

Writer Amanda McCracken knows what it's like to be attacked by women for her virgin status. In 2013, she penned a [New York Times](#) op-ed titled *Does My Virginity Have A Shelf Life?*, in which she laid bare what it was like to be a 35-year-old virgin. “[I] was willing to give up a certain sense of pleasure to avoid feelings I feared: betrayal, emptiness, the loss of dignity and control,” she explained in candid prose.

The piece initially inspired a torrent of angry messages from men who accused her of being “selfish” and “a tease” —a response she recounted in a follow-up post for [Al-Jazeera America](#). She refers to the main perpetrators of these messages as “incels” (shorthand for “involuntarily celibate”), men who blame society for their lack of sexual activity and believe women owe it to men to give themselves over. But more surprising was how much criticism she received from women, whose messages, she said, were “equally vicious.”

“They talked about entitlement and suggested that it is my human right to have sex,” she wrote. “By abstaining, they said I was relenting to pressures set up by a patriarchal society.”

In a piece for [Cosmopolitan](#), writer Laura Beck called McCracken “naive,” writing that “holding onto your virginity like it's some magical talisman that wards away evil and keeps you pure and safe is not only a lapse in logic, but brings up the important question of why virginity is such a valuable commodity.” Despite the peanut gallery's protests, McCracken has remained firm in her resolve. At 37, when she wrote her follow-up piece for *Al-Jazeera*, she remained a virgin.