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WRITING SAMPLE #2

Personal blog post, February 2011 (links included)

In Praise of Protection

[<http://thegreenlightdistrict.org/wordpress/2011/02/in-praise-of-protection/>]

In the United States, we are currently in the middle of [National Condom Week](#), which is recognized in the U.S. during the week of Valentine's Day (February is [National Condom Month](#)). Thus it seemed an appropriate time to post my ode to this rubber entity I love and appreciate so much.

Several weeks ago the beautiful and inspiring [Nikki Magennis](#) initiated [a series of posts honoring the condom](#) on her blog. I deeply appreciated the sentiment and much enjoyed reading the lovely pieces, many of which were [fiction flashers](#), she offered on the topic. (In fact, she has now created an entire blog devoted to the loveliness of the condom—check out [Rubber Soul!](#))

In one of Nikki's posts, she linked to [this piece](#), in which three authors discuss their respective perspectives about including the mention of condom usage in the fiction they write. The piece is specifically about M/M romance, but I myself frankly don't see distinctions either among which populations it is more appropriate to use condoms or in which genres their use is appropriately included/displayed—to me condom usage seems appropriate across the board in partnered sex unless the partners are monogamous with each other and have been STI/STD-tested—so I read it as a general post about condom usage/mentions in fiction.

In the comments, I saw a number of assertions of something I have heard before (in regard to both erotic fiction and pornography of other media): These are “fantasies,” so the realism of condom usage is not necessary and/or desired and may even seem misplaced.

I feel very differently about this. The first thing that strikes me, I think, is that I don't feel I write erotica just to write “fantasy” (this may be different in the romance genre, to which the aforementioned article appeared to be more related). I write it because sex interests me, and its inclusion in life is what I want to reflect in my writing—the ways sex enlightens, challenges, connects us, the plethora of sensations and emotions we feel around it, how it shows us things about ourselves, others, society. For me, the idea that I'm writing an “escape” and thus should not or would not want to include real-life concerns in what I'm writing does not resonate. To me, in fact, it feels more accurate to say the opposite would be true.

As I mentioned in the [interview Ashley Lister](#) did with me for the [Erotica Readers and Writers Association](#), I have been carrying condoms in my purse since I started having sex. Rarely am I anywhere without them. This has of course been quite deliberate, and I have made use of condoms I'm carrying with me numerous times. Often the characters I've written have adopted this trait as well, and as I mentioned in the interview, while some readers may find this unrealistic or “too” convenient, the first part of this paragraph may show why I do not.

It thus seems odd to me to not include this aspect of sexuality in what I write. I am, as I mentioned, aiming to write about the integral nature of sexuality in life, and to me condoms are a significant part of that. Since I myself have never found condoms a “mood-killer” or any such thing, I have not aimed to portray them as such in what I've written (which is not to say one

would never interpret them as such—I have no control of course over how my work is interpreted). Rather, I have mentioned them generally the same way I have experienced them in my life—matter-of-factly, as a requisite and understood aspect of sex. I myself have often found condoms sexy: they offer a protection I appreciate indescribably, and they tend to represent that I will soon be, well, having sex. :)

Also on the aforementioned [post](#), I saw comments such as this one:

Don't expect me to care about "real" characters who only act like "real" people when it's convenient and I have to ignore everything else. If I'm sitting there thinking "what kind of idiot has bareback alley sex with a stranger" I'm not thinking "that was really well written and wow, that was a funny line and I loved the description of the garbage bin."

I will admit I feel relieved to see comments like this, not because of a vested interest in regard to my own writing or because I want readers to agree with me, but rather because I have sometimes felt there has been an underlying idea permeating society that condoms somehow “aren’t sexy” and aren’t *really* important or desired or used in real sexual interaction. I find that very disturbing, and probably in large part given my history as a reproductive rights and health activist, I have tended to place a lot of importance on the open acknowledgement and embrace of condoms as an essential and desirable component of modern sexual landscape. It is both because I feel no desire whatsoever to contribute to the perpetuation of the idea that condoms are “un-sexy” or “kill the mood” or somehow decrease the quality of sex in any of the depictions of sex I offer (including in [video porn](#)) as well as the simple reality I have experienced of the connection between condoms and partnered sex that leaving out the mention of them in writing erotic fiction feels jarring and inappropriate to me.

That all being said, none of this is to say any or everyone else, writer or reader, should feel the same way I do. I am simply stating my perception and experience of condom use in life and fictional portrayal and why I have made the invariably deliberate references to condoms in my writing that I have. On the subject of fiction, incidentally, I will say that applying a rule that characters *must* use condoms does not seem appealing to me. Characters are characters; they do what they do. To state what a character in fiction must do before the character has even been born or created (even by the author) seems dubious and intrusive to me. As [Nikki said](#), it is not that I support any installation of such a rule; rather, I am stating why I personally find it called for to include condom use and the reference to it in sexually explicit fiction and why I have chosen to do so (as well as why I find condoms sexy!).

Happy belated Valentine's Day, and happy National Condom Week and Month!