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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ EROTICA

Smooth: Erotic Stories for Women

Rachel Kramer Bussel, editor
Cleis Press (November 2010)
Softcover $14.95 (204pp)
978-1-57344-408-8

Despite or perhaps because of social taboos against exhibitions of uninhibited behavior, the commercial appeal of erotica, sometimes classified as a lusty subgenre of romance, may exceed that of tamer types of fiction. With a guaranteed audience craving the contents of these lucrative books, erotica is one of the most competitive genres in today's publishing industry.

Outstanding and original, *Smooth: Erotic Stories for Women* will not disappoint readers. An anthology of nineteen pieces written by a diverse group of women, this collection is attention-grabbing and titillating, though it occasionally verges on esoteric. The theme is one of revelation and discovery, of letting go, getting naked, and enjoying physical sensation without withdrawing.

These stories have a decidedly female perspective, but often veer into clinical encounters—procedures interpreted as bodily functions separated from the intellectual or emotional backdrop of the mind. Nothing is inherently wrong in this approach; in fact, this may be a good way to overcome psychological blockades to pleasure, which is one beneficial purpose of erotica. The stories explore a wide range of unusual scenarios, with only a few falling into the realm of the stereotypical or trite. Settings range from a tattoo parlor to a sauna to an artist's studio to the subway. Many are presented with a sense of humor, and one even served with sushi.

A resident of New York, Rachel Kramer Bussel is an award-winning erotica editor with over twenty-five anthologies to her credit. She's the senior editor for *Penthouse Variations* and a contributing editor to *Penthouse*. Her *Art of the Erotic Love Letter* was also published by Cleis Press, and her first novel, *Everything But…*, was a fall Harlequin Spice release. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science and women's studies from the University of California at Berkeley and studied law at the New York University School of Law.

Contributors include established names in the field such as Angela Caperton, Heidi Champa, Lisabet Sarai, and Susan St. Aubin, along with a few lesser-known newcomers. Whether at a tea party or in an online chat, these innovative writers find smooth ways to describe a secret fantasy.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (January / February 2011)

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