



Behind the Bedroom Door: Getting It, Giving It, Loving It, Missing It

Paula Derrow (Editor)

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We may not admit it, but we're all curious about what goes on in other people's bedrooms. After all, we live in a world saturated with sex, which makes it tough not to wonder how we measure up—and even tougher to talk about our intimate experiences honestly. In this frank, poignant collection, twenty-six acclaimed writers go *Behind the Bedroom Door* and lay bare the messy, mind-blowing, often hilarious encounters that make up a woman's history.

By sharing their stories, authors like Susan Cheever, Hope Edelman, and Julie Powell bravely open a window on the passions, predilections and problems that we encounter between the sheets. In doing so, they reassure us that whatever we feel, whatever we do or don't do in the bedroom, we're not alone.

Telling the truth about sex—how we like it, how often we get it, how it affects us—isn't easy. This eye-opening anthology tells the truth about women's intimate lives, shattering some deeply entrenched myths about what goes on in the bedrooms of real women along the way: Susan Cheever upends conventional notions about women, sex, and sentiment in her essay "In Praise of One-Night Stands."... Sex is the last thing on Lauren Slater's mind when the bestselling author and psychologist reveals a few surprising truths, even joys, about her virtually sexless marriage in "Overcome."... Julie Powell serves up a searing chronicle of an illicit affair in "Lost in Space"; and novelist Valerie Frankel takes a decidedly lighter view in "Ouch, You're Lying on My Hair."

Whether you're twenty or seventy, single or perpetually coupled up, these frank, seriously sexy essays provide a deeply illuminating, ultimately comforting no-holds-barred look at our most private selves. Gutsy and provocative, they reveal a great deal about how far we've come—and how far we still have to go.

Behind the Bedroom Door: Getting It, Giving It, Loving It, Missing It Details

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Marnie says

It seems like I'm giving every book I read lately three stars. I'd give this book five stars for many of the essays inside as well as for its refreshing honesty about sex, a topic that often gets a lot of sugarcoating and exaggeration. But a small number of the essays didn't totally capture my attention. In a few instances, I blended the different stories in my head. Were there similarities that caused a natural overlap? Or did I not read it right? Maybe a little of both. I definitely appreciated the candidness each author brought to the table, and liked the brutal truth exhibited by most. While it is a book entirely about what goes on behind other people's bedroom doors, including props, fetishes, abuse, S&M, infidelity, homosexuality, etc, nothing about it seemed pornographic or perverted. It just was what it was. And that was pretty good.

Andrea says

This book has started out really well. It is a quick read and is interesting and provocative and says a lot of what a person might say if totally uncensored and their audience is not going to judge them at all. I'm only a couple of essays in, but I am captivated. If only we could be as candid with our lovers and friends... perhaps the world and the bedroom would be a better place.

This was a great book and an easy read. It was better than a harlequin because it was real women talking about real situations. I could have imagined myself in many of these stories and on top of it all I felt like I was in on the gossip.

Started: 3/23/09

Finished: 3/29/09

335pps

Rona says

I am not much for play-by-play erotica, and this is not that. It's an essay collection of stories about people's sex life. What is refreshing is that many of the stories involve life, as well as sex.

Read the ones that appeal to you. Read at least one that doesn't.

Katherine says

I just started reading this book last night, and I started with Hope Edelman's essay. I LOVED it! I can't wait to read more of the collection.

Emily Jane says

Behind the Bedroom Door is a very interesting, fast-reading collection of stories about the most personal lives of the women who wrote it. The premise, as presented by its editors, is to stand in for the deeply personal conversations many women are too afraid to have, even with their dearest friends. Some of the stories concern lesbianism, some abuse, some rape, some adultery, and some plain and simple love; all are intimate narratives that affirm women's sexuality.

Personally, I love gossip. I love being allowed entry into the secrets of others, especially people I don't know. The scintillating details of another's emotions, the seemy revelations of the forbidden ... being able to experience things I am too afraid to admit I want. Behind the Bedroom Door offers all of this.

I enjoyed this one very much. Again, it goes along very quickly, each essay being between five and ten pages and very well written. Some are even hilariously funny: my fiance insisted I read aloud each time I burst out laughing, and he too laughed. The most rewarding part of reading this book is seeing again how universal many emotions actually are. As the editor points out, the value in this work is being able to compare your own experiences with those of the writers'. The fabulous highs and the desperate lows speak to the reader with the tenor that is only achieved through painful and absolute openness.

I highly recommend this one for all women out there. Just be forewarned: it ain't all pretty.

HeavyReader says

I read this book to review for the Feminist Review blog. Once my review runs on the blog, I will post it here.

“Daring. Provocative. Unflinchingly honest,” the book jacket proclaims of this anthology subtitled “getting it, giving it, loving it, missing it. “It” is sex, and *Behind the Bedroom Door* is a collection of essay about sex from twenty-six contemporary women writers.

Don’t be confused. While some of these essays are sexy, this writing is neither erotic nor academic. These are personal essays covering points across the adult female life cycle, the thoughts and feelings of individual women about their individual sex lives.

In “The Sweetest Sex I Never Had,” Hope Edelman recalls her first sexual experiences as a teenager. “If you define sex as an act of penetration, we weren’t having it, but that feels beside the point,” she writes of the hours she and her boyfriend spent giving each other pleasure. Sadly, some teenage sexual encounters are actually sexual assaults which cause repercussions well into the adult years, as attested to by Stephanie Dolgoff in “Kiss Poker” and Anna Marrian in “Under the Influence.”

We know that pregnancy and childbirth are not only the biological culminations of sex, but also two factors that change the way a woman and her partner(s) interact sexually. In “Pregnant Pause,” Pari Chang tells how her husband stopped relating to her sexually during her pregnancy, while in “Sex with a (Much) Younger Man” Elizabeth Cohen confesses that she was the one who halted sexual intimacy with her husband while pregnant with their child. Brett Paesel shares her experiences of trying to get pregnant and how that affected her sex life in “Procreational Sex.” She says, “...sex, always so easy throughout our relationship, became a thing to be calculated, negotiated, withheld.” Both Susanne Paola (“Toys in the Bedroom”) and Lori Gottlieb

(“Mommy Lust”) divulge secrets of sex once there are kids in the house.

I especially enjoyed the essays steeped in humor. With “Ouch, You’re Lying on My Hair!” Valerie Frankel deals specifically with the comedy of sex. “Looking for Mr. Snickers” is Jenny Lee’s funny retelling of how, after she leaves her husband, she decides “sex is a commitment, even if it’s only for a night.” Although discussing the serious issues of what arouses her and what leave her cold, Bella Pollen keeps the tone of “Turn Me On, Turn Me Off” light and humorous.

The essays in this book are definitely hetero-normative. Twenty-four of the authors write about having sex with men. In “Look Both Ways Before Crossing,” Meredith Maran writes about having sex with men and women (although the word “bisexual” is conspicuously absent). Thankfully, Ali Liebegott does nothing to hide her queerness in her piece “In the Beginning,” a consideration of the early, heady days of a new love affair “pretty in all its potential”.

On the surface it may seem that sex is the theme tying together the stories in this volume. However, these essays truly deal with women learning about themselves through sex. The writers in this anthology don’t just write about the sex they’ve had; they use that sex as a prism through which to examine themselves, their hopes, their needs, their desires. Instead of using this collection simply as entertainment, readers would do well to use these stories as a catalyst for learning about themselves through studying the role sex plays in their own lives.

Erin says

Just fantastic--I loved pretty much every essay, even the ones that were a little off the wall. The thing about sex is that everyone thinks about it in some way at some point (that's why I love the book's subheading), but rarely do we talk about it honestly. Even in our current "anything goes" society, we're act like 13-year old boys, giggling and tittering and shocked if the subject comes up. I mean, come on--Jersey Shore has a "smush room." This is not how adults (especially adult women) should be talking about sex.

Derrow's collection of essays by female writers was absolutely terrific: thought-provoking, funny, embarrassing, silly, honest, sad, but most of all, courageous. Reading it, I thought of which of my own ridiculous stories I would add to the mix, because everyone has at least one story of some partner or act of intimacy that helped define them. I may not have related to all those women's stories of sex after children, or a married woman's longing for her female friend, or a woman having an unsatisfying affair, but I related to the fact that I had my own stories that were just as ridiculous, or sweet, tender, painful, cringe-worthy, transcendent, or downright awful (and thankfully not too many of those), and I was just as normal as anyone else. Often we think of our experiences, especially as we get older and are not yet with one person, as "baggage," but really, they're just...life. And each new person just allows us the chance of a new experience, different than the one before.

Emily says

I grabbed this on a whim while looking for something else entirely. I really liked the idea of a collection of

essays all written by women about sex. And then I found out that it worked for a prompt in a reading challenge I'm doing, so it was a win-win for me.

All in all I found it to be.... pleasant, I guess. I'm not disappointed but I did find some of essays to be better than the others. Although that is to be expected. I found some to be funnier or more relatable or just plain better written. I think of the 24 essays only about 3 still stand out in my mind, the rest were forgettable. Maybe that's just me. The collection wasn't bad, it just left me wanting more.

Jessica says

This collection of essays by women writers takes a highly personal look at numerous aspects of sexuality -- first experiences, married sex, pregnant sex, wanting more sex, not wanting sex, worrying about whether you want the right amount of sex, one-night stands, new relationships, old relationship, young sex, old sex, sex with women, sex with men, sex across various demographic divides. The writers express themselves openly, often movingly and often with a great deal of humor. While never gratuitously graphic, the essays are honest and sometimes explicit, as these women explore the very question of how they find comfort around the subject of expressing themselves sexually.

Francesca Escamilla says

Sexual memoirs

This has to be one of the most real and vulnerable things I have ever read. It was interesting to hear things from other women's point of views. Most women embellish the truth or just plain don't give it. Personally I loved this collection for its honesty.

Paula says

I like it--because I edited it. But it's a great, unexpected, sneak peek at what really goes on in the bedrooms of women today.

Marjorie Ingall says

Paula Derrow is a superb editor. The essays in Behind the Bedroom Door are a terrific mix of funny, gasp-inducing, infuriating, heartrending. And yes, shockingly honest. Some of them essays talk about stuff we just don't talk about. I wanted to bitchslap some of the contributors and go out for coffee with others -- but I had strong reactions to almost everything in the collection, which is rare for me. Nothing was pretentious, boring or fake-hot.

I think my faves were Hope Edelman on how her romantic life was budding as her mother was dying (lyrical, nuanced) and Deanna Kizis on hate-pounding (did I just coin that term?) a jerk with a strap-on (uproarious). two pieces that couldn't be more different, right? And this is why this book is worth your time.

Deborah Sowery-Quinn says

Interesting, tho graphic, essays from various women on their experiences with sex & love. Some funny, some touching.

Gabby says

My friend Paula wrote/edited these books and I love the first chapter so far...not a smut book but very REAL. Highly recommended!

Elevate Difference says

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Review by Chantel C. Guidry
