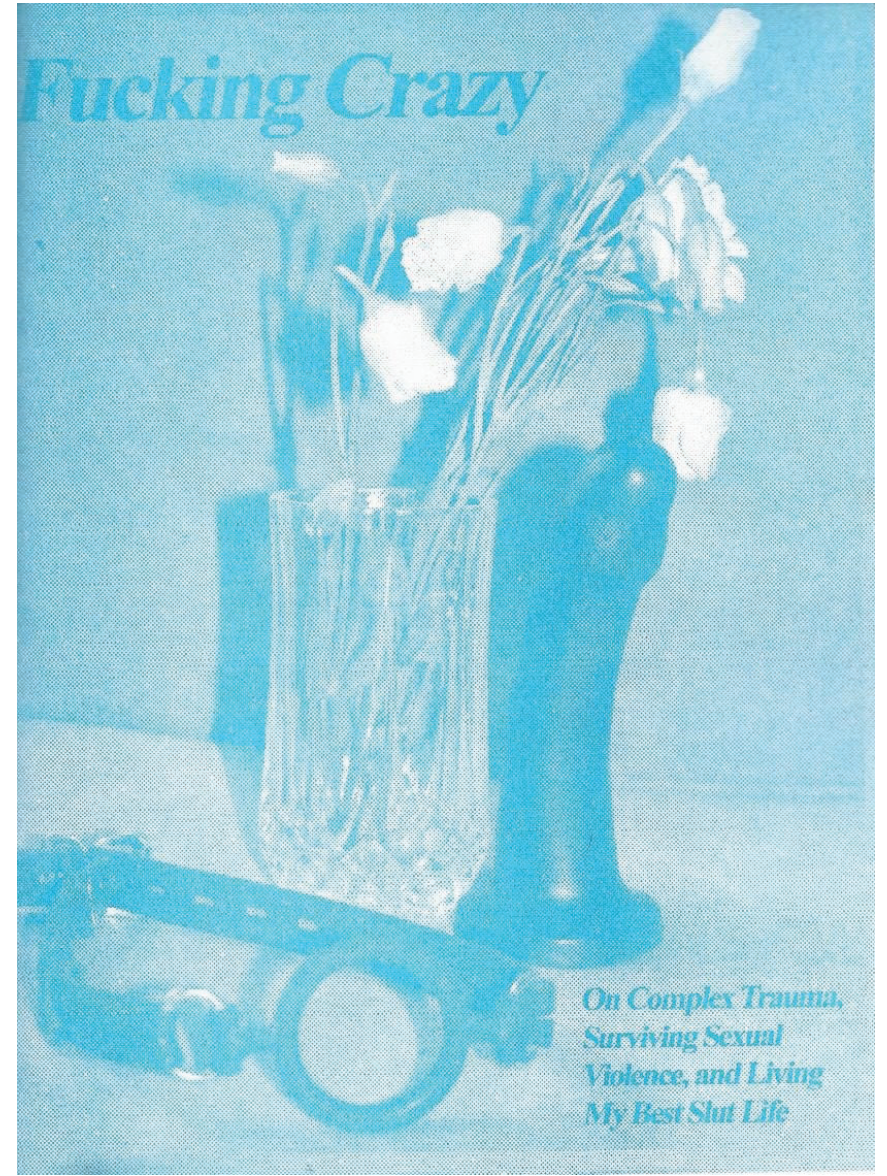


Fucking Crazy



*On Complex Trauma,
Surviving Sexual
Violence, and Living
My Best Slut Life*

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Clementine Morrigan

Content Warning

This writing includes detailed descriptions of sex and bdsm, discussion of trauma, mentions of childhood sexual abuse and incest, mentions of self injury, alcoholism, and suicide.

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About the Writer

Clementine Morrigan is a writer, poet, rebel scholar, teacher, and working witch. She writes the zine *Fucking Magic*. They are the author of three books: *You Can't Own the Fucking Stars* (2018), *The Size of a Bird* (2017), and *Rupture* (2012). Her writing has appeared in *GUTS Magazine*, *Shameless Magazine*, *Prose & Lore*, *Soliloquies*, *Somatechnics*, *The Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, and *Knots*. They design and facilitate workshops on a number of topics, including the popular workshop *Trauma Informed Polyamory*. She provides trauma informed, queer and trans affirming tarot reading services under the name *ReEnchantment Tarot*. They are the creator of two short films, *City Witch* (2016) and *Resurrection* (2013). She writes, creates, teaches, and works magic engaging with trauma, sexuality, desire, love, healing, and relationships. All of their work aims to obliterate shame, cultivate compassion, and encourage enchantment. She is a white settler of Irish, Scottish, and English ancestry living in Tiohtià:ke/Montréal. They are a sober alcoholic and a practitioner of trauma magic. To stay in touch visit clementinemorrigan.com, become a patron at patreon.com/clementinemorrigan, or follow her on instagram [@clementinemorrigan](https://www.instagram.com/clementinemorrigan).

Acknowledgements

The first four essays were initially published with *GUTS Magazine*.

The final, and title, essay was written for and presented at the Sick Theories conference in Toronto in 2018.

Thank you to all the lovers I've written about here who have contributed to my sexual healing and growth.

Thank you to benni for collaborating with me on the cover design. Love u.

Fuck Me Up: Submission as Trauma Magic

From a young age I had sexual fantasies that revolved around power. I got off on the idea of being totally overwhelmed by and surrendering to another person's desire. They weren't rape fantasies exactly but they were close enough to scare me. As a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, sexuality was already terrifying terrain filled with shame. The idea that I might get off on something that even resembled violence made me feel deeply fucked up. As a teenager I devoured anything I could find about recovering from childhood sexual abuse. I remember reading a passage that said it was common for survivors to eroticize the violence that happened to us, and that we could find ways to heal from this. The text suggested imagining lying under a waterfall and becoming turned on by the waters' caress. Then and now, waterfalls don't get me off. But something else did, something scary that as a survivor, and as a feminist, I believed I definitely shouldn't be into.

As I grew older I learned about BDSM and I definitely considered that I was a submissive. But as I was swept away in the blur of c-ptsd and alcoholism, reliving my traumatic childhood in one abusive relationship after another, I didn't have the opportunity to explore BDSM in a safe context. Instead, I became someone who liked 'rough' sex and who let my partners do things to me that weren't exactly negotiated. Once I got sober and started intense trauma recovery work it was easy to dismiss my submissive drives as the dysfunctional result of a lifetime of trauma. I decided to reject that aspect of myself and embrace being vanilla. Something which, I must assert, is totally legit. There is no hierarchy of liberated sex and honestly, claiming vanilla sex is a profoundly powerful

act in queer ‘sex positive’ spaces that can reverse mainstream hierarchies and act as if kink is inherently more subversive or liberating. It’s not.

I finally found myself, in my early 30s, in a safe secure relationship with someone who is into kink. From the beginning, my partner modelled consent practices that I had never known in all my sexually active years. The first time we had sex they asked me things like “What are you into?” and “Do you have any hard no’s?” These questions, I now realize, are an important part of establishing consent and having hot sex, whether the sex is vanilla or kink, but at the time it was all new to me. I felt safe and considered. I felt like I had a say in what was happening. Initially I told my partner that I’m vanilla, but I was open to exploring. The flicker of old desires was alive just under the surface and I was finally in a situation in which I could explore them in a safe way.

I am incredibly blessed to have a partner who is patient, considerate, kind, and experienced in both good consent practices and good BDSM practices. It’s disturbing that I describe this experience as being ‘incredibly blessed’ because consideration and good consent should be standard. My life experiences show that they are not standard, and I am grateful to be in a relationship where I can explore my sexuality, including my submissive desires, in a safe, chosen, consensual way. We have long conversations about sex when we are not having sex. We share our fantasies with each other over facebook messenger, differentiating between what might be hot to do ‘irl’ and what we want to keep in ‘fantasy land.’ My ‘no’ is always welcomed and encouraged. My partner also always plays close attention to my body language and checks in with me. Unlike the abusive relationships of my past, in this relationship I am encouraged and expected to be my own complete

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feel anything when someone went down on me. I think about how the focus on my own pleasure was repulsive to me. Now my friend moves between my legs, prepared with knowledge of my specific tastes, knowledge that I was able to communicate to them directly. Here in this moment, I am happy, I am at peace. The sex unfolds between the three of us, it builds in its own rhythms and momentum. I am being smacked and fucked, held and kissed all at once. I am in a tangle of limbs, I watch the face of our friend as they watch me flying through sub space, there is tenderness and fascination on their face, like they are beholding something both sweet and sacred. They kiss me between my cries as I move through pain and pleasure, they hold me their arms while my partner fucks me, smacking me repeatedly. I rub my own clit in frantic circles, cumming.

person, with desires and interests, sexual and otherwise, which extend beyond the scope of our partnership.

It is in this context that I connected with my deep deep submissive desires and pleasures which feel so viscerally good and right that I can't believe I went thirty years without them. It is in this context that I finally stopped shaming myself for being a desperate sub and learned that my submission is a form of trauma magic, a space in which I work through trauma and heal on deep psychological and spiritual levels. It is in this context that I learned that my submission, freely chosen, deeply desired, and carried out in controlled, safe, consensual ways, is a feminist act. My body belongs to me. My pleasure is inherently good. Kink is a space in which I can explore power and powerlessness, themes which were imposed on me my entire life, in a safe and empowering way.

Once my partner and I were sexting and an aspect of the fantasy they were relaying triggered me. It opened up an area of great pain. I told them that and we talked about it. My partner accepted my trigger and we found ways to explore the fantasy without that aspect. My 'no' was listened to. Later, when I was getting myself off, I found my mind wandering to the aspect of the fantasy that I found triggering. To my surprise I felt a flood of pleasure unlike anything I had experienced before. I made myself cum over and over, thinking about this thing which I usually find very upsetting. At first, I was freaked out by this. I wondered if I was broken, if this was some fucked up trauma response. But I talked to some other trauma survivor submissives I know and they assured me that it is not uncommon to eroticize our triggers, that there's nothing wrong with it if it genuinely feels good, and that the process can in fact be transformative.

After much careful discussion with my partner, and much assurance on their part that I absolutely could leave this fantasy in ‘fantasy land,’ I asked them to carry it out with me. We did and this opened up an entirely new, deep, and incredibly fulfilling aspect of our D/s dynamic, and our partnership. This strangely paradoxical experience taught me some important things. First, that being allowed to say no creates the conditions in which we can truly say yes. Second, that no sexual desire is inherently bad, traumatic, or degrading, what is bad, traumatic, and degrading is when things are done to us without our desire and consent. Third, that eroticizing (some of) the things that really upset and trigger me can be incredibly liberating and transformative. The entire charge of the trigger is transformed into a profound pleasure. Not only do I experience this as hot as fuck, but it is trauma magic in action. I am healing deeply by changing my relationship to my trauma, in a way that is explicitly chosen and desired by me.

I don’t want to lie naked under a waterfall. I want to be gagged and hooded and left in a closet for long periods of time dripping drool all over myself. Neither scenario is inherently wrong; it all depends on my desire and my consent. Is my desire for submission related to my trauma? In my opinion, yeah probably. Probably my desire to explore power and submission in a consensual erotic context is connected to my history of never having a choice but to experience powerlessness. The difference is that now I do have a choice, and this is what I choose. Rather than framing it as a pathological or traumatic result of being a survivor, I choose to see it as a powerful, hot, incredibly creative way to heal and transform. For me, kink is a practice of trauma magic.

It is possible to love my traumatized bodymind, this particular specific life marked by so much suffering, to move toward as much healing as is possible for me, and to grieve and rage and thrash against the limits of my capacity to endure this unbearable pain. While compulsive sexuality was an anesthetic, an attempt to repress or outrun unbearable pain, conscious sexuality is a space of healing and integration, an intentional reckoning with embodied experience. Conscious sexuality is a space in which I explore the edges and contours of pleasure and pain, the way these can bleed into each other, in which I express my frustration and my desire, my numbness and my wetness, my commitment to healing and my grief at what has been taken from me. Conscious sexuality is a space in which there is intentional communication about this process, in which there is language and time for processing and unpacking, in which my body and its visceral experiences are given centre stage. I have spent years trying to suppress the messages issuing from my traumatized bodymind. Now through various practices including therapy, mindfulness, witchcraft, magic, embodied writing, and conscious sexuality, I invite my body back. I give open space for the sensations, both of pleasure and of pain, and I find language to communicate my desires, my boundaries, and my needs. This is trauma magic, a process of reclaiming what was taken from me.

Why don’t you go down on Clementine? *my partner says to our friend. They are happy to oblige this request.* Clementine likes slow circles on their clit and – *Our friend cuts my partner off,* I know, I’ve done my research. *We all laugh at this. I think about this moment, in which the specificity of my desire is important information, information that we are all so happy to communicate about, information that we hold as valuable and necessary. I think about how I hated receiving head for years and years, how I was so dissociated from my body and unable to*

depths propel me towards behaviours that I have long since left behind: self-injury, suicide. Price's statement that unbearable pain is "the sort of pain that impels one to self-injure or to consider or attempt suicide" feels like a massive validation. Up until that statement I assumed that the type of unbearable pain Price was writing about was physical pain, not emotional pain. Despite knowing better, it is still easy for me to dismiss emotional pain as less real and less painful than physical pain. The assertion that it is "all in my head" and therefore something that I should be able to overcome by the power of will is hard to shake. Succumbing to emotional pain is often framed as a sign of weakness, because really, it can't be *that bad*. Bessel van der Kolk and many others have pointed out that the binary between physical and emotional pain is a false one, and that the pain which traumatized people endure actually manifests as visceral pain in the body. This pain is often *unbearable*, driving survivors toward drugs, alcohol, sex, self injury, suicide, anything to lift the burden of the unbearable pain.

I am also struck by Price's recognition of the seeming incompatibility between unbearable pain and desire, how difficult it is to hold, simultaneously, the depth of unbearable pain and how badly we want to not feel it, with a desire for the lives and bodies that we do have, the specificity of disabled embodiment, the pleasures and knowledges made possible by our intimacy with unbearable pain. How do we reconcile these? In one way, I think they are irreconcilable and that it is okay to admit that. The anguish and frustration I express to my therapist when I lament *I can't do this anymore, I can't, I can't, it's too hard*, will not be erased no matter how many moments of healing, integration, transformation, pleasure, or joy I experience. The unbearable and the transformative continue to live side by side in my body and in my life.

Sexting As Access: How Sexting Helped Me Have Better Sex

I live with Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (C-PTSD) and I'm a survivor of many experiences of sexual violence. This impacts my sex life in a number of ways. One big issue is that I have a tendency to go non-verbal during sex, especially with new partners. I have a hard time saying what I like and don't like, asking for things and stopping things verbally during sex. This means that I need to do a lot of communication work before sex is happening, so that my partners know my desires and limits and nonverbal cues.

This wouldn't be too much of a barrier, except that my C-PTSD also makes me feel a lot of shame about my desires. It feels very risky and scary to state them out loud, even when sex isn't currently happening. I'm afraid of being humiliated. I'm afraid that my desires are the "wrong ones". I'm afraid of being a creep for having sexual desires, even though I know I work very hard to practice good consent and that I am extremely cautious. I am afraid of saying out loud what I want—even thinking about it causes my stress response to become activated. Good sex requires good communication. So, how can I possibly have good sex?

When I first started dating my partner, we were living in different cities. We had sex the first time we hung out and then I got on a bus and went back to my city, seven hours away. The next month, before seeing each other in person again, we blew up each other's phones. Sexting took on an important role in our relationship because we weren't able to have sex irl most of the time. We sent nudes. We talked about the sex we had

and the sex we wanted to have. We talked about our desires and our fantasies. We wrote out imagined x-rated scenarios, some which we actually wanted to do and some which were just hot to think about.

This wasn't easy for me at first. Sometimes I would write out a message and be like omfg I can't send that! But I found that the courage it took to just lift my finger and hit send was a lot less than it took to articulate these feelings out loud in front of a person in real time. The stakes were lower. I knew that if I received a response that was difficult to deal with I wouldn't have to process my feelings in front of the person. They wouldn't see me squirming with discomfort and fear as I articulated what I think is hot. I had more control over the presentation of my desires and fantasies, and more space to handle all the emotions the process brought up for me.

For the first time in my life I was describing my desires and fantasies in graphic detail, I was learning about the nuances of good consent, I was giving voice to my sexuality in a way that normally terrified me, and it was really fucking hot. The process wasn't hard and stressful. It was scary and intense sometimes, but doing it over text rather than in person dialed the stress way down and let it be sexy and fun. I found myself saying things I couldn't believe I was saying to this incredibly hot person on the other side of the screen. We were getting off together and we were learning about each other. No surprise, when I moved and we started having regular irl sex, it was amazing.

We are nonmonogamous and I often talk to my partner about my struggles with dating and sex with other people. I tell them about how hard it can be for me to ask for what I want, to express my desires and communicate my needs. I tell them about how I frequently end up

presence, joy. I often say that it is a miracle I am alive, given what my life has been. Even more so it is a miracle that I can feel what I feel, that I live a life abundant with love and sex and desire, that I am able to turn toward my body, that the sensations which rise up from me now are not only terror and pain. And yet I can't and don't want to erase the reality of my ongoing experience of pain. I don't want to replace pain with pleasure or to proclaim that I am "all better now." Just the other day my therapist asked me if I am feeling suicidal. I glared at her and snapped *No I'm not feeling suicidal*. She sensed my hostility and asked me about it. *I take that question as a threat* I told her. She looked confused. *It's a threat of incarceration* I told her and as a psychiatric survivor I say that from a place of intimate knowledge. Suicidal ideation remains a topic I cannot discuss for fear of my freedom being taken from me, it remains an experience pushed to the margins, shamed and taboo, punished with further violence. The extent of my ongoing pain is difficult to talk about in general, it is hard to create space in a narrative of recovery for the reality that complex PTSD is a permanent disability. I will never be someone who has not been severely traumatized. I will never have a brain like someone who grew up in an environment of safety. And while I do hope for more recovery than I have now, I also know that healing will always be work that I must do.

While discussing the move toward desiring disability within disability studies, Margaret Price writes "the larger DS [disability studies] turn toward desire seems unsure of what to do with pain. In particular, it seems unsure of what to do with what I would call *unbearable pain*—that is, the sort of pain that impels one to self-injure or to consider or attempt suicide." I feel resonance with the word *unbearable*, and I am reminded how many times in the last few months I have described my pain to my therapist as unbearable, intolerable. The way my pain and its

sex? Is monogamy a healthier option for me given my history of compulsive sexuality? After a lifetime of sexual trauma can sex ever be something else, something good, something healing? How do I envision a healing sexuality for myself that does not internalize the narratives of a dominant culture which rewards monogamous heterosexuality and relegates everything else to the margins? Is it possible to be a happy, healing, queer, sober slut, in recovery from sexual trauma?

Tell me about your desires *my partner says to me. This is an invocation, a practice of magic, calling forth from me a torrential flood. It is still hard for me to speak my desire, even after years of therapy, even in the context of love and safety.* I could give you a massage, you could suck my cock, I could fuck you in the ass, I could go down on you, we could lie here and make out, we could snuggle and watch tv, I could tie you up and put you in my closet. *I feel my desire moving through my body as I listen to these possibilities, possibilities my partner offers up because they know they are some of my favourites. I feel the pull and pulse of pleasure, the electric excitement and expansive relaxation of trust and safety. I love the power of knowing that my desires are good, are welcome. I remember the time that my partner said to me I love your desires, they are beautiful and good. Even if you have desires that I don't share, I am glad that you have them, and I want you to fulfill them. These words are magic, they are an antidote to the terror of my sexuality being taken from me, an antidote to the demand that my sexuality always be performed for the pleasures of someone else. I listen to this list with pleasant anticipation, letting desire rise from my body to direct me toward what I want.*

I have come so far. My life traces a trajectory of transformation, an alchemy in which pain and trauma are changed into pleasure and

freezing and having bad sex because I don't know how to communicate. Or, I date people for long periods of time without having sex, because both of us are too afraid to make a move. It ranges from disappointing to traumatizing and I get so frustrated about it. My partner said to me, "Why don't you try sexting? You can tell your dates you need to communicate that way. You're a writer and you feel safe over text. Think of it as an access need!"

Framing sexting as an access need may seem strange, but in my experience it has made a noticeable difference in my ability to have safe, empowering, hot sex as a person living with C-PTSD. Millennials are always getting shit for being attached to our smartphones, and there are definitely downsides to our phone use. At the same time, our phones are tools and we use them in a lot of creative ways. In this case I use my phone as tool to navigate my disability and have better, safer, hotter sex. I can write out my desires, explore fantasy scenarios, ask difficult questions, state boundaries, explain communication styles, take hot nudes, have live real time long distance sex, use excessive emojis to express enthusiasm, take a step back from the convo to process my feelings, and practice skills that are highly valuable for irl sex in a lower stakes scenario.

Even though my partner and I live in the same city and get to fuck each other irl way more these days, we still blow up each other's phones with fantasies and nudes and have hot sex in separate beds in different parts of the city. This practice builds intimacy and it's a lot of fun. I also use this practice to get to know new dates. Sexting can be an access need, it can be a creative way to cope with the effects of trauma, and it can be a super hot and fun addition to sex.

Becoming a Butt Slut: Anal Sex as a Practice of Sexual Mindfulness

I got fucked in the ass for the first time on my 31st birthday.

It wasn't my first time trying. Throughout my twenties I felt pressured to try anal by a number of male partners. I even had men try it without consent. The idea of a whole cock in my ass scared me. I imagined that it would be painful, and the few attempts I made proved that to be true. When guys pressed their cocks against my asshole I felt tense and scared and pressured. I knew that anal sex was desirable for them and I wanted to give the guys I was fucking what they wanted. I wanted to be into anal sex but my body said no.

Eventually I started to let guys put fingers in my ass and I found that it felt good. When I was really turned on I was able to take a small amount of penetration. Rubbing my clit while they fingered my ass was exciting and hot. But as soon as we moved up in size from a finger to a cock, my body couldn't take it. I couldn't relax enough to open myself wide enough for a cock. I decided that I would never be able to.

The base of the rectum has two muscles enclosing it, called sphincters. There's an external sphincter, closer to the opening, and an internal sphincter just beyond that. The external sphincter is a muscle we have control over; we can relax or tighten it intentionally. The internal sphincter is involuntary and controlled by the body rather than the conscious mind. The internal sphincter was where I was running into trouble. A finger is not asking the sphincters to relax very far, a cock is asking them to relax a lot, and I felt tense and stressed out, so my

lungs I want you to keep hitting me please! They count off fifteen people who turn their heads. I get three more sets of fifteen blows and I count them off gratefully.

As a teenager and in the first half of my twenties I ran from pain. Reading about the common trajectory of the lives of incest survivors in *The Body Keeps the Score* I recognize myself immediately: self-injury, suicide attempts, alcoholism, re-victimization, promiscuous sex. I did everything I could to feel something other than the sensations of terror and helplessness, thwarted rage and pervasive shame, death-like depression. These feelings and sensations kept issuing up from the deep recesses of my traumatized bodymind, they were incoherent and urgent, present and real. I did everything I could to outrun them and very often that meant drunken sex with random men who treated me like shit. I remember reaching up to kiss whatever man was currently fucking me only to hear him say *I don't kiss sluts*, unleashing in me the torrent of feelings which I was trying so hard to outrun. Back then the sex was like the drinking. I knew it was hurting me. I knew I didn't have control over it. I knew that I often felt humiliated and violated, that I was often in danger. I also knew that these things saved me, they were necessary. I hunted for sex like my life depended on it and in many ways it did.

After the end of an abusive relationship in which I was repeatedly told that no one else would ever love me because I'm such a disgusting fucking slut, I finally managed to find non-psychiatric therapy that didn't terrify me. I finally started to get the help that I needed to face the unrelenting flood of pain. I got sober and I began a long process of recovery that continues today. In sobriety I was faced with the question of my sexuality. What could healthy sexuality look like for someone like me? Would I ever be present and non-dissociative enough to enjoy sober

am easing into the safety of the beautiful life I have today, the relationships which nurture and sustain me. Now, from this place, I want to write about sex.

She ties my wrists with her belt and leans me over the bench. She instructs her service submissive to hold my hair and my wrists. She shows me the hand signals. This is green, this is yellow, this is orange, this is red. You can remember that right? I nod my head eagerly, obediently. The other two submissives are in training to become Doms, they take turns hitting me with various implements, under the instruction of the head Dom. Try this one, hit her with that, keep it in the centre of her butt cheek. I listen to them talk amongst themselves about the different ways they can hurt me as pain explodes through my body, sharp and brilliant. My hands are changing shapes: green, green, green, yellow. She's at yellow! The service sub announces. She's at yellow, okay go easy on her. I feel hands all over me massaging my red skin, bruises blooming. They are hitting me again and I am crying out. Oh I like that sound, make her make that sound again. I am deep in sub space, watching flashes of powerful femmes move in and out of my view, feeling the weight of my body against the bench as I yield to the pain they give me. How does it feel? I open my mouth but all that comes out are incoherent sounds. She laughs at this, Come on, I thought you were a writer. Tell me how it feels. Desperate to be good I manage to yell It hurts, it feels like pain, burning pain! That's all I can say and they all laugh, pleased with my answer. The scene is almost over and I am given my final instructions. You want us to hit you some more before we stop? I nod my head eagerly. You need to ask for it, as loud as you can, and the number of people who turn to look, that's how many times more we'll each hit you. Desperate for the pain they're giving me and so deep in sub space I don't care what anyone thinks, I yell at the top of my

internal sphincter would not relax, no matter how much I consciously willed it to do so.

Relaxing enough to open that second sphincter is hard for most people; this is part of the reason why anal sex has a reputation for being difficult and painful. On top of this, I experience an added barrier to totally relaxing during sex. I am a survivor of a lot of violence, including a lot of sexual violence, and I live with Complex-PTSD. This means that sex, even under the safest circumstances with the most trusted partner, is tricky terrain to navigate. I can easily become triggered or feel stressed out. This additional stress and tension makes receiving anal penetration even harder.

My C-PTSD also makes it difficult for me to communicate during sex. My trauma often makes me go nonverbal. Working on the safety and trust I need with partners in order to speak during sex is an ongoing process. I have to get creative and find ways to communicate non-verbally, and I need to do a lot of communication before having sex. Anal sex, in particular, requires a lot of communication from the receptive partner. The receptive partner is the one who knows when to push a little more, when to slow down, and when to stop. The receptive partner is the one who knows when it hurts and when it feels good. Because I have difficulty communicating verbally during sex, I face another barrier to having good anal sex.

It is hard to find information on how to have good anal sex and it isn't easy to find situations in which I can freely and openly talk about my experiences trying anal. Like any experience or skill, I am enriched by talking about it with others and learning from their experiences. Yet it can feel shameful or inappropriate to talk about anal sex even in contexts

where I feel comfortable talking about other kinds of sex. Even now, as someone who writes about sex and is known for my consistent transparency, I feel more hesitation to write about anal sex. It somehow *feels* more x-rated than writing about blowjobs or even kink. I anticipate making other people uncomfortable by talking so openly about taking it in the ass.

It's hard to publicly name that I love taking it in the ass. But I'm a total butt slut—that's the truth. These days anal sex is a regular and extremely pleasurable part of my sex life. I take it like a champ and I love it. My partner even calls me the patron saint of bottoms. It's fun and hot and it feels really good. I have also discovered that anal sex is particularly helpful for me in the work of learning to stay present with my body during sex and communicating with my partner. Something that used to be scary and unpleasant has transformed into a hot and healing experience.

How did I get here? How did I go from being someone who believed I would never be able to take a cock in my ass to a self-identified butt slut? How did I go from someone whose trauma provided additional barriers to having good anal sex to someone who experiences anal sex as a healing practice for my trauma? It was a process. I've had years of therapy and do a lot of work to heal. My sexuality was profoundly harmed by the violence I experienced, and healing my sexuality is a huge priority in my life. Learning to stay present in my body and to have good, communicative sex is an ongoing process for me. It is easy for me to lose the connection between my body and my brain and it is easy for me to lose my voice. Finding ways to connect to what I am feeling and to speak aloud my desires and needs is some of the hardest work of recovery.

But then I think of the other night, having sex with my date for the first time (even though we've been lowkey long distance seeing each other for a year), and how nervous I felt about the red dots and patches all over my skin. *Your psoriasis* she gasped *It's beautiful*. And she is beautiful and good and sincere. I think about the way I let myself relax into safety, the way I let myself feel her desire and my own. I think about the way she pressed her body into mine, eager and without hesitation, the way our desire built between us and my skin was neither a detraction nor an imposition.

I think about my partner holding my psoriasis covered foot in their hand and the way they held my skin in their focus and gently brought my foot to their lips, kissing my red inflamed skin. I think about the way I covered my eyes because the sight was too much to bear and then opened them again, squirming both from the pleasure and the vulnerability and the miraculous surprise of love.

As someone living with complex PTSD, who has known violence and betrayal in most of my important intimate relationships, I am not familiar with love. The combination of sexuality and care, of desire and attentiveness, is almost more than my trauma brain can process. But I do. Little by little I time travel to the present, I breathe into this body, into this hard earned safety, and I begin to trust in my pleasure, in my desire, in the transformative possibilities of all sorts of intimacies. Thinking of this pleasure, this intimacy, this safety, helps me to time travel back to the present, now, helps me to breathe into my adult body and retrieve myself from the apparitions of terror and helplessness. Thinking about my date and my partner, people I trust and care for, gives my bodymind something else to experience other than fear and pain. Now I am thinking about pleasure and desire, intimacy and care, I

Fucking Crazy: On Complex Trauma, Surviving Sexual Violence, and Living My Best Slut Life

I am too sick to write this paper. I am nauseous. I have a headache. My muscles are tense. My skin is on fire. I have been crying uncontrollably followed by numb hours blanked out and scrolling my phone. My body is flooded with sensations, deep visceral apparitions of pain, which I refuse and struggle against.

I am too sick to write about sex. I don't want to write about sex because I've been thinking about incest, I've been deep in therapy work and struggling hard with my complex ptsd. I have been triggered. Memories from my childhood keep flooding back to me. I don't want to write about sex because I feel fucked up and sick and sad.

Right now in this moment I feel disinterested in sex, maybe even repulsed by it. I also feel stressed and insecure about the psoriasis that is flaring all over my body. I was reading *The Body Keeps the Score* and in it there is a study in which incest survivors were found to have higher rates of autoimmune conditions. Psoriasis is autoimmune. It is hypervigilance at a cellular level. My immune system is launching an attack against a threat which isn't present, inadvertently attacking my own body. Familiar story. Trauma body. Trauma brain. Red and flaky and scaly and stressful. It is hard to feel desirable like this; it is hard to feel desire.

In order to get to the place where I could enjoy anal sex, I needed to own my right and ability to say no to anal. It is only in the absence of pressure and coercion that we can truly say yes; yes only becomes possible when no is equally possible. Having a partner who never tries to pressure me into any kind of sex, who respects and encourages my 'no', and who is a responsible lover, creates the conditions for me to consider my own desire. For the first time I started to think about what I might like about anal sex, why I might desire it, not for my partner, but for me. I started to think about the pleasure of having fingers in my ass, how good my orgasms are when I'm experiencing a bit of anal penetration, and how hot it would be if I could take even more.

I decided to try anal sex on my 31st birthday with a partner who I love and trust, who works with me to navigate my C-PTSD in our sex life. I decided to try anal sex with this partner because I felt safe doing so. I knew they would listen to me, go slow, be patient, and absolutely accept it if I changed my mind. I knew there would be no pressure and that it wouldn't be a disappointment if I couldn't go through with it. I was excited and driven by my own curiosity and desire, and I had a partner who would move through the experience with me, with presence and care. I texted my partner and said "Babe, I want you to fuck me in my ass on my birthday" and on my birthday they brought me lube along with my birthday present.

I wasn't scared but I was a bit nervous. I still didn't know if I would be able to take a whole cock in my ass. But I had desire, trust, and safety—all the requirements for good sex—and I was ready to try. We waited until we were both really turned on, we used lots of lube, and we went slow. I looked into my partner's eyes and breathed deeply, feeling my body and allowing myself to relax. When I felt a bit of pain I said

“Wait” and my partner waited. My ability to speak was the result of the work I’ve done on myself, the trust I have with my partner, and also the fact that I knew anal sex especially requires this of me. I breathed down in my body and felt myself let go. I told them “Okay” and we continued, slowly and carefully. I relaxed and, amazingly, took their whole cock inside of me. They fucked me in the ass and it was incredible. It felt intimate and safe and hot and loving and healthy and good. I felt my body and I used my voice. I came like crazy.

Anal sex shows me how to listen deeply to what my body is saying, and how to communicate that to my partner. For me, anal sex is a practice of sexual mindfulness. It creates the conditions for me to really connect and listen to my body and it helps me to relax and let go of tension. Vaginal sex does not require of me the same level of close attention to every sensation in my body. While all sex would benefit from this level of attention, anal sex requires it, and therefore I am pushed to carefully and attentively notice what I am feeling. I also need to relax, or it simply won’t work. My internal sphincter will not budge unless my body is thoroughly relaxed. As a person living with C-PTSD, I carry a ton of tension in my body. It is hard for me to slow down and breathe. Again, all sex would benefit from this practice of breathing deep and relaxing, but anal sex requires it. It demands that I slow down, release, and let go.

As a bottom and a receptive partner, anal sex puts me in the driver’s seat more than any other sex act. While all sex would benefit from this careful communication, anal sex again requires this of me. If I don’t communicate with my partner, it will hurt. I need to be able to tell them when to slow down, when to stop, when to keep going. Having anal sex regularly and practicing this communication with my partner has made sexual communication easier for me generally. The skills I’m learning

of my partner licking my psoriasis to solidify that we are only interested in exploring sexuality with people who are down with my body as is, feels fucking affirming and hot. Listening to my long distance date gasp and say “Your psoriasis! It’s beautiful” when she got me naked for the first time after my flare up feels fucking good. Having a threesome with my date and my partner and watching both of them touching and kissing me all over is a powerful experience of letting fear melt into pleasure, vulnerability open to depths of intimacy.

Posting sexy psoriasis selfies and having the queers flood me with heat eyes and fire emojis, to have them share their vulnerabilities about their own body feels in the comments, reminds me that queer sexuality can and should be a space that liberates us to love and desire ourselves and each other in all our varied glory. I won’t gloss over the fact that jerks are still out there, that rude comments and stares still hurt, and the psoriasis itself can be painful and uncomfortable. That complexity and ambiguity is still there, and psoriasis life has its fair share of pain. But it can also be a life full of pleasure and desire and love, including the very specific pleasure of being loved and desired in vulnerability and bravery.

When I first posted online about my flare up, my friend sent me a message with the phrase “magic sluts with psoriasis” which I fucking love and use has a hashtag now. Psoriasis makes me even queerer because it helps me to continue divesting from normative, oppressive depictions of desire and to move towards the very queer pleasure of loving the bodies we have.

someone with severe psoriasis. I didn't want it to be true, but there it was on my feet, all over my legs, on my pussy, my belly, my butt, my back, my breasts, my arms, my face. My entire body is covered in psoriasis and while I can do my best to take care of myself, bring down my stress, and calm the chronic inflammation, there is nothing I can do to make it go away.

So here I am again, scaly as fuck. And I still want to be desirable. I still want to be sexy and have hot sex. I still want to be loved. At 31, I'm a self-proclaimed slut and sex writer. As a queer person and survivor of sexual violence, claiming my sexuality has been hard work and is extremely important to me. But it is hard to feel sexy and confident when you are covered in red scaly skin from head to toe. Anyone whose body falls outside of mainstream definitions of desirability doesn't need me to tell them how much easier it is to talk about self love and acceptance than it is to face down the stares and comments and the fear of rejection and judgement.

When I faced the reality that severe psoriasis had taken over my body again, I was flooded with terror that my partner would no longer be attracted to me and that dating and exploring sexuality with new people wouldn't be possible anymore. I was scared I would no longer be desirable or hot, that queers would stop flirting with me, and that my sex life would dry up. The opposite has turned out to be true.

Intimacy with my partner has deepened as I let them love my scales. Watching my partner take my psoriasis covered foot to their mouth and kiss my red inflamed skin is one of the hottest, most vulnerable, and sexy experiences I can imagine. Setting up an okcupid with my partner to look for dates who want to have threesomes and putting up a picture

through anal sex: paying attention to my body, relaxing, and communicating, are skills that benefit my overall sex life and my trauma recovery. They are important, transferable skills.

Anal sex requires that I really listen to my body, that I let go of tension, and that I find and use my voice. All of these things are good for me as a person recovering from C-PTSD. In the context of trusting myself and my partner I discovered that anal sex allows me to drop down into my body, out of the heady dissociation I'm so used to, and to feel what my body is telling me. Anal sex has helped me learn how to say "Yes", "No", and "Slow down": huge accomplishments for me as a survivor of sexual trauma. Getting fucked in the ass has opened doors to all kinds of pleasures, but most importantly, it helps me to connect with my body in a way that trauma took from me. Far from being a painful or unpleasant act that I endure for my partner's pleasure, anal sex teaches me how to deeply feel my own pleasure, how to ask for what I want and say no to what I don't, and how to relax and surrender to the incredible sensations my body is capable of.

Anal sex gets a bad rep and while there's nothing wrong with liking anal because it feels slutty or taboo, it's also important to liberate all sexual practices from limited meanings. Yeah I love the feeling of walking home in a slutty dress knowing that I just took it in the ass like a champ, but I also love the safety and intimacy and healing I experience through anal sex. Anal sex can be slutty, it can definitely be hot and queer and focused on pleasure. Anal sex can also be intimate, loving, sweet, ecstatically pleasurable, and profoundly healing. It doesn't need to be painful and it shouldn't be shamed. For me, anal sex is a practice of sexual mindfulness that connects me with my body and my voice. I'm a butt slut and I love it.

Magic Sluts With Psoriasis

I text my partner about the psoriasis flaring up all over my body. I tell them “I’m really scared, last time it was bad like this it was bad like this for years. What if it doesn’t go away?” They reply, “Seems like the best thing you can do is try to just live your best scaly life babe. And let me love you.”

For those not in the know, psoriasis is a genetic, chronic, autoimmune condition that causes the skin cycle to speed up, producing patches of red, scaly skin. It can come and go in its severity, and it’s a condition that has no sure fire ways to reduce or eliminate the symptoms.

Autoimmune conditions have been connected to histories of trauma and chronic stress, and as a person who lives with complex PTSD this makes a lot of sense to me.

I first developed psoriasis when I was eighteen. A mysterious rash started popping up all over my body, red, itchy, and then, scaly. I didn’t understand what was happening and being eighteen and highly invested in my attractiveness, I was terrified. I wasn’t at all prepared when the doctor said to me bluntly: “It’s psoriasis. There is no cure.” It felt like a door slamming in my face; like a future of sexuality, desirability, and love being snatched up from me just like that. I refused to believe that what I had was this incurable condition the doctor described, but Google quickly confirmed that it was none other.

My psoriasis spread and multiplied and proliferated. My entire body was covered in dots and patches of red, inflamed, scaly skin. I did everything in my power to get rid of it, including going to the hospital every single day for light therapy. Nothing worked, and all the stress just made it

worse. Eventually, I gave up. I accepted my fate and decided I would look like this forever. Instead of investing my energy into fighting psoriasis, I invested my energy into accepting it. I did what I could to manage the pain and itchiness. I advocated for my needs with my teachers and bosses. And I searched out and discovered a psoriasis dating website and found a psoriasis boyfriend. He turned out to be an overall not great human, but the experience of psoriasis4psoriasis desire was deeply healing for me.

After a few years my psoriasis all but went away on its own. It never completely cleared. I always had the classic red patched elbows and the generous white flakes falling from my scalp. But compared to having it cover most of my body, this was easy to live with. I went on with my life like a non-scaly normy and didn’t think too much about it. But my sense of (p)solidarity never left me and I carried in my heart the knowledge that people with severe psoriasis frequently turn to immune suppressant medications that highly endanger their health and they all too frequently turn to suicide. The cost of falling so far outside standards of beauty and desirability is high. It can feel, like it felt for me when I was eighteen, like being sentenced to a life without sexuality, desirability, or love.

When I was 31 and touring my third book, I found myself couch and bus hopping, lugging suitcases of books, and managing my flaring c-PTSD while extending myself beyond my capacity as a chronically ill person. I pushed myself too far and my body rebelled. Psoriasis began flaring in places it doesn’t usually and before I knew it I was covered from head to toe, like I was when I was eighteen. This obviously compounded my stress, and despite all the work on (p)self-acceptance I did in late teens and early twenties, I was not prepared to plunge back into being