



## Was that a compliment? Decoding backhanded praise

### What they say

You're so beautiful,  
I almost forgot how  
smart you are.



### What they mean

#### **Gendered Expectations:**

Why can't intelligence and ambition  
exist alongside beauty and gender?

#### **Reducing to Stereotypes:**

Why is attractiveness given more  
weight than skill and intelligence?

#### **Condescending Surprise:**

Is their ambition and intelligence  
surprising simply because they're a  
woman?

#### **Undermining Merit:**

Why is their worth measured by  
appearance rather than  
achievements?

### What they say

You're pretty ambitious  
for a woman in this field.



**Sometimes, what sounds like a compliment can carry hidden layers of disrespect. Let's pay attention to how we acknowledge and uplift others.**