

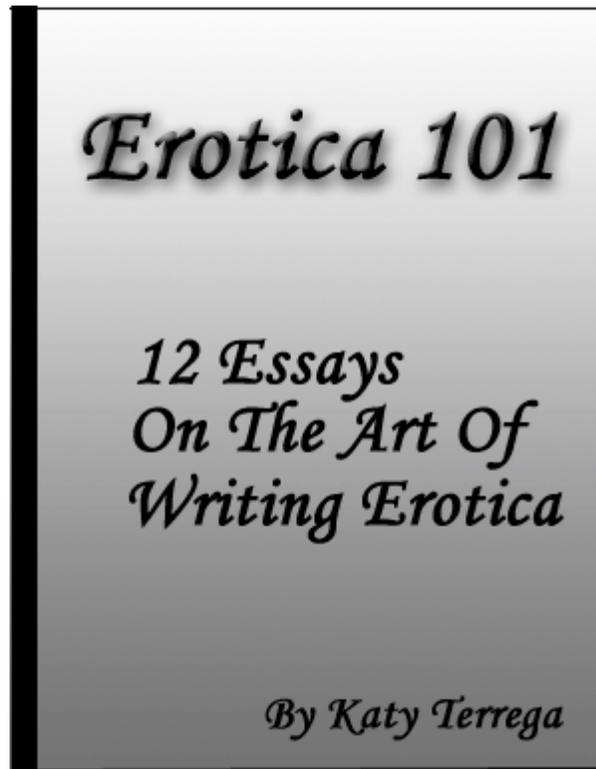
24 Essays On The Art Of Writing Erotica.

Erotica 101 and Erotica 102

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Erotica 101: 12 Essays On The Art Of Writing Porn And Erotica



By Katy Terrega

Published 2000-2003

Published by KT Enterprises, PO Box 441699, Aurora CO 80044-1699, U.S.A.

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Preface

After many years as a full-time professional writer in the porn/erotica genre, I like to think I've learned a few things, most all of them the hard way. So, when the opportunity came to write a bi-weekly column for AbsoluteWrite, I jumped at the chance to share my thoughts, feelings and insights.

Not only was it an opportunity to chatter on endlessly about how to find success at my chosen profession, it also sounded like a whole lot of fun. After all, if writing about sex is a hoot, writing about writing about sex is certainly the next best thing.

Not that it's always been easy.

My column, which is due on Sunday morning, is most often conceived, written and edited sometime late Sunday afternoon. That obviously leaves me precious little time to scour my deadline addled brain in search of new ideas. But somehow the words always come, and I've found that writing this column has been one of the most challenging and rewarding (and yes, fun) things I do as a writer.

I'm hoping that you'll find the reading of said columns just as rewarding, and I hope you'll be able to glean your own insights into the writing of this contradictory and provocative genre.

Failing that, I hope you just have fun. After all, reading about writing about writing about sex ranks pretty high up there on that list of fun things to do, too...

About The Author

Katy writes porn and erotica full-time from the relative comfort of her suburban living room. Her credits include Score, Swank, Gallery, Penthouse Variations, Genesis, Hustler, Writer's Digest and many more. She is the author of *It's A Dirty Job... Writing Porn For Fun And Profit* (Deep South Publishing) – <http://www.katyterrega.com/dirtyjob.html> - and she runs two sites for sex writers; Sex-Writer.com (<http://www.sex-writer.com>) and Katy Terrega's Resources For Writers Of Porn And Erotica (<http://www.katyterrega.com/newsletter.html>.) In between (as well as during) writing assignments and web-mastering duties she communes with, fusses over, occasionally fights with and often hugs her husband and her two children.

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So, You Want To Be A Porn Writer?

So, you want to be a porn writer? Great, you've come to the right place!

In this new column for AbsoluteWrite I'm going to tackle the many issues that relate to the writing of porn/erotica. But first, let me ease your mind a little.

Please, don't be put off by the word "porn." I'm a firm believer that literary erotica and mainstream porn belong in the same sub (basement) genre. That's not to say that they're the same thing, obviously there are huge stylistic (and other, more base) differences between the two. But in the end, smut is smut. While there are different ways to go about it, in the end, writing about sex is what I call porn. Even if what you like to write is of the softer variety, that's okay, we're still all in this together.

So, now that we've gotten that out of the way, I'll admit that I write mostly hard-core, mainstream magazine porn. The kind you'll find in that little back room at the newsstand; the one with the big Must be 18 to enter! sign on the door, the one stocked to bursting with an endless variety of "dirty" magazines. While I've written some (literary and otherwise) erotica, my focus is mainly the raunchy stuff.

Not because I like it more than erotica (although I do) but because it gets my work out in national print formats and usually pays better. That, for me, is the bottom line. I write full time from home and hey, I need to pay the bills. My goal, like yours, maybe, has always been to make a living doing what I love, which is writing. If I can hone my skills (and fantasies) on the bigger markets while also working on more experimental (and often free) literary markets, more the better.

In this fledgling bi-weekly column, I'll try to give both sides of the smut coin equal space. While my personal focus is more on the big hard-core print markets, I'll be sure to include info about all the fantastic erotic 'zines, mags and sites out there, also.

I'll be covering the basics; what it takes to be a porn writer, how to go about targeting your markets, how to write stories, letters and articles, how to submit and query, where to get ideas, as well as the peripheral aspects: how to deal with

the sometimes contradictory and degrading aspects of the genre and, oh yeah, what to tell the kids.

If you've got a particular area that you'd like to see covered, whether it's "Manuscript Basics" or "How to Deal With Porn Editors", please feel free to email me, I'll be happy to tackle it. Ditto for those questions that you could never ask your mother, like, "What the heck is *leg sex*?" If you know of a great market or site that deserves mention, let me know; while I 'm not going to be advertising here, I'm always happy to pass along info to other writers.

I'd like to make this as interactive a forum as possible, mainly so that I can give you the kinds of information you're looking for. So, please, contact me with your comments, suggestions, questions, etc. And, now that we've been introduced, I'll plan to start on the real nitty gritty of porn writing in my next column, two weeks from now. I look forward to seeing you then!

Creating Characters With Personality

So just what is it that makes a saleable porn or erotica story?

Is it proper targeting of markets? Tight writing? Hot sex scenes?

Well, yes, it's all of the above. But even all that won't necessarily get you published in the mainstream mags, because anybody, with a little bit of practice, can do those things. I'm a firm believer that anyone with even a little bit of smarts and a whole lot of drive can do their homework, learn how to write carefully crafted prose and put together stories brimming with steamy sex. But even a writer who has managed to do that may still have difficulty getting published.

Because, while editors (and readers) are obviously looking for excellent quality in the stories they publish (and read), in the end, what they're really looking for are stories with personality.

Note that I didn't say that editors want exotic locales or sci-fi plots or outrageous never-before-been-done-or-written-about sex acts (although very occasionally they do.) They often want just the opposite, everyday settings and situations that just happen to be exceedingly sexual. This means that you absolutely can write and sell a story that features two married lovers and their fairly ordinary sex life. The trick is to give them (and your story) personality.

I see so many stories that describe, by rote, the fantastic sex that two or more characters are having. And, while the writing might be adequate or even good, I often can't get involved in these people's lives. Not because I don't want to (because I - and every other reader of porn - definitely want to), but because the author won't let me.

Who are these people? Why are they here in this situation? What makes them unique individuals? What reasons do they have for wanting to have sex with these other people?

Readers really do want to believe (even when they know better) that the situations they read about could actually happen. They want to imagine that

these characters could be their next door neighbor, boss or telephone repair person. That's why they're reading the stuff; it may be escapist fantasy but it's their fantasy. And the only way to give your reader (and editor) what he wants is to make your characters real.

In my book, I use the oft used Laundromat scenario as an example:

Two characters meet in a Laundromat and have sex. But which two characters?

Is it the recently divorced thirty-something; a kind of burned-out but basically nice guy, who meets a cute but insecure-about-her-looks young thing who knows everything about laundry but nothing about sex? And is the story told from her POV, all innocence and eagerness, or is it told in his, more pragmatic, tone?

Or maybe it's those two married lovers again, finding new and inventive ways to spice up their sex life. Perhaps he tells the story of how he ambushes his wife at the washing machine, pretending to be an insistent stranger, and how she at first resists his advances but eventually is won over. Or maybe she's the aggressor, sweet talking her uptight, not-into-public-displays-of-affection husband into doing it right there amongst the folded clothes.

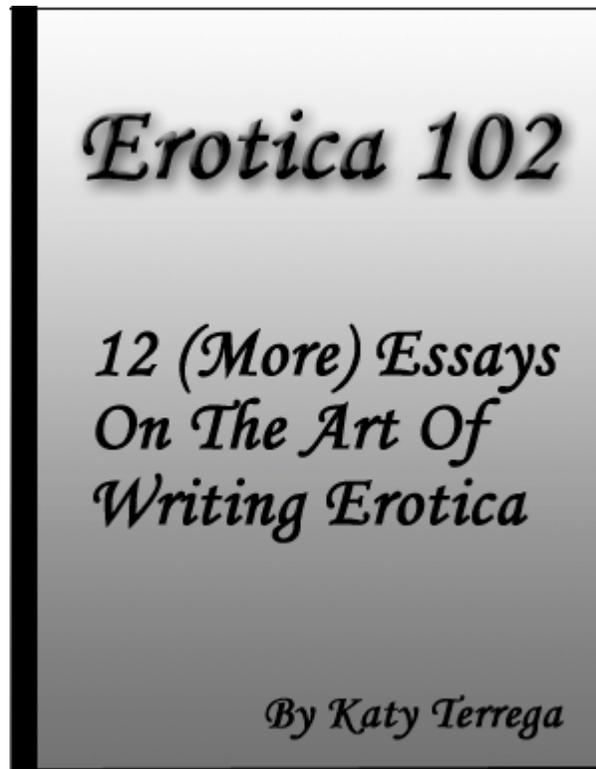
In either case (or hundreds of others) it's the characters who make the story. It's their lives, desires and quirks that make the story interesting.

That doesn't mean that you can just set up your characters with a few brief sentences and expect to be done with them. They have to talk, think, act and react like the unique individuals that they are, and they need to do it all the way through the story. From the moment they meet, the shy young woman needs to act the part; perhaps it's her Valley Girl speech or her simple cotton dress or her way of nervously brushing the hair off her face.

They also need to feel. Give your characters the emotions that they would quite likely be having in such a situation. The aggressive wife might be feeling powerful and in control while her recalcitrant husband may feel at first annoyed, then aroused, then more and more out of control (in a wild but ultimately satisfying way, of course) as his wife manipulates him into letting go in ways he's never considered before.

In the end you'll find that even the most "boring" of setups (the Laundromat) can be made interesting (and saleable) with the addition of multi-dimensional characters. You don't have to create bizarre plot twists or try to come up with the newest in sexual acrobatics to create a story that your reader will remember. Just give your characters some personality, let them have their way, then sit back and watch what happens!

Erotica 102: **12 (More) Essays On The Art Of Writing Porn And Erotica**



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Preface

There is something immensely satisfying about writing a regular column. It's a challenge to come up with new ways to explain and define the art of porn writing, as well as to describe the equally important art of *selling* said writing. A sometimes frustrating, but always enlightening, challenge.

Forcing myself to really think about what works and doesn't in this often bizarre world of porn, and then working through those thoughts in order to make them accessible to others, has been a tremendous educational experience. It's amazing how much I've learned about my own writing - what I do, how I do it and, perhaps even more importantly, how I can improve it - just by explaining the process to others. Thanks to Jenna Glatzer for the opportunity.

But don't get me wrong, writing these essays hasn't been *all* hard work. Oh sure, I sweat and toil and tear my hair out as I wrestle each and every one of them into submission, but I also have more fun than should be allowed.

Hopefully I've managed to amuse and enlighten a few others along the way, whether by positive example, or, more often the case, as a glaring illustration of what *not* to do. Either way, in this, my second collection of essays culled from Absolute Write's *Porn 101*, I hope you find all the inspiration and guidance you need to forge a career writing in this strange and wondrous genre of smut.

Good luck with your writing!

About The Author

Katy writes porn and erotica full-time from the relative comfort of her suburban living room. Her credits include Score, Swank, Gallery, Penthouse Variations, Genesis, Hustler, Writer's Digest and many more. She is the author of *It's A Dirty Job... Writing Porn For Fun And Profit* (Deep South Publishing) – <http://www.katyperrega.com/dirtyjob.html> - and she runs two sites for sex writers; Sex-Writer.com (<http://www.sex-writer.com>) and Katy Terrega's Resources For Writers Of Porn And Erotica (<http://www.katyperrega.com/newsletter.html>.) In between (as well as during) writing assignments and web-mastering duties she communes with, fusses over, occasionally fights with and often hugs her husband and her two children.

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Adding Sensory Detail

A porn story can be (and often is) just about two or more people having sex. God knows there are plenty of variations on that theme, and lots of magazines that will buy pieces that feature sex and only sex.

But if you want to branch out into the higher paying (or more literary) markets, you'll need to add a little more substance to your story. Your piece has got to stand out from the rest; it needs that extra something that will help it linger in the editor's memory. One great way to do this is to give your story a theme, some recurring detail or story line (apart from the sex) that weaves it's way through the entire piece. My favorite way to "theme" my stories is to add sensory detail.

In addition to giving your story more *oomph*, the details you add can also give your characters something else to do and think about. Instead of just having sex with that handsome gardener who mows her lawn, your heroine can first sip her ice-cold lemonade as the beads of sweat build up on the hard working stud. As a segue into the sex part, she can offer him a much-appreciated glass of the cool liquid and when they finally kiss, their lips can be cold and taste tantalizingly sweet/sour. After their tryst has ended, they can relax with their now warm and watered down glasses of lemonade.

The more details you can add (without being too wordy - you don't want to detract from the sex, of course) the better. Make the day brutally hot, the sun exceptionally bright, the glasses sweaty with condensation. Describe the texture and taste of the lemonade and the way it feels going down their throats. Use it's chill as an erotic contrast to the heat of the day (and the rising heat of their desire.)

Adding all this sensory detail is a prerequisite when writing for niche/fetish markets. When you write a story for the leg sex genre, for example, you need to totally infuse your piece with legs, feet and all the related accoutrements. In the same way, when you spice up an ordinary story you need to completely infuse it with elements of your chosen theme.

My favorite theme - in case you hadn't noticed already - is heat, as in sun and sweat and greasy suntan oil. I play with words that describe sweat dripping off of (and onto) various body parts. I incorporate the heat of the sun into the heat of the participant's passion. And I use that suntan oil to my advantage, from it's scent and texture to it's convenient lubrication properties.

Another good theme is water. Pools, beaches, hot tubs, mineral springs, rain; all can be used to add detail to your piece. Your characters can have sex in the water and you can describe how it feels caressing their bodies. The warm rain that pelts their bodies as they do it outside can figure prominently in your piece, from the first few, almost searing droplets to the cascade of water that envelopes them as they climax.

While "touch" usually gets the best workout in a porn story, the other four senses can be equally used and abused. Play with them. Some writers use food to their advantage, mingling tastes into the sexual experience. An obvious (but still effective) scenario is to have your characters licking various tasty substances off of each others body. Less obvious is to set your story in some exotic locale and have the scents of the local foods and herbs play into your theme.

Visual details can work, too, such as the breathtaking vistas for the couple hiking up a mountain. And the pulsating beat of the music at a dance club can invade your character's body as well as her ears, moving her to a spontaneous and public display of self love.

I've been known to just pick a theme or sensory detail and write my story around it, creating the characters, setting and plot as I go. Other times I've been bored with a finished story and decided to expound on a minor theme, fleshing it out until it figures as a more prominent part of the piece. Still other times, an editor has suggested a theme, for a summer issue perhaps, or maybe a specific holiday issue (think hot toddys and flickering fires and bear skin rugs.)

Have fun with your themes, play with senses and scenarios that tickle your fancy. Intrigue yourself first, and you'll likely intrigue your editors, too. In the world of porn, as in most other writing genres, that's the first step to more sales.

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