



Best Women's Erotica of the Year, Volume 1

Rachel Kramer Bussel (Editor) , Tara Betts (Contributor) , Lazuli Jones (Contributor) , Jessica Taylor (Contributor) , L. Marie Adeline (Contributor) , Doriana Chase (Contributor) , Elizabeth Coldwell (Contributor) , Tabitha Rayne (Contributor) , more... Deborah Castellano (Contributor) , Rose P. Lethe (Contributor) , Theda Hudson (Contributor) , Ria Restrepo (Contributor) , Valerie Alexander (Contributor) , Rose Caraway (Contributor) , Amy Butcher (Contributor) , Dorothy Freed (Contributor) , Tiffany Reisz (Contributor) , Jade A. Waters (Contributor) , J. Crichton (Contributor) , D.R. Slaten (Contributor) , Heidi Champa (Contributor) , Elise King (Contributor) , Hilary Keyes (Contributor) ...less

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Best Women's Erotica of the Year, Volume 1 delivers risky, romantic, heart-pounding thrills. Joyful, daring, and authentic, these steamy stories revel in erotic adventure, from the sparks between strangers to the knowing caresses of longtime lovers. These stories are not merely erotic but filled with strong characters and clever narratives showing how sexual experience is different for everyone. This anthology is a glorious celebration of the finest and friskiest female erotic fiction today.

Best Women's Erotica of the Year, Volume 1 Details

Date : Published January 12th 2016 by Cleis Press (first published December 8th 2015)

ISBN : 9781627781534

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Format : Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Adult Fiction, Erotica, Short Stories, Anthologies, Romance, Erotic Romance, Bdsm, Contemporary

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From Reader Review Best Women's Erotica of the Year, Volume 1 for online ebook

Jillyn says

4.5 stars, rounded up

I think that Rachel might have just outdone herself in selecting the stories for this anthology. This is one of the best Cleis Press anthologies that I've had the pleasure to read so far.

As the title and synopsis suggest, these stories are focused on female erotica. There are twenty-two short stories included in this collection, each of them talking about females and sex in some capacity. Honestly, I was blown away by the amount of diversity that spans across these stories. There are young women, middle aged ones, older ones still. There are Asian women and black women and lesbians and those who are in transition, those who are butch and those who are femme. There are dominant women and submissive women. It's a great sampling of different women, and it was a really, really refreshing change of pace. Well done!

These women are found in a variety of different genres, including historical fiction and even post-apocalyptic. I wasn't expecting that, but it was definitely welcome.

There's also a huge amount of variety when it comes to the sex and erotica bit. No matter where your interests lie on a scale from vanilla to kinky, there's a story here that you're sure to enjoy. There's bathroom play, there's BDSM, there's spanking, there's toys, there's voyeurs and exhibition. And then there are stories that are simply two people finding pleasure and passion in one another, no bells and whistles needed. It's a lovely sprinkling of different things.

As this is an anthology, of course there were stories that I enjoyed more than others. I preferred some authors' writing styles, some kinks are not my own, etc. Instead of going over all 22 stories and giving my opinions, I'm going to highlight my four favorites. I know my regular readers are thinking "but you always do three!" I know, I know. But this time I just could not narrow it down. That's how happy I am with BWE. These stories are in no particular order.

The first story I wish to spotlight is called "Demimonde" by Valerie Alexander. This is a historically set short story that features a tall, dark, and handsome man, a seance, and a widower. It had just the right amount of "action" and scene build up, and honestly Ms Alexander knows how to write a man. I'd like one of him please, to go. The next story is called "Ophelia the Second", which is about an understudy, a gorgeous Shakespearean actor, and a passionate night off the stage. I love Shakespeare, and Hamlet is one of my favorite plays, so I loved that incorporation into the story. The third story is called "Starstruck" by Lazuli Jones. I adored this one. This story includes an ebony-skinned actor who once played a hero, a grown up nerdy fan girl, and a convention. I relate to this girl on so many levels, and I have had so many fantasies of meeting my favorite actors/actresses at conventions. I wish this one would happen to me, for sure. The final one is called "Enter Me" by Tabitha Rayne. This one stood out to me, because the female is deaf. It added a really unique dynamic to the story, and I don't think it's anything I've ever read before. It was very well written.

If you're into girls loving men, or each other, and you're looking for a book to warm up those cold February nights, look no further than this collection. You can read it in one go, or take it slow and read each story

separately. There's a huge amount of variety, and I wasn't disappointed.

I received a copy in exchange for my honest review. Thanks, Rachel! This review can also be found on my blog, Bitches n Prose.

Nikki "The Crazie Betty" V. says

Ok, I've been sitting on this review for almost two weeks struggling to figure out the best way to do it. I really wanted to try and do a rough mini-review for each of the 22 stories but that is just not gonna happen. I'd be banned from posting reviews, the thing would be so damn long.

I'll start out with this. I **LOVE** Rachel Kramer Bussel. Every time she comes out with an anthology I'm equal parts excited and nervous. I'm always excited because she has an exceptionally keen eye for well done erotica. I'm always nervous because I know I'm never going to read a RKB anthology and not be faced with some type of scene I'm not sure how to handle. Which I love because she's always opening my eyes to new types of stories and characters that I've never imagined before. I'm now going to bunch together some of the titles into specific groups to tell y'all how I felt about them. I also apologize for not knowing off-hand who the authors of each story was. I don't have my copy with me right now to go and check.

Favorites:

- Date Night
- Flying Solo by Rachel Kramer Bussel
- The Altar of Lamented Toys by Jessica Taylor
- Enter Me by Tabitha Rayne
- The Assistant by Tiffany Reisz
- Demimonde by Valerie Alexander

Took Me By Surprise:

- Alvin's Night by Elizabeth Coldwell
- Waiting to Pee
- Out of the Ordinary by Rose P Lethe

Grabbed My Feels and Wouldn't Let Go:

- The Carnalarium by Rose Caraway
- Lighting the Pyre by Theda Hudson
- Enter Me by Tabitha Rayne (yes I put that in two places on purpose)

I implore you to read this anthology, I would daresay it's one of Rachel's best edited works. I know I'll be going back and reading many of these stories again and again.

Thank you Rachel Kramer Bussel for the signed paperback copy in exchange for my honest review

Tracey says

a free copy of the book was given to me by Rachel Kramer Bussel for an honest review

Can I just say wow! This collection of erotic fiction featured the much needed diversity that Dirty Dates was missing. I can't tell you how happy it made me to see a sexy viable man described with dark skin. It literally made me squeal with joy. But the assortment of love interests were not the only reason I loved this volume. The writing was really really good. I found myself wishing that more than half of these stories were full length novels. Everything was unique and intriguing and sexy and awesome. The stories that really struck a cord with me were:

Demimonde by Valerie Alexander
Ophelia the Second by Jade A. Waters
Flying Solo by Rachel Kramer Bussel
Starstruck by Lazuli Jones
Matilda's Secret by L. Marie Adeline
Alvin's Night by Elizabeth Coldwell
Enter Me by Tabitha Rayne
The Wolf at His Door by Deborah Castellano
The Carnalarium by Rose Caraway
Two Doms for Dinner by Dorothy Freed
The Assistant by Tiffany Reisz

I have such high hopes that the second volume will be even better than this one. I have complete faith that Bussel will deliver no less.

Ren says

3,5 stars

A very diverse erotica anthology, written by women and for women. Some short stories is too vanilla for me (despite this entitled as "erotica"), some are "wtf I just read", some make me yawn aka pretty boring and some make me beg for more.

A New Canvas

For a first story, it's pretty yawn for me. Didn't left impression too to make me want to read another. But, hey, this is still the beginning.

Demimonde

Pretty generic historical romance. Didn't find it erotic at all (if you can say that quick tumble in the carriage is erotic), except that the heroine find her awakening. Disappointed that the author didn't explore much to the masquerade debauchery.

Ophelia the Second

Inspired by Hamlet..but this is not Hamlet re-telling. Too simple for me and not erotic at all. Gosh, did I need to continue the rest? Well, I can endure this.

Revisiting Youth

The first diverse story (finally). Set in Japan about widower past her 30 (40 maybe?) and she is Asian as well. Have menage with young men. I like that the author write about love hotel, as a manga reader, I appreciate this, lol.

Date Night

Story is usual but the sex steamy. If you want to spice up your relationship with your husband, that is.

Flying Solo

Wow, just wow. I might be find the first gem. Never read any by Rachel Kramer Bussel (whom happen to be editor of this anthology) and may check her others work. A good combination between 1st PoV and 2nd PoV as well, which is rare. Steamy is another bonus. Very recommended.

Drawn by Nic

A quickie story. Not enough to burn. I have no slightest idea who this Nic is.

The Ropes

Old flames rekindle in the outing. Maybe you may consider to go to company training if it will end you up with your office crush. So hard to imagine they have sex in the height and just by ropes. I keep screaming "what if they fall???"

Starstruck

Another favorites. The heroine is PoC, past her prime (she's about 40-ish), and nerd. I like that finally she can meet her teenage crush and well..have sex with him is a cherry on the top of geeky sundae. Recommended.

The Altar of Lamented Toys

The world might be near its ending, but not your love and passion. You can always find the heat in the hopeless situation. A nice erotic short story in the post-apocalyptic era.

Matilda's Secret

This story maybe part of the author's series, but can be read as stand alone as well. Its also give a nice ending, not just a quick meeting or open ending.

Scents & Sexuality

Well.. a little bit weird for my taste. Just weird (aka I forgot what the story, lol)

Alvin's Night

Very much alike Date Night, but with third party named Alvin. I can said it almost the same with Flying Solo, but just with a little spice aka no actual sex.

Enter Me

This is the first time I read a story about deaf character. The author masterfully write what its feel to can't hear anything, how its affect the character's life. I can relate a bit since my hearing is not good (I'm not deaf, just my right ear is not functioning properly). The story feel melancholy too me, but also hopeful.

The Wolf at His Door

Supposedly to be BDSM story...but..eh..feel vanilla for me

Out of Ordinary

The first story feature transgender character. Took me a little bit to realize one of the characters is trans. It's a nice and steamy story and the author insert some insight how the trans character family treat him with his condition. A little bit sad, tbh.

Lighting the Pyre

A story about breast cancer survivor. Start with her having tattoo and then have outdoor sex with her girlfriend. Some make me confused, like when she using condom? Maybe she used strap-on? :/

Restitution

An artist make a scandal to buzz her new single. I already new that her interrogation is just a cover up, lol

The Carnalarium

A lesbian story, with one girl is commitment phobic, want to leave her lover to travel around the world. I almost irritated by her. Like if she afraid of commitment, why she suddenly act jealous when her girlfriend try to forget her and move on with new lover. The ending is bittersweet but I guess it's perfect for the phobic commitment character. You must deal with the consequences of your choice.

Waiting to Pee

All I can said is..yuck, yuck, gross. The title already said it. Sorry, can't find how the story is erotic!

Two Doms for Dinner

Pretty ho-hum for BDSM short stories. Not enough steam, despite its have two Doms. Just barely scratch the itch.

The Assistant

Save the best for the last! Written by Tiffany Reisz, I know that she will always deliver even with just short story. I must make time to read her Original Sinners series!

I can't said that this is "Best" collection, for some stories is pretty mediocre for me. I guess it's hard to choose 20 stories from hundred stories that meet the editor standards (I know how it feels. Been there done that), and maybe my taste and her is somehow a little bit different. What she or others reader dubbed as erotic is not erotic at all for me (example: Waiting to Pee). BUT, I won't said that this anthology is bad, because I enjoy some of the stories. Its diverse and give some new perspective for me like, a deaf character, PoC, lesbians, trans character and women past her prime age.

Beverly Diehl says

Such an interesting and varied collection of erotic stories. First I've read that included transgender people in the lead roles, which was awesome. A few acts I hadn't even considered before (and some I considered, and decided, Hell No!) but overall juicy and delicious.

Lucy Felthouse says

The Best Women's Erotica series has had an overhaul. There's a new editor - the inimitable Rachel Kramer Bussel, and a slight tweak in the title format, as well as a change of hands for the publisher itself. Best

Women's Erotica of the Year Volume 1 was sent to me for review, and I was eager to see if the changes were noticeable.

Bussel's been editing for a long time and obviously knows her stuff, so as I expected, the quality of the stories was high. Granted, there were two or three in there that really didn't do anything for me and I skipped over them altogether, but to me, that's the nature of anthologies. You're unlikely to like every author's writing style or story topic, and it's a personal thing. But the vast majority of the stories were excellent, and of course, very hot. My particular favourites were Jade A. Waters' *Ophelia the Second*, Heidi Champa's *Drawn* by Nic and Tabitha Rayne's *Enter Me*. Other recognisable names between these pages are Valerie Alexander, Elizabeth Coldwell, Rose P. Lethe, Rose Caraway, Dorothy Freed and Tiffany Reisz.

I did notice a few errors throughout, which I'd not noticed in Cleis Press anthologies before. A good proofread would have fixed them easily, so that was a shame.

Overall, though, this is a good collection, and a great way to dip in and find some erotica authors you enjoy, so you can go out and see what else they've written.

warhawke says

Genre: Erotica

Type: Short Stories Anthology

POV: Various

Rating:

Best Women's Erotica of the Year, Volume 1 is a collection of erotic short stories by twenty two authors. It has a good mix of sexual orientations, racial diversities and variety of sex acts. Each story averages at 5%/15-20 minutes reading time. I don't re-read books but I can certainly come back to read my favorite stories in this one.

I read 10 of the stories, and below is the brief summary of it. You can avoid reading if you want to go in totally blind.

★ THE ASSISTANT by Tiffany Reisz ★

Her hips moved in tight circles as Lennon touched her and Jack fucked her.

A boss gave his assistant a long weekend to relax only to have her erotic dream come to life.

◆ 4.5 stars

◆ M/F/M, voyeurism

★ FLYING SOLO by Rachel Kramer Bussel ★

“Call him,” he says, whipping out his phone. “I want him to hear you come.”

A married couple had a pact of having threesome with strangers strictly when traveling only. On a solo trip, she must find someone who could satisfy her while bringing her husband near without being together.

◆ 4.5 stars

◆ F/F/M, M/F, voyeurism

★ THE ROPES by Elise King ★

My hands were raw from gripping the ropes. Somehow all the pain made every sensation more extreme, even the feel of him moving in and out of me.

A woman joined a leadership development training to advance her career ended up conquering her fears in the most pleasurable way.

◆ 4 stars

◆ M/F

★ THE ALTAR OF LAMENTED TOYS by Jessica Taylor for KC Taylor ★

The noise of his hand on my cheek is an omen of terrific sensation to come.

A husband in post apocalyptic world went all the way to grant his wife the pleasure of her favorite toy before the world fell into chaos.

◆ 4 stars

◆ M/F, toys

★ DEMIMONDE by Valerie Alexander ★

Inside the velvet bodice of my dress his fingers go. Into my corset and chemise until he cups my breasts.

It's 1899 in New York and a widow attended a séance that led to an adventure she will never forget.

◆ 4.5 stars

◆ M/F

★ SCENTS & SEXUALITY by Doriana Chase ★

Suddenly, real life gave me a bit of a jolt when Jax, looking inquisitive, tapped on my car window. I wasn't sure if it was because he had a garden question, or if he'd witnessed me molesting his T-shirt.

A student attracted to the scent of a sexy gardener that led to an unconventional study and "research" method.

- ◆ 3.5 stars
- ◆ M/F, M/F/M

★ STARSTRUCK by Lazuli Jones ★

"He came in and sat down a half hour ago. He's still there. By himself." Oh fuck. I think my younger self wrote a fanfic that started like that.

A woman reliving her teen crush nostalgia with a 90s has-been actor at Comic Con.

- ◆ 3.5 stars
- ◆ M/F

★ ENTER ME by Tabitha Rayne ★

He always chose the perfect words to get me off. I can hear them now, in my mind. The way he wrapped his tongue around words like cunt and cock. I hear every nuance, every inflection, and sear them into my mind.

A woman rediscovering her sensuality after an accident that robbed her of her sense of hearing. The ending was beautiful in non sexual way.

- ◆ 4.5 stars
- ◆ Masturbation, M/F

★ WAITING TO PEE by Amy Butcher ★

And it does...when his pee hits directly, accurately, purposefully onto the head of my clit. "Fuck," I grunt, trying not to move and unable to hold still.

A butch girl formed a "connection" with a trucker while waiting in line for the public restroom.

- ◆ 4.5 stars
- ◆ Wet play

★ TWO DOMS FOR DINNER by Dorothy Freed ★

Sir moves behind me, spanking me with the long-handled leather paddle, which makes a loud slapping sound as it strikes. Charles, facing my front, gazes into my eyes as he tweaks my nipples and then amuses himself by lightly slapping my breasts, making them swing back and forth.

A sub had a busy evening entertaining her Dom and his friend.

◆ 3.5

◆ M/F/M

For more reviews/reveals/giveaways visit:

Angy Potter - Collector of Book Boyfriends says

This is an anthology of erotic short stories from different authors. I read only two of them—I wish I had time to read the rest, but *C'est la vie*. Nevertheless, I'm sooooooo in love with the two short, super hot, super erotic, super *where-is-my-damn-vibrator* stories I read: *The Assistant* by my beloved Tiffany Reisz, and *Flying Solo* by Rachel Kramer Bussel. So... here go my reviews:

***The Assistant* by Tiffany Reisz - 5 stars**

I FLOVED Lennon and Ivy's sexy and kinky adventure. Ivy has worked for Lennon for a couple of years and they have had an ongoing sexual tension since then. One weekend, Lennon told Ivy he was going to a "party" and she was free of work for 3 days, and then is when Ivy decided to go the party and see what happened.

I loved reading this sinners short story. Tiffany's writing style was as always perfect. I could read anything she writes and I'm 120% sure I WILL LOVE IT!!!

Something really cool happened to me when I was reading it. I was lying in bed, reading my paperback—Yeah! I'm still fangirling for getting a signed paperback from Miss Rachel Kramer Bussel herself, it's practically my first paperback from Tiffany I hold in my hands, I got the whole #OriginalSinners books last year in the signing at Jen's Paperback 's event for the release of The Queen, but the logistics of sending books to Colombia is a little tricky... Anyway, I was reading and I saw this...

Lennon wrote back thirty seconds later. "Yes, please. Saturday, nine. 152 Riverside Drive. Warn the driver we'll be dress weird."

I have a crappy memory for names and such but I was jumping up and down because I remembered Kingsley's home address! If that makes me a crazy fan, so I'M A CRAZY FAN! Hahaha that is old news,

anyway.

So, great Original Sinners short story, kinky, funny, sexy. Overall, 100% recommended.

Read and excerpt in bestwomenseroticaoftheyear.tumblr.com/

***Flying Solo* by Rachel Kramer Bussel - 5 stars**

This is my first time I read a Rachel's work, and I really hope it's not the last. Her writing style was unique, it was my first time I read in that style, it was weird at the beginning but I got used to it pretty quickly. It was like if the female main character was talking directly to the male main character. I ended up loving it.

This was the story of Sunny and her husband. They always had an open relationship and right after they got married, they started having threesomes with other men and women when they traveled. This short story was all about those sexy times, and the final one was when Sunny had to travel alone. It WAS SO HAWT! Go read it and enjoy it yourself.

Great story, sexy, romantic and awesome. 100% recommended.

Final note: Both stories I read had sex relationships in all ways, M/F, F/F, M/M (Not explicit, sadly), M/F/M, and M/F/F. SO HOT!

Absynthe says

Outstanding anthology of female-centric erotica. Every story was exceedingly well-written and edited and HAF (hot as f**k). I highly recommend this book to everyone who loves diverse storytelling in their erotica. My favorite, of course, was Tiffany Reisz's The Assistant. LOVED it!

ARC provided to me by editor & author Rachel Kramer Bussel in exchange for an honest review. Thank you, Rachel!

Amelia Faith says

Suitably Named

This is a jammed packed book full of erotic goodness. It contains twenty two stories by different authors. There are straight couples, lesbians, trans-gendered pairings, some romantic, some BDSM, some quick hook

ups and some that may last for years. Some of the stories are tender and beautiful and some just down and dirty. Really there is something for everyone, except male on male. I've included a few of the stories that were most memorable to me.

Ophelia the Second by Jade A Waters is a sweet story. Nat fancies herself Ophelia the second, she is an understudy and desperately in love with Phillip who plays Hamlet. He wishes Dear Nat was in the lead roll. After a show one night Phillip invites Nat home to run lines... Suddenly being the second isn't so bad.

In Rachel Kramer Bussel's Flying Solo we see a woman alone who reminisces about her honeymoon where they picked up a woman to join them. She picks up a man at the airport and go to his hotel. After he is told her husband is fine with them hooking up, he insists she call her husband who listens in on them doing the deed. Very hot.

Star Struck by Lazuli Jones is a gentle story with endless possibilities for a romantic HEA (Happily Ever After) Angela is a huge fan of a 90's superhero show and in particular the character Tecton, her geeky adolescent crush. Now she is in her 40's waiting in line at a sci fi convention to get his autograph. She spots Desmond (aka Tecton) alone in a bar and they begin to have a conversation. She makes him feel special and she begins to see him not as a character but for the man he is. Later in his hotel room its Desmond she is with and not the superhero she used to get off thinking about. He is just as taken with her.

L Marie Adeline brings us Matilda's Secret. A 50 yr old woman trains a 32 yr old man to satisfy the female clients at S.E.C.R.E.T., a place for women to have their fantasies come true. The problem is that Jessie falls in love with Matilda. He leaves when she won't let him into her heart. Several years later he's back and has a young son. After trying to find him a younger woman she gives up and allows herself to love and be loved.

One of my two top favourites is Enter Me by the talented Tabitha Rayne. It is so full of emotions, sad, scared, joy, peace.... A woman who was in a crash is suddenly left deaf feels alone and trapped by the loss. When she is finally intimate with her man she breaks past the fear and can remember hearing him. She is not so trapped anymore. Just serious Awwww factor here!

Finally we have my other favourite Lighting the Pyre by Theda Hudson. This story is very memorable and beautiful. It is also a lesbian tale so that's another big win for me. Brin has beaten breast cancer and gets a tattoo to cover the scars on her chest. She is angry and feels dead inside. With the love and strength of her partner she begins to feel alive and whole again. I just really love this one!

This was a fantastic book with a whole lot to offer. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

Angie Elle says

Thank you to Rachel Kramer Bussel, the editor of this book, for providing a print copy in exchange for an honest review.

While this book is an entire collection of short erotic stories, I'll be reviewing three that are included in the book. The ones I've chosen are Tiffany Reisz (a favorite of mine,) Rachel Kramer Bussel (she provided the review copy of the book,) and one story I've chosen at random simply because that's where I opened the book!

The Assistant -Tiffany Reisz

5 stars

I feel like Tiffany Reisz turned me into a voyeur with this hot little number. She brings us once again to Kingsley Edge's doorstep when Ivy, having found out where her boss likes to carouse, crashes a party at the town house with intentions unknown even to herself. What I really enjoyed about this story (aside from the heat level) was the emotional intensity TR managed to weave with such a small word count. If you're like me and desperate to read every word she puts to paper, you'll enjoy this. If you haven't tried this author yet and want a small taste of what she can do, this is a great place to start!

Flying Solo – Rachel Kramer Bussel

4 stars

This was a hot story. There was a bit of F/F which isn't normally something I'd read. But the story as a whole was well written, and I do love it when an author explores the concept of open marriage. It read as an erotic letter from a wife to her husband, which would probably leave most men squirming for relief. I'd read more from this author.

Enter Me – Tabitha Rayne

4 stars

This last one I'm reviewing was a bit more serious than the first two. It takes place two months after an accident that left a woman deaf, and she and her significant other have yet to regain physical intimacy. After a note from him telling her he wants to make love again, she realizes how much she wants it and how long it's been since she's been aroused. This was hot, but also a bit tender as a man and woman try to regain their physical bond.

The three stories I read from this book were incredibly erotic, just as the title claims. I think this book is a great way to find new authors, and I can't wait to read the rest!

books are love says

Received in exchange for a honest review.

this set of short stories are titillating and scintillating. Wowza the shower you will need after reading this book. Each story is it's own tale and they are glorious. A brief look at a few of the amazing stories:

The assistant by tiffany reisz is just yummalusciously delicious. I never thought a assistant would be so bold and brazen but also honorable. And the ending just wow.

A new canvas by Tara betts is very sensual. I mean the way he using her as the canvas in such a delectable and erotic way. Just yumm..

Date night was fascinating and intriguing. The altar of lamented toys was unique and alluring.

Each story adds its own allure and intrigue. Each with a different way of reaching the sensual side of us all and allowing us to see the delicious freedom of erotic acts of desire.

Emmanuelle Maupassant says

I received an advance review copy of this edition, from the editor, Rachel Kramer Bussel.

Readers familiar with Rachel's erotic fiction anthologies know that they are guaranteed a rollercoaster ride. This edition certainly meets the mark, being not only skin-tinglingly exciting but diverse (across ages, ethnicities and writing styles). I read the collection within a weekend, eyes bulging and, inevitably, wobbly-legged: be warned!

'The Altar of Lamented Toys' left quite an impression: a cleverly-woven tale by Jessica Taylor, set in a post-apocalyptic world, in which sex toys once so beloved can no longer be charged. Paying homage to their transportational power, the story is both original and moving.

'Alvin's Night' by Elizabeth Coldwell is masterfully written: the work of an author who has long proven herself in command of her words. Here, we observe the power of the long tease, of role-play and power-play. Her dialogue is faultless; her details crystal shards of anticipation.

On the theme of allowing our desires free reign, there is Tiffany Reisz's 'The Assistant' in which our heroine attends a masked party and, safely behind her veil of anonymity, enters into an encounter more thrilling than she could have imagined:

'She found the prospect arousing, the thought of being passed back and forth between them' and 'Jack had warned her Lennon would be rougher with her than he was. But Jack hadn't warned her it would feel this good. He was fucking her so hard now she could feel it in her stomach.'

However, she soon realises that she seeks not anonymity but more intimate connection, and her mask is, at last, lifted.

For those daring to enter the dark recesses of a sex dungeon, there is Rose Caraway's 'Carnalarium', in which all pleasure and pain awaits. Here, the true theme is not simply the lure of the forbidden but the agony of parting from a lover, allowing them to be free. Rose's tale explores the nature of 'possession' and of love.

J Crichton and H Keyes' 'Revisiting Youth', set in Tokyo, begins with an opening line commanding of attention: 'Aya went out that night looking to feel.' At first sight, the story is standard fare: an older woman on the prowl picks up two young men and takes them home to play. However, there are deeper themes swimming beneath: notably, how far our sense of emotional and intellectual self (and self-worth) is entwined with our sexual self, and our belief in our desirability. The story navigates smoothly towards its highly charged threesome, ending, at last, with the words: 'Adventures only stop happening when you stop looking for them.'

Ms. Kramer Bussel's own addition to the collection, 'Flying Solo' is both tender and sexually thrilling. We peek through the lens at a marriage, like most others, of mutual love and respect, except that, here, there is some extra spice in the mix. Our happy couple regularly invite a third person into their bed and, in doing so, enhance their understanding of (and admiration for) one another.

Also well-delivered is L. Marie Adeline's 'Matilda's Secret'. Again, we are invited to explore the theme of an older woman's sexual self-esteem, and the complexities of desire v. love. Recruiting men for S.E.C.R.E.T (an agency orchestrating women's sex fantasies) we glimpse 'behind the scenes'.

Another little gem in the anthology is Lazuli Jones' 'Starstruck': what happens when, as a mature woman, you

meet your teenage celebrity crush, and he measures up to all those years of hero-worship...

Rachel KB has done an admirable job of collating stories which seek to explore unusual 'edges' within the genre: 'Enter Me' by Tabitha Rayne, is both tender and raw, her heroine redefining her sense of self on having lost her hearing; Dorothy Freed's 'Two Doms for Dinner' features men and a woman in their very much older years; Theda Hudson's 'Lighting the Pyre' tackles loss of sexual libido following cancer treatment; and Rose P Lethe's 'Out of the Ordinary' features a transgender protagonist.

Tara Betts' 'A New Canvas' is a poetic rendering, in which we can feel the artist's pen drawing upon our heroine's skin. Valerie Alexander 'Demimonde' is sexy vignette of a woman's secret fantasies, daring parlour games, and an illicit liaison in her carriage, in 19th century New York.

Jade A. Waters' 'Ophelia the Second' is a subtle journey through the attraction between actors on and off-stage, and Ria Restrepo's 'Restitution' offers a wonderful twist (no spoilers!).

So many stories, and perspectives, each awaiting the reader's own interpretation.

Take to your bed for the weekend, and snuggle down with this anthology.
Just remember that I warned you...

Leela says

So here's what's funny about this book. I usually blast through collections of erotica on the first read, eating them like junk food at my left elbow while half my mind is somewhere else, noting where I might want to go back and linger...later.

Not this time.

I read the first story, breathed a "thank you" to the empty room, read the second one, and stopped.

I thought, "this really is literature."

I thought about the stories, for the sake of the stories. I wound them through the fingers of my day, considering characters and motivation.

And sex. That too.

Every story has its steam. Every story has its moments of this into that, tasting, smelling, undulating, yes, of course. It is, after all, erotica.

But there is a grace here, a quality, a depth, a craft of story itself that is often disappointingly missing in the world of the explicitly sexy.

This is erotica in its mature form, erotica grown up and acting its best. It is a delight. It is engaging and even potentially challenging without losing sight of the possibility of getting you off.

I highly recommend it. To savor.

Pairs well with long baths or long train rides, sipped between appointments, or clean sheets and a curious lover or two.

Hans says

Some of these short stories are hot. Some are very hot. And some are even hotter.
