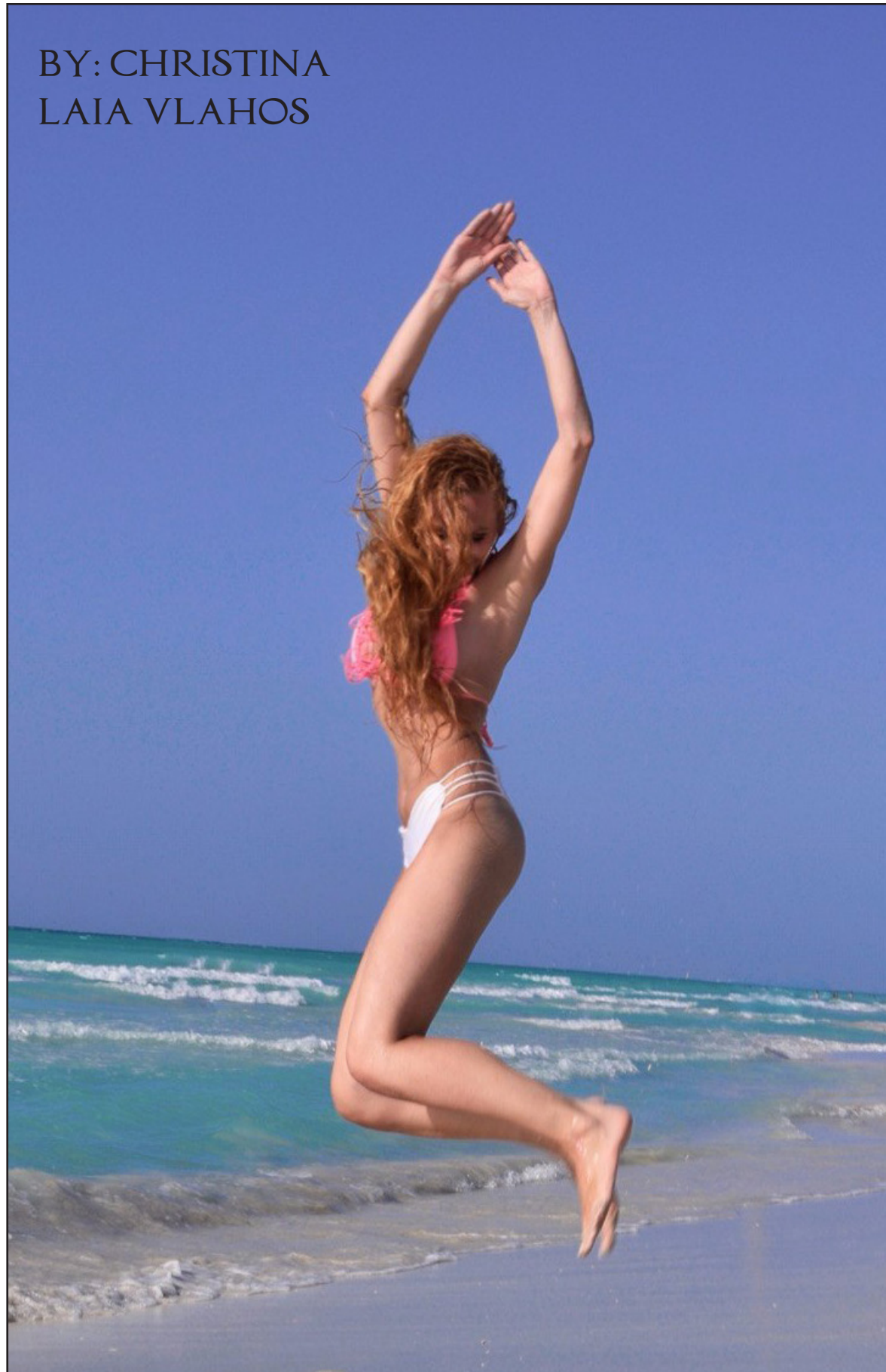
world). She describes the effects of romantic love as an obsession in which 'you lose yourself of sense'.

Alternatively, the MRI scans of the people who had been 'dumped' revealed activity in three regions of the brain. Hold on to your hats, but the obsession in fact gets worse when you've been rejected. The first area where activity was observed was the same region active when people are in love – so what does this mean exactly? It means you now love harder. If you're like me, you want to know why? How can this region of the brain be more active after I've been dumped? Well according to Fisher, the reward system for wanting becomes more active in the brain when you can't get what you want – in this case, when you can't achieve life's greatest prize, romantic love.



PHOTOS BY
NANCY MARTINEZ

BY: CHRISTINA
LAIA VLAHOS



Grinning Girl

The second region that becomes active during rejection is the brain's area for calculating gains and losses. Fisher describes this area as the region for calculating mathematical problems; we equate this to continuous and incestuous analyzing of trying to understand how things work, and of course how things went so wrong and why we were dumped.

Lastly, Fisher's team discovered brain activity in the region of the brain associated with deep attachment to another individual once we've been denied love. Evidently when you've been rejected in romantic love, you feel more love, more intense energy, and motivation to win back this great prize.

Fisher's eerie findings also included that romantic love shared the three main characteristics of addiction: tolerance, withdrawal, and relapse. As I listened to her final conclusions, a disturbingly familiar feeling flooded my body. Perhaps I wasn't to blame for my consistent weak regressions, it wasn't him I was addicted to after all, it was the feeling, the rush and the high that came along with him, evidently that was my arch nemesis and preferred drug of choice.

A drug? I'd never touched one in all my life, but there I was, time and time again, wallowing in sorrow begging for another hit. It was official, each break-up, heartache, and disappointment was like weaning myself off of a drug, only there was no Betty Ford Clinic for it – no AA meeting and no sponsor to pick me up off the floor.

While difficult to believe at first, my conclusion spoke volumes when it came to past loves, and if I could pass along a tweet, email or Skype message to any of my new found followers, it'd be a simple one. 'Girls you aren't addicted to him, you're addicted to the feeling that came with him, it's not him you want back, it's the feeling; time to get up off the floor.'

Although it may seem I've summarized all my research in one sentence, that's not entirely true. There remain many gaps, holes, and uncertainties when it comes to matters of the heart; why we fall in love, and why we fall in love with a specific person for instance. We do however know that romantic love can best be characterized as an urge; like hunger or thirst, we don't know why it's there, but it's there. Like Fisher, I suppose Plato knew what he was talking about over two thousand years ago when he said 'the god of love lives in the state of need'. Words of wisdom, or perhaps inspiration for daily living; either way they take us one step closer to understanding one of the most addictive substances on Earth.

Anthropologist Helen Fisher studies gender differences and the evolution of human emotions. She's best known as an expert on romantic love.



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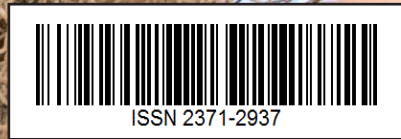
Valya
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