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books

more

Submitted by anonymous

Collected by
gillian anderson

B L O O M S B U R Y P U B L I S H I N G

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crave

The erotic imagination is unique. Our sexual fantasies have the power to fulfil many of our most basic emotional and psychological needs, but first and foremost they serve to bring us sensual pleasure. They intensify sexual excitement and arousal, and ultimately satisfaction. Happily, too, because they exist in our minds, in the realm of the imaginary, we can conjure them at will, when we want, and as often as we want, like having our very own X-rated movie on which we can press play and rewind, and edit at whim.

That's the thing – often, as women, our real-world pleasure is minimised, trivialised or regarded as dirty. The multi-billion-dollar porn industry is made by men, for men, with both men's fantasies and men's pleasure driving its viewership and its success. It is only in the last few years that there have been creatives and platforms genuinely placing women's pleasure, from a woman's perspective, at their core.

What has also become clear as we hear from women across the globe is that, sexual pleasure within relationships, and what each party might most desire from the other is rarely spoken about. This is the bit that interests me – the ways in which women continue to shy away from speaking up in order to get our needs met. Living in a world where our wants and desires are rarely put front and centre, being able to express what we want – or even really knowing what that is – seems to be the biggest challenge. As I know too well, it's

not always easy finding the words, or being able to translate what sometimes feels intangible to the tangible.

Once again, in More, I have included my own anonymous letter. And I must admit that, once again, I put off writing it for a really long time. I was curious, as I procrastinated, what exactly my nervousness was about. It wasn't until I eventually forced myself to sit down and start that I realised how challenging it was, despite being able to talk very openly about sex, to find the right words to describe my fantasy, images and scenarios that have existed in my head for some time. It wasn't so much about making the letter perfect or interesting to read, I simply found that to write about the sex act, and about pleasure, with any grace and eloquence was surprisingly hard. I found I really didn't like writing certain words, not because I'm prudish, but because, somehow, those words just didn't feel right. They felt smutty, which was not my intention. I wanted my letter to be sensual, sexy, intimate, startling. It was fascinating to be made aware of my limitations not just as a writer but as an openly sexual being.

But, also, I felt as I knew others had about the process of writing it down; that I was giving something of myself away. I felt not just vulnerable, but that I was in some way betraying myself in the process. Exposing the imagery of my private arousal to the air was a deeply intimate act and I hadn't expected to be so shy about it.

Many women told me that their sexual fantasy felt too sacred, and to give it words, write it down, in a book to be read by hundreds of thousands, might somehow diminish it. I respect this sentiment not least because I felt it myself. And it makes me doubly grateful to all the women who felt like that and wrote it down anyway. For me, pushing past that and hitting send felt like a most unselfish and radical act, and it is with that same humility that I accept the gift of your courageous admissions. One confession, however: in order to grant myself the same anonymity as every other letter-writer, the identifying details of my submission have been changed.

Reading your letters, I continue to marvel at how bravely, evocatively and specifically you women have been able to translate their desires to the page. The fantasies in 'Crave' are complex scripts of the erotic imagination. They pulse with intensity, with hunger, with the ache of wanting. They speak of longing — for touch, for connection, for surrender, for that sense of being wholly filled and overwhelmed. These are the fantasies that consume us, distract us, turn us inside out. The ones that never leave us; the ones we return to again and again.

Each fantasy is rich in evocative sensual detail, taking us into a host of imagined spaces — the heavy garlic scent of a warm restaurant kitchen after all the customers have gone home; the ticking quiet of an office after hours; the pulsating noise and screaming guitars of a heavy metal concert; or the sun-bleached paving stones of an ancient Roman bazaar. But, importantly, for me, here women are articulating an intimate narrative of their inner lives, and in so doing, write about something deeply emotional and particular.

There is so much rawness, complexity, and joy here — I learned a lot about how different we all are in terms of what we crave from an exchange with another person.

In the first chapter, 'Touch Me, Feel Me', the letters are visceral, sensual, describing that irresistible, all-consuming touch of skin on naked skin, flesh meeting flesh. There is a sense of quietness and slowness to these imagined encounters, each long lingering touch and kiss described in wonderful cinematic detail. I got goosebumps as I read. One woman writes: 'The way she touches me, it's like she's writing something into my skin, something permanent.' Another writes: 'I forget everything but the way he feels... skin to skin. We don't speak. Just move together...' And this: 'heavy, hot breathing and long caresses with achingly wet kisses followed by a slow and deep rhythm that still feels like I'm part dreaming but also overwhelmingly alive. We become so melded together it almost hurts.'

In 'Fill Me Up', for the women, no matter their sexual orientation, it's all about penetration. For some, the fantasy is a penis.

As this woman writes: 'I need a penis to fill me, to come and bloom inside of me...' Or this woman, 'size really does matter': 'I want,' she writes, 'to feel the thick, veined length dragging against the walls of my cunt that have never been touched like that...' For others, though, it is tentacles and beaked mouths, muscular octopuses and rippling snakes – or the sleek, dark trunk of a beech tree.

In 'Take Me, Hurt Me, Don't Hurt Me', the highlight is that sweet spot between tenderness and pain with fantasies featuring an array of erotic accoutrements – silk ropes and blindfolds, metal collars and handcuffs, tall red boots and tightly laced corsets, even an ingenious mechanical 'sex machine'. Here is a hunger for surrender, of owning and being owned. As one woman says: 'This is what I've always wanted. To be simply and completely his... I cry when he takes [the collar] off. I want to stay in this tangle of desire and lust and spit and sweat and come and love and protection.' Here you feel the push and pull of desire in its purest, most fundamental form – the kind that engulfs us, and refuses to be ignored. Just a note, however, that many of the letters in this section explore real violence, trauma and acts that may be triggering, uncomfortable or offensive for some readers. Please read with care.

To crave is to feel deeply, desire intensely, and to admit, even if only to ourselves, that we want more. Perhaps, through that admission, we can begin to breathe life into that want. In this section, you will read fantasies that are wild, tender, bold and touching. You will hear women who are unafraid to name their hunger. And perhaps, in a word, in a turn of phrase, in an explicit longing, you will find a reflection of your own desires, your own cravings and, more significantly, your own truths.

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touch me, feel me

‘Skin to skin. We don’t speak. Just move together...’

I'm nineteen, but I've always felt older – though my body still tricks people into thinking I'm too young to matter. They see a girl: I see a mind sharpened by silence, by loneliness, by a kind of pain that leaves no visible bruises – only questions. I never went to school dances. Never kissed anyone behind the gym. I was the physics nerd. The girl teachers called 'the smart one'. Maybe 'the weird one'. My classmates mocked the way I looked. Maybe that's why it was so easy to leave them all behind. I always wrote. Poems. Texts meant to be read one day. About pain. Sometimes about anger. Now I live in another country. I've had what people call a glow-up. Guys smile at me. Offer to carry my things. Ask if I'm seeing someone. It's strange. For the first time, I understand what it's like to be seen the way the 'popular girls' were seen. In a few months I'll be twenty. I'm a virgin. I've never been kissed. By choice: I've been focusing on my studies, my blog, my intellectual life. But I noticed something. A guy can bring me flowers, chocolates, meet my family, win over my friends, do a million things – and maybe I'll feel a little flutter. But a girl? A girl can smile at me and I'll have butterflies swarming in my stomach for a week.

When I picture being with a woman – usually older than me – I don't imagine someone perfect. I imagine someone tired. Smart. Maybe a little bitter. Someone who's seen too much to believe in fairy tales but still searches for magic in the roots of trees. Someone who doesn't want to take care of me – but might enjoy doing it anyway. I want her to talk to me like she knows I'm not a child. To let me touch her collarbone with a curiosity that isn't naive – just hungry. I want her in my arms. I want to run my fingers over the lines on her face and tell her she's safe. I want to kiss her hands. Lie beside her at night watching TV. Go out with her on sunny Saturdays. I want to hear her voice when she forgets to be composed. I don't want to worship her: I just want to be close enough to feel her warmth. We both know

touch isn't magic. It's human. Necessary. Messy. But maybe it could still mean something. (I've never told anyone any of this before.)

18–24 • *Latin Brazilian* • *Catholic* • < £15,000 • *Bisexual/pansexual* • *Single* • *No*