

Why is it such a tall order to accept women's height?

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Kat Brown wasn't surprised by the reaction to 6ft 3in Elizabeth Debicki being cast as Princess Diana. But she was still disappointed



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ALGORITHMS. some would have you believe that the biggest scandal last week was that *The Crown* cast *The Night Manager* star Elizabeth Debicki to play Princess Diana in its final two seasons... and SHE'S REALLY TALL.

OK, downgrade that a 'little', and yet: among discussion over who could possibly play Charles to 6ft 3in Debicki's Diana (Charles was the same height as 5ft 10in Diana and rumoured to have stood on a box for their engagement shoot) there were also complaints that, 'Last time I checked, Diana wasn't 8ft tall.' Would all this have come about over hair colour, age or much else? Unlikely.

Nobody fussed when 5ft 5in Naomi Watts and Kristen Stewart were cast as Diana. So this talk is indicative of wider attitudes, where height is simultaneously seen as undesirable, yet somehow also unfair. At 6ft 1in and a size 14, I have never quite forgiven a former magazine editor dismissing models as 'freakishly tall' in an interview. What did that make me?

Short men have never been fazed by my height but, certainly online, I found that tall men wanted to date much smaller women. I lucked out with my husband (6ft

3in), who was totally fine with me wearing heels in our engagement photos and did not request a box. We also have the same size nine feet, which is incredibly handy for grabbing random shoes to go to the shops.

Tall women rarely get love interests on screen unless they are very thin; as though we won't notice their height if they're as skinny as someone four inches shorter. Tall mostly equals parts with a lot of sitting down, or action roles. I was once mistaken for the *Game Of Thrones* star Gwendoline Christie at the junket for a *Star Wars* film, which says something both about the lack of tall British women in the public eye, and that they often shut them up in armour.

But buying armour would probably be easier than buying tall clothing. Long Tall Sally, the biggest and longest-lasting tall women's shop, almost closed this month – partly I suspect due to the pressure of having to be all things to all people – before being saved by an 11th hour acquisition. The high street has awoken to the existence of plus-size shoppers at last, but its few tall ranges have either shrunk or closed. When I wrote a tall fashion column for the website Domestic Sluttery, I called up the PR of one brand to ask how they designed their tall range. My jaw dropped when I heard they just 'added a few inches'.

There is no such thing as fast fashion when you're tall: every item, every shoe is cared for as if it's Chanel, in case you never find anything else. The cost per wear on my wardrobe stands at about 5p, held together by 10-year-old purchases from M&S, Zara, Monsoon, Hawes & Curtis, Oxfam and eBay. You can have fit, or you can have style, but both is almost impossible. There is always a too-short sleeve, a waistband in the wrong place. This was especially shaming when I worked at a glossy magazine.

Hope comes from women who know what it's like to be ignored. The stylist Irene Agbontaen has diversified her fashion brand TTYA (Taller Than Your Average) into 'an inclusive space for the excluded girl', while Laura Schofield launched her ethical shoe brand Otto + Ivy this spring in sizes 8-12. With luck, Elizabeth Debicki's rising status could lead to more chances for tall girls to shine – and hopefully, to shop.