

*Nancy Friday, a leading voice in the field
of women's sexuality, talks about why erotic
fantasies are important to sexual satisfaction . . .*

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH GOOD OLD-FASHIONED SEX?

Nothing's the matter with good old-fashioned sex. Nothing's the matter with asparagus, either. But why not have the hollandaise, too? If a woman fantasizes, or wants to, then she should accept it without shame or thinking herself freaky—and so should the man. Fantasy should be thought of as an extension of one's sexuality.

. . . and how she came to write
My Secret Garden

People said they wanted to hear from women. What were they thinking? What women needed and were waiting for was some kind of yardstick against which to measure ourselves, a sexual rule of thumb equivalent to that which men have always provided one another. But women were the silent sex. In our desire to please our men, we had placed the sexual constraints and secrecy upon one another which men had thought necessary.

*Turn the page to learn why the real women
featured in this book opened up their secret lives*

Madge

“What a relief it is to admit to fantasies and to tell them to someone as understanding as you obviously are.”

Annette

“I have never confided my sexual fantasies to a living soul, but I feel I must tell someone about them. I have always been ashamed of them, because I feel that other people would think them unnatural.”

Maria

“I think my husband would mostly react with surprise if he found out that I think about other men sometimes when we are having intercourse.”

Abbie

“I’ve been thinking more and more about my fantasies lately. I’ve even tried talking to my husband about them, that is, the ones I don’t think would make him angry.”

Norma

“I’m very brave and aggressive in my fantasies. In fact, I take the lead.”

Heather

"I'm twenty-two and very shy, and group gropes aren't my scene at all. But my imagination isn't the least bit shy."

Clarissa

"When my husband first begins to make love to me, there is one imaginary scene that comes to my mind. . . . This image seems to turn itself on without my trying or doing anything about it, and continues until I have had an orgasm."

Nora

"My husband is not an imaginative man and our lovemaking is not at all varied. I used to attempt to get him to try different things, but he never wanted to."

Viola

"When I'm making love, I don't think of anything else but satisfying my lover. I save my fantasizing for when I'm alone. I wait till evening, take a couple of drinks, and curl up in bed with a sexy book. Then when the drinks take hold, I can imagine my hands are those of my lover."



My Secret
GARDEN

NANCY FRIDAY



POCKET BOOKS

New York London Toronto Sydney



Pocket Books
A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

Copyright © 1973 by Nancy Friday
Copyright renewed © 2001 by Nancy Friday
Introduction copyright © 1998 by Nancy Friday

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this book
or portions thereof in any form whatsoever. For information
address Pocket Books Subsidiary Rights Department,
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

This Pocket Books trade paperback edition February 2008

POCKET and colophon are registered trademarks
of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

For information about special discounts for bulk
purchases, please contact Simon & Schuster Special Sales
at 1-800-456-6798 or business@simonandschuster.com.

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN-13: 978-1-4165-6701-1

ISBN-10: 1-4165-6701-1

FOR BILLY

*who believed in this book
when it was just a fantasy*

N.F.



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS IN THE GARDEN

xv

1. "TELL ME WHAT YOU ARE THINKING
ABOUT," HE SAID. 1
2. "WHY FANTASIZE WHEN
YOU HAVE ME?" 15
- FRUSTRATION: 15
Madge, Dot
- INSUFFICIENCY: 20
Louella, Irene, Annette, Maria
- SEX ENHANCEMENT: 27
Patricia, Suzanne
- FOREPLAY: 35
Bertha, Bellinda
- APPROVAL: 41
Sally, Vicki, Francesca, Sondra
- EXPLORATION: 52
Karen, Abbie, Hilda, Heather, Kitty
- SEXUAL INITIATIVE: 60
Carol, Faye

CONTENTS

INSATIABILITY:	69
<i>Clarissa, Annabel, Iris, Nora</i>	
DAYDREAMS:	76
<i>Corinne, Molly, Alicia, Lily, Eliza,</i>	
<i>Esther, Shirley, Lillian, Viola</i>	
MASTURBATION:	86
<i>Patsy, Norma, Adair, Mary Beth,</i>	
<i>Elizabeth, Mary Jane, Amelia, Alix</i>	
THE LESBIANS:	101
<i>Marion, Jeanne, Lisa, Zizi, Kate,</i>	
<i>Anna, Susan, Melanie</i>	
 3. THE HOUSE OF FANTASY	 124
ROOM NUMBER ONE: Anonymity,	126
or, "Taken by the Faceless Stranger"	
<i>Linda, Pamela, Marie</i>	
ROOM NUMBER TWO: The Audience	136
<i>Caroline, Elspeth, Mary Jo, Melanie,</i>	
<i>Celeste</i>	
ROOM NUMBER THREE: Rape, or,	146
"Don't Just Stand There, Force Me!"	
<i>Julietta, Gail, Dinah, Sadie</i>	
ROOM NUMBER FOUR: Pain and	155
Masochism, or, "Ouch, Don't Stop!"	
<i>Barbara, Edith, Rose Ann, Amanda</i>	
ROOM NUMBER FIVE: Domination, or	167
"How Humiliating! Thank You."	
<i>Nathalie, Poppy, Heather, Ingrid</i>	

CONTENTS

ROOM NUMBER SIX: The Sexuality of Terror, or, "Help! I'm Out of Control, Thank God!" <i>Johanna, Anne</i>	182
ROOM NUMBER SEVEN: The Thrill of the Forbidden, or, "No, You Must Not! . . . Here, Let Me Help You." <i>Emma, Donna</i>	188
ROOM NUMBER EIGHT: The Transformation Room, or, "Life Can Be Beautiful." <i>Monica, Betty, Phyllis</i>	193
ROOM NUMBER NINE: The Earth Mother Room <i>Vivian, Marina</i>	205
ROOM NUMBER TEN: Incest <i>Bella, Dominique, Lola</i>	209
ROOM NUMBER ELEVEN: The Zoo <i>Jo, Rosie, Dawn, Wanda</i>	217
ROOM NUMBER TWELVE: Big Black Men <i>Margie, Raquel, Lydia</i>	225
ROOM NUMBER THIRTEEN: Young Boys <i>Evelyn, Victoria</i>	230
ROOM NUMBER FOURTEEN: The Fetishists <i>Faith</i>	233

CONTENTS

ROOM NUMBER FIFTEEN:	236
Other Women	
<i>Christine, Dolly, Bee, Venice, Lilly, Rita,</i>	
<i>Mary Beth, Viv, Lee, Willa, Dana, Cara,</i>	
<i>Celia, Theresa, Tania, Michelle, Sandra,</i>	
<i>Patty, Stella, Claire, Gwen, Rebecca</i>	
ROOM NUMBER SIXTEEN:	266
Prostitution, or, "Sadie Thompson	
Doesn't Live Here Anymore."	
4. "WHERE DID A NICE GIRL LIKE YOU	
GET AN IDEA LIKE THAT?	268
CHILDHOOD:	268
<i>Theda, Lindsay, Fiona, Felicia, Sonia,</i>	
<i>Phyllis, Marlene, Kay, Trudy, Mona, Stella</i>	
SOUNDS:	283
<i>June, Nina, Meg, Holly, Evie</i>	
WOMEN DO LOOK:	288
<i>Fay, Sukie, Constance, Deana, Anna, Vera,</i>	
<i>Una, Lois, Liz, Winona, Ruby, Gale,</i>	
<i>Imogene, Francine, April, Myrna, Laurie,</i>	
<i>Jeanie</i>	
SEEING AND READING:	299
<i>Mary Jane, Miranda, Margaret, Alexandra,</i>	
<i>Stephanie</i>	
RANDOM ASSOCIATIONS:	310
<i>Susie, Adrienne, Doris, Lulu, Daisy, Kit,</i>	
<i>Flossie, Josie, Brett, Sarah, Maud, Gelda</i>	

CONTENTS

5. GUILT AND FANTASY, OR, “WHY THE FIG LEAF?”	326
WOMEN’S GUILT:	326
<i>Christiana, Hope, Lil, Alison, Clare, Penelope</i>	
MEN’S ANXIETY:	339
<i>Tina’s husband</i>	
6. FANTASY ACCEPTED	343
“OF COURSE I FANTASIZE, DOESN’T EVERYONE?”	345
<i>Gloria, Hannah, Sophie, Bobbie, Paula</i>	
FANTASIES THAT SHOULD BE REALITY:	375
<i>Martha</i>	
ACTING OUT FANTASIES, PROS AND CONS:	377
<i>Sylvia, Babs, Elizabeth, Winnie, Loretta, Sheila, Claudine, Jocelyn</i>	
SHARING FANTASIES:	390
<i>Lynn, Jacqueline, Doris, Bonnie, Jessie, Esther, Posie, Mara, Joan, Adele’s husband</i>	
7. QUICKIES	411
AFTERWORD	427
“IN DEFENSE OF NANCY FRIDAY” by Martin Shepard, M.D., psychiatrist	







INTRODUCTION

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS IN THE GARDEN

Now, here at the beginning, let me set the record straight. I don't want this to get lost halfway through these introductory pages: Sexual freedom was never a part of modern feminism, never celebrated as such at Feminist Headquarters.



Because so many of us marched in both the Women's Movement and the Sexual Revolution, and because they happened simultaneously, those events remain in memory as one glorious upheaval. Wouldn't it seem irrational to exclude sexual freedom from all the other rights—political, social, economic—for which we fought? Why separate sex and state?



I automatically assumed that those of us who marched and wrote in the late 1960s and early 1970s knew there would be no joy in the workplace without sexual freedom, by which I don't mean fucking in the Ladies' (Oops!, Women's) Room. Simply put, I knew that we would never be equals staying in the traditional sexual straitjacket. Sex is energy and although it was a fundamental tenet of patriarchy that men held the key to eros, some of us knew in our bones that women, not men, were

INTRODUCTION

and remain the permission givers when it comes to sex. It is through other women's voices that we hear our own. Without fear of their disapproval, all our sexual fuel can run into every facet of our lives—political, personal, and economic.

Our mistake, however, was believing that everyone on the march had the same agenda. When I sat down to write this book, I thought the feminists would embrace it. I didn't realize that it was unwelcome at Feminist Headquarters until a former friend turned editor at *Ms.* magazine, gave me a rap on the knuckles, proclaiming that "*Ms.* will decide what women's fantasies are." Soon after, a review in that magazine followed with the opening line "... this woman is not a feminist."

I was shocked, couldn't believe that I had been called a bad girl for writing about something as joyous as women's sexual liberation. I didn't realize then, as I do now, that the Patriarchal Feminists were consciously determined to leave sex off the agenda. Not that they discussed it. But they knew they couldn't control an army of women pursuing sex with men. Sex between women? That was safe, and still is.

They knew intuitively that other women's voices enable us to hear our own and that keeping men the enemy, up to, and especially, today, allows for a fertile dumping ground for everything that is wrong in women's world.

My initial reaction to the nasty review in *Ms.* was to forget it. The millions of women who bought *My Secret Garden* reaffirmed my belief in the importance of understanding sex. Besides, upon completing this book, I had too many questions of my own to pursue.

INTRODUCTION

Why, for example, did women, as many do today, feel so guilty about sexual fantasies? We were just thinking, after all, not acting on our thoughts. The answer hit me the day I put down the manuscript for this book: Mother. So I sat down to write an outline, then entitled "The First Lie." It subsequently became *My Mother/My Self*, my study of mothers and daughters. I went on to write five more books, two about women's sexual fantasies, *Forbidden Flowers* and *Women on Top*; one on men's sexual fantasies, *Men in Love*; and *Jealousy* and *The Power of Beauty*.

But the *Ms.* review and all that it implied never went away, and writing my most recent book, on how our looks influence our lives, it returned with full force, an horrific belch from the unconscious. I had come to understand that competition among women was the last taboo, something the Matriarchal Feminists were unwilling to acknowledge or discuss. Better to opt for noncompetitive quilting, as Gloria Steinem proposed in her last book, than accept the reality of competition, for looks, in the workplace and, certainly, for men. No wonder these feminists were and remain so rigid about sex. It wasn't just that they wanted to be taken seriously, as I do, and not as sex objects. It was just as important that they outlaw competition over sex and beauty among women.

That continuing need helps explain its opposite, the enduring popularity of this book's erotic themes. These fantasies are perennials that speak to women today as they did twenty-five years ago. A woman masturbating wants to reach orgasm. To do so, she has to win the competition against those who would

INTRODUCTION

deprive her of owning her own sex. Who are her competitors? Well, as I learned writing *My Mother/My Self*, it begins with the Giantess of the Nursery, a loving Giantess as often as not, but one who would not tolerate sexual independence.

No man can cut me as another woman can. Feminism's refusal to address issues of competition leaves us eternally vulnerable to the dangerous power that women hold over one another. All this comes to mind when I think about today's Lesbian Chic, which is in part a celebration of the easy access women have always had to one another's bodies and in part a "natural" solution for women conditioned by the Patriarchal Feminists' anti-male agenda. A woman lies down with another woman and the world shrugs.

Few women care to live with exclusion from women's world. And so the garden of sexual desire and fulfillment becomes the "secret" garden, and the sentence I first heard from women twenty-five years ago continues today: "Thank God you wrote that book. I thought I was the only one."

How could it be, you might ask, that women today, at the turn of the century, would still think they were the only Bad Girls with erotic thoughts? What kind of prison is this that women impose on themselves? It is, of course, an unconscious pressure, where we seemingly do things against our will. Some part of us chooses the pressure that perfectly fits our need to be taken, to be bad—yes, ultimately, to reach orgasm.

Need I add that we win in all of our fantasies? Yes, even those involving the so-called rapist, that *deus ex machina* we roll in to catapult us past a lifetime of

INTRODUCTION

women's rules against sex. That fantasy is as popular today as ever. The women whom I have interviewed don't really want to be hurt or humiliated. His male presence, that effective battering ram, neatly "makes" her relax sufficiently to enjoy orgasm and then allows her to return to earth, her Nice Girl, Good Daughter self intact. The rape fantasy fools them into thinking the loss of control isn't their fault.

What tribute to the power of the unconscious that in the day of the internet, of pornographic videos, not to mention of the erotic assaults on television, that with all this seeming permission, there is still a nay-saying voice that requires answering before we can reach orgasm.

As I have said, Mother isn't an ogress. She is merely human. Love isn't without ambivalence. What we do when we lie down for sex is to reconcile the power of that most important person in our early lives with the power of our own sexual appetites.

Women's lust has always been feared as that extraordinary force that, left unbridled, could bring down not only individuals but also society itself. The bridling comes so early, in mother's milk—and, oh, my dears, how fixated the infant remains as she grows to girlhood, watching her, that source of love, warmth, food, life. We never take our eyes off her, and in these earliest preverbal lessons, we learn those lifelong feelings about our bodies.

Nothing plants the seeds of our private sexual guilt more deeply than her admonitions, threatening loss of love should we ever love our own body. Nothing need be said. Little eyes learn life's lessons most efficiently when we are most dependent. Little girls

INTRODUCTION

copy her hatred of her own flesh, assuming it unconsciously though we may later deny that we are in any way like her. We may disobey her anti-sex rules in adolescence when our erotic muscle so demands, but it is temporary, this war with her. Eventually, most women cave in to one or another's anti-sex rules which demand that no woman get more sex or be more sexual than any other.

That is what the Matriarchal Feminists understand and why they have eliminated sexual fulfillment from their agenda. The Matriarchs would keep us all the same. You rarely hear them talk about birth control and the ravages of unwanted pregnancy. Few of them came to the defense of Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders when she dared suggest that our schools teach the role and importance of masturbation.

My fury is only tempered by people like you, who share my interest in true feminism, striving for equality in matters sexual as well as everywhere else. When I first started this journey twenty-five years ago, it was so hard to find women who would even admit to having such sexual reveries. It took me years to find women in numbers who knew what I was talking about when I would ask if they had sexual fantasies. But as the years have passed, more and more women have been willing to talk about enjoyment of our sexual selves and to acknowledge its inextricable link to true liberation of women.

Nancy Friday
Key West, Florida
January 1998

1.

“TELL ME WHAT YOU ARE
THINKING ABOUT,” HE SAID.

In my mind, as in our fucking, I am at the crucial point: . . . We are at this Baltimore Colt-Minnesota Viking football game, and it is very cold. Four or five of us are huddled under a big glen plaid blanket. Suddenly we jump up to watch Johnny Unitas running toward the goal. As he races down the field, we all turn as a body, wrapped in our blanket, screaming with excitement. Somehow, one of the men—I don’t know who, and in my excitement I can’t look—has gotten himself more closely behind me. I keep cheering, my voice an echo of his, hot on my neck. I can feel his erection through his pants as he signals me with a touch to turn my hips more directly toward him. Unitas is blocked, but all the action, thank God, is still going toward that goal and all of us keep turned to watch. Everyone is going mad. He’s got his cock out now and somehow it’s between my legs; he’s torn a hole in my tights under my short skirt and I yell louder as the touchdown gets nearer now. We are all jumping up and down and I have to lift my leg higher, to the next step on the bleachers, to steady myself; now the man behind me can slip it in more easily. We are all leaping about, thumping one

MY SECRET GARDEN

another on the back, and he puts his arm around my shoulders to keep us in rhythm. He's inside me now, shot straight up through me like a ramrod; my God, it's like he's in my throat! "All the way, Johnny! Go, go, run, run!" we scream together, louder than anyone, making them all cheer louder, the two of us leading the excitement like cheerleaders, while inside me I can feel whoever he is growing harder and harder, pushing deeper and higher into me with each jump until the cheering for Unitas becomes the rhythm of our fucking and all around us everyone is on our side, cheering us and the touchdown . . . it's hard to separate the two now. It's Unitas' last down, everything depends on him; we're racing madly, almost at our own touchdown. My excitement gets wilder, almost out of control as I scream for Unitas to make it as we do, so that we all go over the line together. And as the man behind me roars, clutching me in a spasm of pleasure, Unitas goes over and I . . .

"Tell me what you are thinking about," the man I was actually fucking said, his words as charged as the action in my mind. As I'd never stopped to think before doing anything to him in bed (we were that sure of our spontaneity and response), I didn't stop to edit my thoughts. I told him what I'd been thinking.

He got out of bed, put on his pants and went home.

Lying there among the crumpled sheets, so abruptly rejected and confused as to just why, I watched him dress. It was only imaginary, I had tried to explain; I didn't really want that other man at the

WOMEN'S SEXUAL FANTASIES

football game. He was faceless! A nobody! I'd never even have had those thoughts, much less spoken them out loud, if I hadn't been so excited, if he, my real lover, hadn't aroused me to the point where I'd abandoned my whole body, all of me; even my mind. Didn't he see? He and his wonderful, passionate fucking had brought on these things and they, in turn, were making me more passionate. Why, I tried to smile, he should be proud, happy for both of us. . . .

One of the things I had always admired in my lover was the fact that he was one of the few men who understood that there could be humor and playfulness in bed. But he did not think my football fantasy was either humorous or playful. As I said, he just left.

His anger and the shame he made me feel (which writing this book has helped me to realize I still resent) was the beginning of the end for us. Until that moment his cry had always been "More!" He had convinced me that there was no sexual limit to which I could go that wouldn't excite him more; his encouragement was like the occasional flick a child gives a spinning top, making it run faster and faster, speeding me ever forward toward things I had always wanted to do, but had been too shy even to think about with anyone else. Shyness was not my style, but sexually I was still my mother's daughter. He had freed me, I felt, from this inappropriate maidenly constraint with which I could not intellectually identify, but from which I could not bodily escape. Proud of me for my efforts, he made me proud of myself, too. I loved us both.

Looking back over my shoulder now at my

MY SECRET GARDEN

anything-goes lover, I can see that I was only too happily enacting *his* indirectly stated Pygmalion—D. H. Lawrence fantasies. But mine? He didn't want to hear about them. I was not to coauthor this fascinating script on How To Be Nancy, even if it was my life. I was not to act, but to be acted upon.

Where are you now, old lover of mine? If you were put off by my fantasy of "the other man," what would you have thought of the one about my Great Uncle Henry's Dalmatian dog? Or the one member of my family that you liked, Great Uncle Henry himself, as he looked in the portrait over my mother's piano, back when men wore moustaches that tickled, and women long skirts. Could you see what Great Uncle Henry was doing to me under the table? Only it wasn't me; I was disguised as a boy.

Or was I? It didn't matter. It doesn't, with fantasies. They exist only for their elasticity, their ability to instantly incorporate any new character, image or idea—or, as in dreams, to which they bear so close a relationship—to contain conflicting ideas simultaneously. They expand, heighten, distort or exaggerate reality, taking one further, faster in the direction in which the unashamed unconscious already knows it wants to go. They present the astonished self with the incredible, the opportunity to entertain the impossible.

There were other lovers, and other fantasies. But I never introduced the two again. Until I met my husband. The thing about a good man is that he brings out the best in you, desires all of you, and in seeking out your essence, not only accepts all he finds, but settles for nothing less. He brought my fantasies

WOMEN'S SEXUAL FANTASIES

back into the open again from those depths where I had prudently decided they must live—vigorous and vivid as ever, yes, but never to be spoken aloud again. I'll never forget his reaction when timidly, vulnerable, and partially ashamed, I decided to risk telling him what I *had* been thinking.

"What an imagination!" he said. "I could never have dreamed that up. Were you really thinking *that*?"

His look of amused admiration came as a reprieve; I realized how much he loved me, and in loving me, loved anything that gave me more abundant life. My fantasies to him were a sudden unveiling of a new garden of pleasure, as yet unknown to him, into which I would invite him.

Marriage released me from many things, and led me into others. If my fantasies seemed so revealing and imaginative to my husband, why not include them in the novel I was writing? It was about a woman, of course, and there must be other readers besides my husband, men and other women too, who would be intrigued by a new approach to what goes on in a woman's mind. I did indeed devote one entire chapter in the book to a long idyllic reverie of the heroine's sexual fantasies. I thought it was the best thing in the book, the stuff of which the novels I had most admired were made. But my editor, a man, was put off. He had never read anything like it, he said (the very point of writing a novel, I thought). Her fantasies made the heroine sound like some kind of sexual freak, he said. "If she's so crazy about this guy she's with," he said, "if he's such a great fuck, then why's she thinking about all these other crazy things . . . why isn't she thinking about him?"

MY SECRET GARDEN

I could have asked him a question of my own: Why do men have sexual fantasies, too? Why do men seek prostitutes to perform certain acts when they have perfectly layable ladies at home? Why do husbands buy their wives black lace G-strings and nipple-exposing bras, except in pursuit of fantasies of their own? In Italy, men scream “Madonna mia” when they come, and it is not uncommon, we learn in *Eros Denied*, for an imaginative Englishman to pay a lady for the privilege of eating the strawberry cream puff (like Nanny used to make) she has kindly stuffed up her cunt. Why is it perfectly respectable (and continually commercial) for cartoons to dwell on the sidewalk figure of Joe Average eyeing the passing luscious blonde, while in the balloon drawn over his head he puts her through the most exotic paces? My God! Far from being thought reprehensible, this last male fantasy is thought amusing, family fun, something a father can share with his son.

Men exchange sexual fantasies in the barroom, where they are called dirty jokes; the occasional man who doesn’t find them amusing is thought to be odd man out. Blue movies convulse bachelor dinners and salesmen’s conventions. And when Henry Miller, D. H. Lawrence and Norman Mailer—to say nothing of Genet—put their fantasies on paper, they are recognized for what they can be: art. The sexual fantasies of men like these are called novels. Why then, I could have asked my editor, can’t the sexual fantasies of women be called the same?

But I said nothing. My editor’s insinuation, like my former lover’s rejection, hit me where I was most sensitive: in that area where women, knowing

WOMEN'S SEXUAL FANTASIES

least about each other's true sexual selves, are most vulnerable. What is it to be a woman? Was I being unfeminine? It is one thing not to have doubted the answer sufficiently to ever have asked the question of yourself at all. But it is another to know that question has suddenly been placed in someone else's mind, to be judged there in some indefinable, unknown, unimaginable competition or comparison. What indeed was it to be a woman? Unwilling to argue about it with this man's-man editor, who supposedly had his finger on the sexual pulse of the world (hadn't he, for instance, published James Jones and Mailer, and probably shared with them unpublishable sexual insights), I picked up myself, my novel, and my fantasies and went home where we were appreciated. But I shelved the book. The world wasn't ready yet for female sexual fantasy.

I was right. It wasn't a commercial idea then, even though I'm talking about four years ago and not four hundred. People said they wanted to hear from women. What were they thinking? But men didn't really want to know about some new, possibly threatening, potential in women. It would immediately pose a sexual realignment, some rethinking of the male (superior) position. And we women weren't yet ready either to share this potential, our common but unspoken knowledge, with one another.

What women needed and were waiting for was some kind of yardstick against which to measure ourselves, a sexual rule of thumb equivalent to that with which men have always provided one another. But women were the silent sex. In our desire to please our men, we had placed the sexual constraints and secrecy

MY SECRET GARDEN

upon one another which men had thought necessary for their own happiness and freedom. We had imprisoned each other, betrayed our own sex and ourselves. Men had always banded together to give each other fraternal support and encouragement, opening up for themselves the greatest possible avenues for sexual adventure, variety and possibility. Not women.

For men, talking about sex, writing and speculating about it, exchanging confidences and asking each other for advice and encouragement about it, had always been socially accepted, and, in fact, a certain amount of boasting about it in the locker room is usually thought to be very much the mark of a man's man, a fine devil of a fellow. But the same culture that gave men this freedom sternly barred it to women, leaving us sexually mistrustful of each other, forcing us into patterns of deception, shame, and above all, silence.

I, myself, would probably never have decided to write this book on women's erotic fantasies if other women's voices hadn't broken that silence, giving me not just that sexual yardstick I was talking about, but also the knowledge that other women might want to hear my ideas as eagerly as I wanted to hear theirs. Suddenly, people were no longer simply *saying* they wanted to hear from women, now women were actually talking, not waiting to be asked, but sharing their experiences, their desires, thousands of women supporting each other by adding their voices, their names, their presence to the liberating forces that promised women a new shake, something "more."

Oddly enough, I think the naked power cry of Women's Lib itself was not helpful to a lot of

WOMEN'S SEXUAL FANTASIES

women, certainly not to me in the work that became this book. It put too many women off. The sheer stridency of it, instead of drawing us closer together, drove us into opposing camps; those who were defying men, denying them, drew themselves up in militant ranks against those who were suddenly more afraid than ever that in sounding aggressive they would be risking rejection by their men. If sex is reduced to a test of power, what woman wants to be left all alone, all powerful, playing with herself?

But if not Women's Lib, then liberation itself was in the air. With the increasing liberation of women's bodies, our minds were being set free, too. The idea that women had sexual fantasies, the enigma of just what they might be, the prospect that the age-old question of men to women, "What are you thinking about?" might at last be answered, now suddenly fascinated editors. No longer was it a matter of the sales-minded editor deciding what a commercial gimmick it would be to publish a series of sexy novels by sexy ladies, novels that would give an odd new sales tickle to the age-old fucking scenes that had always been written by men. Now it was suddenly out of the editors' hands: Women *were* writing about sex, but it was from their point of view (women seen only as male sex fantasies no more), and it was a whole new bedroom. The realization was suddenly obvious, that with the liberation of women, men would be liberated too from all the stereotypes that made them think of women as burdens, prudes, and necessary evils, even at best something less than a man. Imagine! Talking to a woman might be more fun than a night out with the boys!

MY SECRET GARDEN

With all this in the air, it's no surprise that at first my idea fascinated everyone. "I'm thinking of doing a book about female sexual fantasies," I'd say for openers to a group of highly intelligent and articulate friends. That's all it took. All conversation would stop. Men and women both would turn to me with half-smiles of excitement. They were willing to countenance the thought, but only in generalities, I discovered.

"Oh, you mean the old rape dream?"

"You don't mean something like King Kong, do you?"

But when I would speak about fantasies with the kind of detail which in any narrative carries the feel of life and makes the verbal experience emotionally real, the ease around the restaurant table would abruptly stop. Men would become truculent and nervous (ah! my old lover—how universal you are) and their women, far from contributing fantasies of their own—an idea that might have intrigued them in the beginning—would close up like clams. If anyone spoke, it was the men:

"Why don't you collect men's fantasies?"

"Women don't need fantasies, they have us."

"Women don't have sexual fantasies."

"I can understand some old, dried-up prune that no man would want having fantasies. Some frustrated neurotic. But the ordinary, sexually satisfied woman doesn't need them."

"Who needs fantasies? What's the matter with good old-fashioned sex?"

Nothing's the matter with good old-fashioned sex. Nothing's the matter with asparagus, either.

WOMEN'S SEXUAL FANTASIES

But why not have the hollandaise, too? I used to try to explain that it wasn't a question of need, that a woman is no less a woman if she doesn't fantasize. (Or that if she does, it is not necessarily a question of something lacking in the man.) But if a woman does fantasize, or wants to, then she should accept it without shame or thinking herself freaky—and so should the man. Fantasy should be thought of as an extension of one's sexuality. I think it was this idea, the notion of some unknown sexual potential in their women, the threat of the unseen, all-powerful rival, that bothered men most.

"Fantasies during sex? My wife? Why, Harriet doesn't fantasize . . ." And then he would turn to Harriet with a mixture of threat and dawning doubt, "Do you, Harriet?" Again and again I was surprised to find so many intelligent and otherwise open-minded men put off by the idea of their women having sexual thoughts, no matter how fleeting, that weren't about them.

And of course their anxiety communicated itself to their Harriets. I soon learned not to research these ideas in mixed company. Naively at first, I had believed that the presence of a husband or an accustomed lover would be reassuring and comforting. Looking back now, I can see that it had been especially naive of me to think he might be interested, too, in perhaps finding out something new in his partner's sexual life, and that if she were attacked by shyness or diffidence, he would encourage her to go on. Of course, that is not how it works.

But even talking to women alone, away from the visible anxiety the subject aroused in their men,

MY SECRET GARDEN

it was difficult getting through to them, getting through the fear, not of admitting their fantasies to me, but of admitting them to themselves. It is this not-so-conscious fear of rejection that leads women to strive to change the essence of their minds by driving their fantasies down deep into their forgotten layers of mind.

I wasn't attempting to play doctor in the house to my women contributors; analyzing their fantasies was never my intention. I simply wanted to substantiate my feeling that women do fantasize and should be accepted as having the same unrealized desires and needs as men, many of which can only find release in fantasy. My belief was, and is, that given a sufficient body of such information, the woman who fantasizes will have a background against which to place herself. She will no longer have that vertiginous fright that she alone has these random, often unbidden thoughts and ideas.

Eventually, then, I developed a technique to enable all but the shyest women to verbalize their fantasies. For instance, if, as in many cases, the first reaction was, "Who, me? Never!" I'd show them one or two fantasies I'd already collected from more candid women. This would allay anxiety: "I thought my ideas were wild, but I'm not half as far out as that girl." Or it would arouse a spirit of competition which is never entirely dormant among our sex: "If she thinks that fantasy she gave me to read is so sexy, wait till she reads mine."

In this way, without really working at it too hard, I had put together quite a sizeable, though amateur, collection. After all, everything to date was from

WOMEN'S SEXUAL FANTASIES

women I knew, or from friends of friends who would sometimes phone or write to say they had heard of what I was doing and would like to help by being interviewed themselves. Somewhere along the way, though, I realized that if my collection of fantasies was going to be more than just a cross section of my own narrow circle of friends, I would have to reach out further. And so I placed an ad in newspapers and magazines which reached several varied audiences. The ad merely said:

FEMALE SEXUAL FANTASIES

wanted by serious female researcher.

Anonymity guaranteed. Box XYZ.

As much as I'd been encouraged by my husband and also by the spirit of the times in which we live, I think it was the letters that came that marked the turning point in my own attitude toward this work. I am no marcher, nor Red-Crosser, but some of the cries for help and sighs of relief in those letters moved me. Again and again they would start, "Thank God, I can tell these thoughts to someone; up till now I've never confided mine to a living soul. I have always been ashamed of them, feeling that other people would think them unnatural and consider me a nymphomaniac or a pervert."

I think it fair to say that I began this book out of curiosity—about myself and the odd explosive excitement/anxiety syndrome the subject set up in others; the male smugness of my rejecting lover and that know-it-all editor kept me going; but it became a serious and meaningful effort when I realized what

MY SECRET GARDEN

it could mean, not only to all the sometimes lonely, sometimes joyful, usually anonymous women who were writing to me, but to the thousands and thousands who, though they were too embarrassed, isolated, or ashamed to write, might perhaps have the solitary courage to read.

Today we have a flowering of women who write explicitly and honestly about sex and about what goes on in a woman's mind and body during the act. Marvelous writers like Edna O'Brien and Doris Lessing. But even with women as outspoken as these, they feel the need for a last seventh veil to hide acknowledgment of their sexuality; what they write calls itself fiction. It is a veil I feel it would be interesting and even useful to remove as a step in the liberation of us all, women and men alike. For no man can be really free in bed with a woman who is not.

Putting this book together has been an education. Learning what other women are like, both in their fantasies and in their lives—it is sometimes difficult to separate the two—has made me gasp in disbelief; laugh out loud occasionally; blush; sigh a lot; feel a sense of outrage, envy, and a great deal of sympathy. I find my own fantasies are funner than some, less poetic than others, more startling than a good number—but they are my own. Naturally, my best fantasies, my favorites of the moment—numbers 1, 2, and 3 on my private hit parade—are not included here. One thing I've learned about fantasies: they're fun to share, but once shared, half their magic, their ineluctable power, is gone. They are sea pebbles upon which the waters have dried. Is that a mystery? So are we all.

2.

“WHY FANTASIZE WHEN YOU HAVE ME?”

FRUSTRATION

Most people think women's sexual fantasies fill a need, a vacancy; that they are taking the place of The Real Thing, and as such arise not in moments of sexual plenty, but when something is missing. Since frustration, therefore, is the beginning of popular understanding of why women fantasize, let's begin with two fantasies from frustrated women.

Madge

What a relief it is to admit to fantasies and to tell them to someone as understanding as you obviously are. I have a regular fantasy brought on by lack of interest by my husband. He fucks me every five or six weeks, and it is always the same: We are in bed with the lights out and he starts to play with his prick. This goes on often for half an hour or even longer. (He used to get me to do it, but he doesn't bother now.) I feel him start to really rub hard and breathe heavily, then he pulls up my nightie (still under the sheet), says, “Open your legs,” and after

MY SECRET GARDEN

about two seconds he comes inside me, rolls off, and goes to sleep.

All this time, and especially afterward when I know he's asleep—I play with myself then—I really enjoy my fantasy.

I find myself at the door of a big house; the door opens and a very big black man with a buxom black woman behind him are inside. He grabs me and pulls me inside, with the woman pushing, helping him. They drag me into a room in which a large Alsatian—very obviously male in the full sense!—is tied up with a boy of about fourteen. The boy is naked. I am ordered to strip naked. “Let’s see what you’ve got,” the black man leers at me. I protest and he produces a whip while his wife forcibly undresses me and ties my hands behind my back. She takes his trousers off and exposes his prick, which is abnormally big and stiff as she rolls his foreskin back and forth. I am forced to kneel in front of him, and when he tells me to, I am forced to use the words “cock” and “prick” to describe it. I am made to beg to be fucked and he makes me say the word “fucked” several times to emphasize it.

Then the dog is unleashed, and I am forced on my back while the dog is coaxed so that my head is by his cock and he licks my cunt. I have to feel its cock and rub it gently. Finally I am made to turn around and suck the dog’s cock as the black man watches me to make sure I really suck it. Then I’m made to lie on my back on a long stool and the woman gets the dog between my legs, held wide open, and guides his prick and I feel it go right inside me. I am watched by the boy and the wife is naked now. I have

WOMEN'S SEXUAL FANTASIES

to beg for a fucking as the man rubs his prick against my mouth until it becomes big and wet. I am made to lick it and suddenly he holds my head and forces his massive prick in my mouth and holds my nose so that I am forced to suck and swallow his come. It seems to squirt endlessly down my throat. As a final act, I am forced to suck his wife's tits and finally to lick her cunt until she is completely satisfied, while the boy jerks himself off over my cunt and belly. The fantasy fades and I am wet as my finger urgently strokes my cunt to orgasm.

Do you suppose this is all due to lesbian tendencies and my secret desire to be watched by a young boy? [Letter]

As is so often the case when human beings are faced with a mass of unexplained or bewildering experience they have been taught not to discuss, not only does Madge not have the answers, she doesn't even know the right questions. The inadequacy of her final paragraph, wondering about the meaning of her fantasy, is almost heartbreaking.

Dot

Although we have been sleeping together regularly for two years, and I have had three short affairs during that time, my husband and I have been married only eight weeks. I thought I was well prepared for all the postmarital disillusionments that young brides are prone to, but one took me by surprise. Prior to our wedding, our sex life had been varied, quite spontaneous and imaginative. Although I had masturbated

MY SECRET GARDEN

since puberty, it was only a year ago that I discovered my clitoris and experienced my first orgasm. Since that time, my mate had been only too anxious and willing to make use of that knowledge, and in his consideration, never failed to masturbate me to orgasm either immediately before or during intercourse.

Since we have been married, however, our mutual sex life has come to a standstill in relation to the life we had beforehand. Granted, we are now on stricter schedules and he is often too tired, but even on Sunday afternoons (what used to be our spend-one-day-in-bed-fucking day) the most I can expect is an uneventful nap. Now this hasn't been going on long enough for me to become angry or even frustrated, so I will deal with this myself. All this rambling has been my disorganized way of building up to the subject of fantasies.

When my husband does decide to get down to business, it generally becomes a slam-bam-thank-you-ma'am affair. Here's where my imagination comes in. I found that no matter how long I concentrated on achieving an orgasm, he was simply not giving me the time. So gradually I discovered that it was quicker to snap together a mental vision, a situation that would give me a quick dose of eroticism that would carry me through. Second, I discovered after trying several fantasies, that the process was much quicker and more effective if I relied on one fantasy each time. And the more use the fantasy gets, either during intercourse or masturbation, the more vivid and realistic it becomes.

This particular fantasy is brief, and I generally repeat it several times in my mind, omitting the

WOMEN'S SEXUAL FANTASIES

finale until I feel the wave of my orgasm. It consists of a room of men, well-dressed, wealthy, and at least middle-aged. One man acts as my husband or guardian—he is anonymous and I never really assigned him any specific relationship to me. He is in command of my actions and seems to be the leader of the men. I appear in this room of men dressed in a lovely summery dress, light and full-skirted. The man tells the men that I am easily embarrassed but am basically an exhibitionist. He tells me to undo the bodice of the dress, leaving my bare breasts exposed. He then has me lie facedown across the coffee table with my breasts hanging freely at one end and my rear at the other. He tells the men that I am aroused by anything icy and wet and suggests that they cup their half-full champagne glasses around my breasts. (When my husband and I were having better days and nights, we often applied ice to one another.) The fantasy goes on as he slips his hand under my dress and underwear and massages my rear. He does not pay any attention at all to my clitoris or vagina, only my rear. He speaks to the other men and tells them what a marvelous white broad ass I have, and would they like to see it? He feels my rear some more and then slowly lifts my dress to expose my butt, still in panties. He rubs it some more, praises it to the men. By this point, my orgasm is beginning to build and when I am ready, I imagine him very slowly peeling my panties down my thighs. If I have not experienced my climax by now, I either repeat the fantasy from the point of the champagne glasses, or else I add to the ending a light spanking. During the spanking, he explains to the men

MY SECRET GARDEN

that he enjoys seeing my white cheeks turn pink.

This fantasy originated while I masturbated in the bathtub. Now it gets used almost daily, if not in bed with my husband, in the tub with a well-aimed stream of water. I'm curious to know how long this one fantasy will suffice before it becomes boring. I'm beginning to think that just the concept of this fantasy is what turns me on—sort of a reflex action. But as long as it works, it's keeping our marriage—including our sex life—joyful. [Letter]

INSUFFICIENCY

Before we go on to more provocative reasons for fantasy, positive reasons with which I personally identify but about which I still feel—even after putting together this book—an odd mix of excitement and anxiety, let me give you four more variations on this theme of frustration; it is one of the great and universal themes of sexual loneliness, one whose reality we can all understand. The first interview below is with forty-five-year-old Louella, a totally sexually deprived woman; the second with Irene, twenty-five, who might as well be. Next comes a letter from Annette, who was young enough—nineteen—and frantic enough to have probably done something about her frustration by now. I think the violence and alienation of some of the themes these women explore is a measure of how much the human being will rage against sexual famine. The well-fed diner will idly choose between this dessert and that; the starving person will dream of “eating a horse.”

WOMEN'S SEXUAL FANTASIES

Louella

Perhaps the basis for my fantasy about my stepson is the humiliation I feel because my husband only married me to be a housekeeper and in order to look after his son. My husband is sexually impotent, but the boy is blatantly sexual. Sometimes I feel I cannot tear my eyes away from the bulge in the boy's trousers. I know what's there, it seems to run the full length of his belly.

In my fantasy I call for him to get up out of bed, I know he isn't sleeping. I listen outside the bedroom door and know he is lying there playing with himself. I am about to call him again but another boy, a school friend, comes to call and I let them go off by themselves because I know what they are up to.

They go into the woodshed, and after a little time I creep down and peek through the planks. They are standing facing each other, their cocks out, stroking each other. I feel so bloody cross, but yet I still feel myself getting wet. I go back to the house and shriek for him to come in. I still feel like hitting him over the head. He comes in half ashamed and sneering; I myself sit down with my legs trembling. I see he has a big bulge there, he seems to be sticking it out more, then, I don't know, I open his buttons and pull his shirt up. I didn't think it was so big. I stroke him, it is hot and throbbing and he comes as quick as that, covering my hand. Later I take him to my bedroom, he sits on the edge of the bed, I play with him, pulling his skin right back. I am shaking with sex, I pull my dress off and he sucks my tits, then I back up to him and guide it in,

MY SECRET GARDEN

with my thighs closed. But he comes too soon, and I send him away. I watch him go down the lane and get out my dildo, it is thicker and goes all in. [Letter and interview]

Irene

My husband is studying for his master's degree, but I have only about one year's worth of college credits which I have earned by attending college part-time. I am twenty-five and my husband is one year younger. We do not have any children and I believe I would prefer not to have any.

My husband talks a lot about sex, but he is not very active sexually. As you can probably guess, I am sexually unsatisfied, and have never had an orgasm. Only lately have I thought of someone other than my husband during sex. I imagine what it would be like to have sex with a man who could continue long enough for me to be satisfied. I know several men who I think could do this. Unfortunately, sex with my husband lasts for such a short time I don't get much of a chance to even fantasize for very long.

He often asks me about my thoughts during sex, but I wouldn't dare tell him about the other men. I'm sure it would just make things worse if he knew I was pretending that he was another man. Anyway, when I do make up innocent little sexual thoughts to tell him, he just gets more excited and comes even more quickly.

I often search for "fantasy partners" when I'm in public. If I see a man who interests me, I imagine that my large breasts are bare. Seeing them, he is un-

WOMEN'S SEXUAL FANTASIES

able to resist me and he takes me then and there, and finally and fully satisfies me. I even look at attractive couples, wondering whether or not the man can satisfy the woman, and what it must be like for her to have an orgasm. That usually just leaves me feeling jealous though.

I have also tried thinking of other women, not frequently but sometimes. I imagine having sex with a girl like myself. We know each other's desires better than any man could, and we are far better able to satisfy them. The fantasies include cunnilingus because I have heard that is a good way to help a woman have an orgasm. My husband will not do it to me though.

I've tried masturbation, but even with fantasy I've not been able to reach a climax. During masturbation, I've tried imagining that it is a young, good-looking man doing it to me. I close my eyes and imagine his head pressed against my breasts and that my fingers are his lips. Or I imagine that an entire fraternity house has kidnapped me for an orgy. I am the only girl there. I imagine them one by one taking their turn with me, in the dining room, in various beds, on the floor, everywhere and with everyone watching. They come at me one right after the other and this way I imagine I can finally have an orgasm . . . but I never really do reach one.

My latest and most unusual fantasy is that I am both a woman and a man and that I am having sexual relations with myself. I imagine that I am able to give myself all the sexual satisfaction I have ever desired. It is a complicated fantasy to work out, but I think eventually it will work. [Letter]

MY SECRET GARDEN

Annette

I have never confided my sexual fantasies to a living soul, but I feel I must tell someone about them, and so I welcome the opportunity to unburden myself. I have always been ashamed of them, because I feel that other people would think them unnatural, and consider me a nymphomaniac, or something similar.

I am nineteen years old, and have been married for a year now; my husband is twenty-three. We have a satisfying sex life when he is at home, and indulge in every kind of sexual activity, including long sessions of oral lovemaking. The trouble starts when my husband is away from home, which is sometimes as much as two weeks at a time, as he travels abroad on business quite a lot and cannot always take me with him.

By the end of the second week, or sometimes sooner, I am getting desperate for intercourse, and I have to resort to masturbation, as for various reasons I do not wish to get involved with other men. At first, I used to fantasize that my husband was with me, and he was fondling my breasts and my vulva, licking and sucking my clitoris, and—as I thrust a banana or the smaller end of a cucumber into my vagina—I closed my eyes and pretended it was my husband's penis that was penetrating me.

This was sufficient to give me a satisfying orgasm at first, but after a while I found it more difficult to reach one. So, I started to imagine that two men were making love to me—my husband and a man I strongly fancy at the tennis club. I imagined that one was kissing my breasts and sucking my nipples while

WOMEN'S SEXUAL FANTASIES

the other was loving me with his mouth between my legs. Then, as I pushed the banana into my vagina, I imagined that the other man was fucking me while my husband put his penis in my mouth.

Now it has gone a step further, and to get my orgasm, I lie down on my back across our double bed, with my legs apart and a two-inch-thick cucumber thrust into my vagina, and close my eyes while I imagine that four men are making love to me all at once. As I thrust the cucumber in and out with a screwing motion, I imagine that one man kneels between my legs, kissing my slit, which is hairless, by the way; another kneels beside the bed above my head kissing my mouth; and two others kneel on the bed each side of me, sitting on their heels, and leaning forward to suck my nipples, while I stretch out my hand and take hold of their penises to masturbate them.

From there the fantasy progresses. I tip my head back over the side of the bed, and the man there inserts his penis in my mouth. The man between my legs gets onto the bed and inserts his penis in my vagina, and with my mouth, my hands, and my vagina, I make all four of them come at once. After a while, when I start to want another orgasm, I imagine that I am taking them on one at a time for a session of *soixante-neuf*. One by one, I suck them to erection, and proceed to drain them dry; swallowing each offering of semen from four men, leaving them limp and impotent (for the time being), thrills me immensely, and I enjoy a whole series of wonderful orgasms in this way.

I know that if ever I had the chance to make my

MY SECRET GARDEN

fantasy come true with four virile men, without the possibility of my husband getting to know about it, I would grab the chance. I feel that once I had experienced the sensation, which I am sure would be out of this world, I would no longer be tormented with the need to fantasize about it.

I shall be interested to hear of other women's fantasies, and to know if I am alone in having such wicked thoughts. And if you know of four *strong*, sexy men who want to take part in an orgy with an attractive, passionate woman (37" 24" 37"), send them along to me! [Letter]

Maria

I have been married three years. I think my husband would mostly react with surprise if he found out that I think about other men sometimes when we are having intercourse. I have led him to believe that I do not often think about sexual things. If anything, he might have his feelings hurt by such a revelation because he often expresses doubts about his sexual attractiveness to women.

I sometimes try to imagine my husband being so sexually excited about me that he would tear my clothes off and "rape" me. His actions when we have intercourse are so much the opposite of that, though, that it is almost impossible for me to imagine. Often, lately, I have resisted having sexual intercourse with my husband when he wants it (which is only about once a month anyway) so that he will have to force me to have it with him, in the hope that he might sort of rape me. So far, though, he has not done so. [Letter]