

The spa day...

I have a confession to make.

Recently, I pretended to be someone else.

I lied.

If I was Pinocchio, my nose would have been bigger than a Blue Whales penis.

(Fact: A Blue Whale's penis can reach between 8 and 10 feet in length. Can you imagine having to control that in the sea?! Nightmare on a choppy day. Anyway, back to the story...)

I moonlighted as someone called Mandy and it was one of the most excruciatingly embarrassing moments of my life.

Let me explain.

A few months ago, my mum and her friends organised a girlie Spa day for my mum's 60th Birthday. They're such a lovely bunch of ladies, they met each other over 20 years ago at a local Aqua aerobics class. As well as exercising their bodies, they exercised their jaws, giggling and chatting their way through the classes, and became lifelong chums. How lovely is that?! Bonding over foam woggles and aquatic jumping jacks.

The spa day was taking place at a local hotel and the order of the day was a spa package where you rock up, change into nothing but a swimming costume and robe for the day, use the spa facilities, have a treatment, a spot of lunch, some more spa usage and then off for some dinner on the way home. The perfect 'girlie' day.

Sadly, a couple of days before the spa day, one of my mum's friends fell ill. Nothing life threatening I hasten to add,

but she was in a bit of discomfort so sadly had to drop out.

Her name was Mandy.

Can you see where this is going yet?

My mum phones me to explain that Mandy is a bit under the weather and asks if I would like to go in her place (Mandy's very kind suggestion) because it's all been paid for already. Treatments have been booked, lunch has been ordered and it's too late for a refund. I instantly say yes because it's a lovely gesture and I wouldn't want the spot to go to waste. Mum then says I will just have to pretend to be Mandy for the day in case they try to charge us for a change of person or anything.

Then, as I hang up, the panic sets in...

[via GIPHY](#)

*"Panic?!" I hear you all ask. "What is there to panic about?!
It's a spa day!"*

Well, I shall tell you all now, I am a worrier.

It's in my genetics.

My beloved nan was a worrier, my dad is a worrier and sadly I too have inherited the worry gene. I can lie awake at night worrying about my children falling off a cliff when we live a good hour and a half away from any cliffs.

It dawned on me as I hung up that by pretending to be Mandy, I would have to lie, and as well as being a worrier, I am also a truly shit liar. I go red, I sweat and stumble over my words, you get the gist, so the thought of having to pretend to be someone else for a few hours whilst trying to relax on a spa day was giving me the fear.

I also **HATE** massages.

Literally **hate** them.

I know, I know, I'm not doing very well here am I. Shit liar, worrier, massage hater, potty mouth, gin swigger...what does my husband see in me??

I just feel so awkward – how terribly British of me.

I don't get any pleasure (Oi! Stop sniggering at the back!) or relaxation from them and I am also really ticklish. I just can't have strangers giving me a rub down (Tom Hardy and Kit Harrington, you're excused in this instance) without wanting to either fall into a gigantic hole and not come out for a very long time because of embarrassment or laugh insanely and possibly get myself sectioned.

I held out hope upon hope that Mandy had plumped for a manicure (that I could handle) but my worst fears were realised when my mum confirms that lovely Mandy had indeed chosen to have a neck, shoulder and back massage.

Fuck. My. Life.

Someone get me a brown paper bag.

The spa day arrives and I have shaved my legs all the way to the top in anticipation of having to strut about in a swimsuit and bath robe all day. Another cause for embarrassment – nobody needs to see me in a swimsuit these days. My stomach and legs bulge out of the lycra swimsuit where they can like a sausage bursting free from it's casing..



We arrive at the hotel and it's all very zen and tranquil and the chap behind reception (who bizarrely looks like a local supermarket manager rather than a spa manager and clearly uses words like fuck and bastard in the pub with his mates) speaks in a soft, slow, gentle voice like we are idiotic children.

"Hello ladies," he whispers, "how are we all this morning? Looking forward to a day of quiet and relaxation I hope..."

No chap, actually I'm not. I am about to lie to your face and tell you I am called Mandy when I am, in fact, called Gemma. I am also going to lie whilst confirming to you that I have chosen a massage as my treatment when I would actually rather choose to sit in an ice bath with nothing on than have a stranger give me a rub down.

"Oh yes!" we all exclaim, "we can't wait!" – someone kill me now.

I glance nervously at my mum – she knows I am panicking about pretending to be Mandy – and she smiles back at me and says it will be fine and to stop worrying.

I do as I feared and confirm to the supermarket/spa manager man that I am in fact called Mandy and yes I have indeed chosen to neck, shoulder and back massage. I can feel my hands are a bit sweaty but I carry on and breathe a sigh of relief as he 'checks me in' and gives me a clipboard.

I sit down with the clipboard only to find I have to fill in a medical form. I then panic more.

Who do I put I am on the form?! I am lying here! What if I die in the middle of my massage and they say Mandy is dead when actually she isn't and I am?! Oh what a tangled web we weave...

I told you I was a worrier.

Do I go the whole hog and say I am Mandy, aged 60 who has the following medical conditions?

Do I say I am Mandy, aged 32 and is (as far as she knows) fit and healthy?

Do I come clean and say I am called Gemma?

I go for option 2. I am now called Mandy, but I am indeed 32 and I have no medical issues of note (other than an irrational fear of massages).

I hand the clipboard in to the supermarket manager (I'll call him Geoff) and I feel like he is eyeing me suspiciously. Like he knows about my lie. Like he can smell my fear, sorry, Mandy's fear. I swiftly trot to the ladies changing rooms safe in the knowledge Geoff cannot follow me in there and wrestle myself into my swimsuit and bathrobe.

We sit in a dark room with some wafting yoga-esque music playing, loungers, faux candles (health and safety first) magazines and dim lighting – why do they put magazines in a room that is about as dim as Donald Trump? – and wait to be

called for our treatments. I feel sick as I wait for the lady to call me, I mean, Mandy.

My mum's friend gets called for her treatment, then my mum and then me. The poor beautician has no idea about the lie I am living either, oh the lies!!!!

"Mandy?" she says as she peers into the darkness. Only I am in the room so she deduces fairly swiftly that I must be her. If only she knew...

"Yes, that's me!" I reply. Sweat gracing my palms.

I reluctantly shuffle out and follow her into the treatment room, my robe dragging on the floor making me look like a child dressed like a Jedi knight because it's so big on me (why don't they do hobbit sized robes in these places?! I even had to roll the sleeves up about 6 times!)

"Okay Mandy," she says in a hushed voice, "if you can just remove your robe and pull your swimming costume down to just above your bottom then lie down on your front on the bed that would be lovely. I will wait outside and give you a few moments then knock when I am coming back in. That alright?"

"Yes, that's fine" I reply, whilst inside wanting to shout, *"you touch me in a minute woman, I'll go all mother fucking Karate Kid on your ass!"*

I do as she says and lie there feeling like an absolute twat. My face is pushed in the hole in the therapy bed causing my fat cheeks to give me a comedy chubby face and I feel like I suspected I would, nervous, worried and like a complete fraud.

Then comes the knock at the door.

"Hi Mandy! I'm back..." the poor beautician whispers. "I won't talk anymore now, just relax and if you experience any pain or discomfort, just let me know".

Bless her heart.

Mandy would be so ready for this, but not Gemma. Oh fuck, here we go...

The massage takes about 25 minutes. Thankfully, due to me being face down on a bed, the poor therapist couldn't see me swearing under my breath, muttering that I'm not in fact called Mandy and that I do in fact feel rather a lot of discomfort in the form anxiety due to her touching me.

It's the longest 25 minutes of my life. I lay there, living my lie. Knowing I am not who she thinks I am, like I have lied to someone I have met for a blind date.

Well, this is awkward. I feel like I should make small talk, discuss the weather, ask if she is a fan of Game of Thrones or if she gets hand ache from rubbing people for a whole day, but I relent. Mandy wouldn't do that Gemma, and you are Mandy.

Just lie there and let her get on with it.

As the massage ends, the therapist says to me, "So Mandy, we are all finished now. If you would like to get dressed I will wait outside and you can just come out when you're ready, alright?"

Dear god, if she calls me Mandy once more I think I might crack.

"Thanks so much!" I reply chirpily with towel print all over my face and a pained expression from all the lies. I end the massage more tense than I did when I went in and can't wait to get back into the dark room and pretend to be asleep so that if Geoff the supermarket manager comes in he won't bother me.

"Did you enjoy that Mandy?" my mum asks. I throw her a glance and she giggles along with her friend. They think it's bloody hilarious (it is really – unless you are the one moonlighting)

and I thank god that the worst bit is over. Luckily Mandy had good taste in food and her lunch choices were spot on. All was not lost.

So, there we have it.

It's safe to say I don't do massages, I don't really do spa days, I can't lie very well, I worry and...I'm not called Mandy.

Oh, and if you're reading this Geoff, sorry.

(PS: Thank you Mandy and the HFC's for letting me go in your place. Despite sounding like an ungrateful bitch I did manage to have a giggle and my mum had a super birthday.xx)