

Introduction

Why A Nice Girl Like Me Wrote Such a Filthy, Politically Incorrect Book

In early 2015, my husband Michael and I indulged in a game of roleplay spanking that became a spark for a greater exploration into BDSM. We never suspected we had such inclinations; in fact, I often rolled my eyes at the popularity of *50 Shades of Grey* and the breathless suggestion of friends that I should read it. Sure, I had vague fantasies of the tie-me-up variety (don't most of us?). But they were fantasies, I thought, not true desires. And the idea of independent, feminist me being submissive in the bedroom? In the words of Daffy Duck, "It is to laugh."

But within a few weeks of that first playful smack of my husband's hand against my bare bottom, our relationship became steeped in Dominance and submission (D/s) and had transformed itself into something so sexually charged that we spent *hours* every day in a naked tangle. In our 50s! Friends my age were struggling with loss of desire, or rarely having sex at all. Yet Michael and I were having daily, raw, transcendent, *thrilling* sex. Week after week, month after month. Talk about mind-blowing.

Even more meaningful to us, as we took greater risks and became more vulnerable to each other, our trust in each other deepened, and our relationship became more intimate. We communicated more, laughed more, appreciated each other more. We not only saw each other through different eyes, we saw ourselves in new ways, too. Most astonishingly, I began to see life, and even

God, in new ways. Indeed, our D/s relationship opened the door to the most profound spiritual experiences of my life.

Today, nearly five years later, I still sexually submit to my husband. Whatever he wants, when he wants it, he gets it, no hesitation, and no choice in my mind. And we are still so blissfully happy with this way of relating that our only complaint is that we did not discover D/s sooner. Oh, how we wished we had discovered it when we were younger and hormonally juicier. We often wrestle with the question of why two seemingly self-aware people had missed the BDSM boat, sailing by in plain sight, for so long.

One reason we never thought to take that ride is our cultural conditioning that modern men and women should be equal in all things, including the bedroom. I am enormously grateful to feminism; it has made so many of the opportunities in my life possible. But it has also been effective in training our collective sexual psyches to a fault. It is now considered shamefully unenlightened for a man to attempt to dominate a woman in or out of the bedroom, and no self-respecting woman would dream of surrendering her body to the will of her lover (except for, you know, in fantasies). Especially now, in the post #MeToo era, unequivocal consent in every sexual particular is mandatory to avoid a humiliating public scolding, or worse. Even the fictional Christian Grey, of *50 Shades* fame, was taught the error of his ways and gave up his retro dominance of his long-suffering submissive.

But I faced another obstacle to my own discovery, and that is the lack of realistic models of what female sexual submission looks like within a committed relationship. Sure, I can find plenty of BDSM porn to watch, but brightly-lit extreme bondage and torture doesn't look at all appealing to me. Most of it is off-putting to

feminine sensibilities with its over-the-top depictions of women being manipulated into uncomfortable positions, beaten mercilessly, or gagging on things being shoved into their throats. BDSM porn is clearly made for the hardcore visual interests of kink-loving men, not the softer sexual imaginations of most women.

In the same vein, there are BDSM groups and communities that sometimes offer education through websites like Fetlife, but again, a girl has to wade through severe images of bondage popping up in ads, images that make me grimace and close the window as soon as possible. Meanwhile, online groups seem oriented for established Doms and subs looking for “play partners.” To venture onto a site like that is to be bombarded with dick pics and crass offers of all manner of sexual shenanigans.

As for books one may read to get a clue, if you type BDSM into the Amazon search bar, you will be directed to *thousands* of books of fictional erotica, mostly badly written, and none realistic. This glut may offer a few titles stimulating to read, but they are all based in pure fantasy, not a true picture of what it is like to live an actual BDSM life. Of course, you might also stumble into the handful of how-to books on BDSM, with the chipper voices of educators encouraging one to give it a shot. Many of these manuals are thoughtful and well-written, and they have been of great value to us (thank you Tristan Taormino). But again, the majority of them, with their glossaries of BDSM terms and lists of rules and cautions and etiquette, are oriented toward people seeking partners to play out whip-swinging “scenes.” Or, they are full of training tips and protocols for those trying to establish a Master/slave relationship down at the far end of the BDSM spectrum.

There are a few memoirs by single sexual submissives, but again, they are written from the perspective

of a woman on the hunt for play partners with whom they may indulge in scene-ing. There are also some good podcasts these days which discuss kinky subjects with true curiosity and care (hello *Ending the Sexual Dark Age* and *Life on the Swingset!*). Yet, nowhere have I found a book on what it is like for an ordinary woman introducing BDSM into her ordinary, married life. A book that answers questions such as: How does a sexual D/s relationship unfold? What does it feel like, physically and emotionally? What are confusions and challenges that might crop up? What are the fears it triggers? How does it alter one's sense of self? What are the impacts on a marriage in the long-term? And few delve into the spiritual side of D/s at all.

A writer by trade, I've always kept a journal, and in 2015, my journal became all about the astonishing changes taking place in our bedroom. Soon, my newly dominant husband was making it a requirement of me to chronicle our journey and email him the installments every day. I'm so grateful he did, because we have so much fun reading our story and remembering those heady days. It always makes us think about other couples we know who seem to be struggling in their 50/50 marriages, and we wish we could tell them our secret. We wonder, would a D/s exploration transform their relationships as it did ours?

Eventually, we had the bright idea to anonymously post some of my chronicle to a blog, and soon I was receiving emails from women who were also making belated forays into BDSM. Like me, they were surprised at how much it enriched their lives, but also a little uncertain on how to process the changes it brought. It is those emails that convinced me there might be value in compiling my blog posts into an e-book.

Yet I present this story with a *huge* amount of trepidation. First, because I have included incredibly per-

sonal details—graphic sexual details—about our D/s journey. I have done so because, under the guise of privacy, real-life sex is often shrouded in layers of mystery. It is difficult to imagine new ways of sexually relating that we have not seen, or at least read about. And as the sex we read about is usually fictional fantasy, and the sex we see is usually porn, also pure fantasy... well, one isn't likely to glean what a loving D/s relationship might look like from such sources. In conveying why our D/s relationship has been so transformational, it seems important not to float off in airy abstractions, but to ground our story in earthy specifics.

Beyond that, I am hoping that an erotic love story will be more engaging to read than a chaste one, as well as more validating to others who want to explore their own version of D/s. As Clarissa Thorn writes in *The S&M Feminist*, “Openly acknowledging, owning, and discussing your sexual preferences can help others respect those preferences—and can help others who share those preferences respect themselves.”

However, the larger reason for my trepidation is that I am writing these words in 2019, when we are still in the throes of countless #MeToo realizations about the harm done when men impose their sexual agendas on women without their consent. I can almost feel my mother's ghost rolling over in her symbolic grave that I am not only so idiotic as to hand my sexual agency over to a man, but to then publicly *brag* about it. I imagine waves of disapproval about to roar toward me from countless feminists—past, present and future. Not to mention the scorn emanating from the feminist in my own head, the one who has written dramatic defenses (literally dramatic, as in television movies) about treating women with respect and dignity.

The treatment of women and girls as sexual objects is very real, very damaging, and not just here in the

West, but particularly in countries where such views are sometimes enshrined into actual law. I know how hard women everywhere are fighting for ownership of their own bodies. I vehemently don't want to present any word or idea that can be interpreted as justifying rape culture or viewing women as second-class citizens.

The irony is that the sexual submission as I experience it would not even be *possible* if it wasn't firmly rooted in a woman's right to decide what happens to her body. The gift of my submission, this unconditional "yes" to my husband, would be meaningless if I did not first have the right to say "no." Of course, that is beside the point for women who are being threatened by men who only see them as sexual prey. And it feels *extremely* inconvenient to point it out at a time when women feel their stories of abuse are finally being given a real hearing. I have stopped work on compiling this book several times over the past two years precisely for that reason.

Yet I have come to know how healing the spiritual rewards of a healthy D/s relationship can be to the people who may have suffered harm in the past, not just through my own experience, but the experiences others have shared with me. And perhaps it is *because* I am experiencing the joys of submission at the worst possible time in our culture that it is important to write about it. The changes that are happening thanks to the #MeToo movement set the best possible stage to make a distinction between abusive and dehumanizing sexual domination of women, and loving and consensual sexual domination that elevates a woman and her sexual choices, while creating a path for deeper union between genders.

Of course, many relationships are between people of the same gender, and not every D/s relationship is between a dominant man and submissive woman. And

while the emotional journey of D/s, along with its spiritual impact, is universal no matter the gender of Dom or sub (at least within the context of a committed relationship), I do share my experience from the perspective of a woman married to a man. To be even more particular, I write this as a woman of a certain age who, after decades of 50/50 relationships, had a difficult time seeing herself as someone who would sexually submit to a man.

The fact is, many women, no matter their age, *do* secretly crave a sexual power exchange dynamic. According to a 2014 a study of 1,500 adults conducted by the University of Montreal and published in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 65 percent of women report fantasies or desires for sexual submission. (And, for the record, so did 53 percent of men). Most who fantasize about being dominated cited bondage or spanking as their fantasy of choice, with 30 percent saying they fantasized about being forced to have sex. Yes, fantasy and reality are two different things, and the study noted that half of the 65 percent of women who fantasized about submission said they wouldn't want to actually act it out. (Which, ironically, is what I would have said about myself in 2014). However, that means a good 32 percent of women, around a third, *would* like to explore their submissive longings in real life.

The same study found that those who reported they have experimented with some type of BDSM activity (about 20 percent of study participants) waited at least six years on average before acting on their interest. That's an intriguing gap to me because over 125 million copies of *Fifty Shades of Grey* were sold between 2011 and 2015, primarily to women. If the book sparked a greater interest in BDSM that many women have yet to act upon, and if six years is the average wait time, then there's likely to be a *lot* of women ready to take action on their longings right around... 2019.

So, for those wondering if they really want to take that plunge, here is the story of how it unfolded for us in our first two months, in full ecstatic detail. The details are, of course, unique to us—no two D/s couples do things the same way, and that is part of the beauty of BDSM. You follow your own excitement to create a relationship dynamic that is uniquely suited to you and your partner. Yet, at its heart, our story is a universal BDSM story: Boy meets girl, boy spans girl, then girl looks at him from desire-glazed eyes and says, “More, please.” Oh yes, please, much more of that.