

From the villainess to the female lead, female characters always seem to hit a wall within the realms of media regardless of the role they play. For whatever reason, it seems particularly hard for creators to add layers of nuance to their female characters, often reducing them to a singular personality trait, whether it be their almost too fantastical kindness or their childish villainy. These characters can only be seen as easy to grasp. Instead of cutting into them and being able to peel away the layers of their personality in an attempt to understand the psyche the creator has so lovingly crafted, we're just left with a thick slice of an apple.

It's easy to say that some things can be simple to understand without needing to delve too much into characterisation or the plot, but then why is it that I find it difficult to find something to watch or read with a female character that doesn't make me want to rip my hair out because of her unending naivety or superficial reasons to want to destroy someone's life? Characters seem to fall into some sort of template - whether the bimbo, the white lotus, the Mary Sue, the manic pixie dream girl. Seemingly, it's as though the creator is unable to stray from the template once it's been decided which of them the character will be slapped into.

It would be wrong to say that we as consumers don't have ideas in our minds of what those characters should look like but are shocked when we find a subversion to these caricatures. It's quite rare to see, so perhaps to some degree the shock is warranted, however the different forms of art we consume alter how we view the real world at times as art does, and within context makes it seem somewhat odd when women are more than just the 'party girl' or the 'academic'. Female characters should be sculpted with a complexity that allows you to understand their motivations, flaws, strengths, and vulnerabilities, much like an onion that needs to be peeled before revealing its core. Unfortunately, what we're often left with is a thick slice of an apple - pretty on the outside, but lacking in substance on the outside.

The issue here does not lie in the simplicity of characters, but in rigidity of the one dimensional moulds that female characters are forced to fit, effectively limiting their potential to be an interesting well-rounded character. Creators struggle to embody the complexities that embody them, instead leaving us with a tasteless archetype which makes you wonder if trying the apple for simplicity's sake is worth the effort at all. Whatever preconceived notions we as consumers hold, art should challenge us to break down these ideas and reflect even some of the nuance of human life. We should encourage creators to pursue sculpting their female characters as ones with flaws, strengths and vulnerabilities, no different to real women. If art is truly to reflect life, what better way than to peel away at the layers of the onions of the human?