



## Dear Readers,


I desperately miss the capacity and the hope of ever making love again. Perhaps some of that anguished regret spilled onto the pages of my stories. Of being held and holding in the way only lovers are able to entwine. I hope not. I hope my decision to utilize graphic and explicit content was motivated by something more substantial and more sublime. But why this sudden angst?



A few weeks ago, I reconnected with an old friend from college. She was not surprised when I informed her of my gender variance and immediately began referring to me as 'AnniKen.' I think it's cute.

I tried to explain to Lisa why I chose to craft my most intimate scenes in explicit detail using graphic language. The question has haunted me for days and made me realize I also owe all of you an explanation, since my intent was never to arouse or titillate.

So, I'll give it my best shot. If I can convey to you, as readers, the need for such an approach, I also hope to answer her.

A decade or so ago, I began dreaming I was a woman. The woman became so real I gave her a name, 'Martha.' Martha began telling me her story. In some ways, I felt more like a scribe than an author while telling Martha's story. That is the genesis of *Tristan's Whore*, Volumes I & II. In some ways, these two stories (initially written as a single novel) document my journey into femininity. Although Martha's certainty regarding her gender was shattered in an instant, my certainty that I was a man took months to unravel. These dream-inspired stories document my blossoming awareness that I am as much a woman as I am a man, if not more. Initial drafts were written alongside Martha's emotional and spiritual healing; a process that forced her to accept her own genderfluidity and modify her sexual orientation.





Claire is also Martha, and The Empath is little more than a second bite of the apple, an alternate incarnation for her.


I am Dany and Nika in Flower Song, but Claire and Martha also form parts of me. Flower's story is metaphorically and spiritually autobiographical. Her character represents my lifelong yearning to find my soulmate, to share a great love. It is the only story in the saga not formed from dreams, but from memories.



Girls of the Fire wraps up loose ends, providing the characters I had come to love with closure. I think it's my most entertaining story, but also my least literary. I wrote it as a gift to those characters, I could not allow them to languish among endless possible destinies.

I wrote these stories in one continuous effort, multiple versions and innumerable drafts over four years. I discarded countless false starts and dead ends until the Lodge of the Gray Bear Saga coalesced into a cohesive and meaningful journey spanning four generations.

I published initial versions on Amazon and included a final piece titled The Last Martha, which I had hoped to revise and republish. That now seems unlikely. I asked Matt, my gay nephew and one of the few people who read my stories, to give me an honest critique. He said reading them was like watching a sunset; beautiful, but so what? He explained that although I was writing about sex and gender, my characters lacked urgency and emotional energy. He was right. My characters are defined by the tension between gender identity and sexual orientation as influenced by cultural norms. I can imagine no better way to integrate this theme with character, plot, and conflict than through intimacy.

So, I undertook one final, thorough rewrite. But I struggled, I could no longer become my characters as I had in my dreams. It felt like I was writing about them rather than being them.





Then Martha returned to me in my dreams. She demanded I tell the truth about her, about Billy, about Tristan, about Amanda. And she wasn't alone. Many nights, my characters spoke to me like a chorus, insistent, vivid, alive. It was inspiring. I never felt like I was writing pornography; I was recounting the most intense moments of their lives.

I described these imaginings in detail, conveying how my characters felt in moments of desire and fulfillment, pain and ecstasy, degradation and despair. I crafted each intimate scene to reflect emotional and relational dynamics.


My goal was not to sensationalize, but to create meaning, to show growth, awareness, or consequence. I avoided including such scenes unless they were essential to the story. I hope I succeeded.



I followed my characters wherever they led. In my view, graphic sexuality was essential to convey their experiences of identity and connection.

My writing style leans toward understatement, allowing readers to interpret meaning. I extended this approach into intimate scenes, using more direct language to create a visceral experience. In my experience, intimacy is complex, vulnerability and control, desire and consequence. As Pat Benatar said, "Love is a Battlefield." I often imagine it as a moth drawn to a flame, sometimes consumed, sometimes transformative.

Those are the substantial changes I made. I believe the stories are stronger for them. My characters seem at peace now; they rarely visit my dreams. That was my intention.

Please consider whether this explanation is meaningful. I do not want readers to believe I write pornography.





I also understand that readers may seek a connection to the author's personal journey. For some, my identity may seem performative, but it is not. It never was.

My journey did not begin suddenly. From childhood, there were moments, memories, that shaped my understanding of self. Over time, I struggled, denied, questioned, and misunderstood myself.

For years, I experienced cycles of expression and shame, believing something was wrong with me. But through dreams, reflection, and writing, I came to understand my identity differently.

Accepting my gender variance has been a profound and joyful experience. I did not become someone new; I became more complete. I identify as genderfluid, embracing both sides of myself.

This joy, however, is complicated by the reactions of others. I have lost relationships. Some people struggle to accept me as I am. Beyond that, there are broader societal challenges that make this identity difficult to live openly.

For me, self-expression is both affirmation and defiance. My stories are part of that expression, a refusal to remain silent.

That is my story. I hope it helps explain who I am, why I write from a woman's perspective, and why I chose not to close the door between my characters and my readers.

Massive hugs,  
Anni

