

# Explicit Sex and Censorship

written by Holly

June 28, 2005

By Holly Lisle

First, here's my nomination for a working definition of the romance genre: "Romantic fiction, or romance, means what readers decide it means."

Second, I don't enjoy reading explicit sex scenes. Might as well be right up front about that. Not because they offend me, but because at two points in my life, I decided to reverse my previous lifelong policy and err with sins of commission rather than omission.

It was educational, if in the end depressing; the good that came from it was that I learned what I liked, and what I didn't like, and when I finally found **my** guy, I could let him know – which lets us have all of the fun and none of the guilt. Like most folks, I have some vanilla tastes, and some that are decidedly not so.

And writers who write explicit sex scenes invariably hit on one or two vanilla things that I cannot freakin' stand, and go into rich and loving detail on those – which wrecks the scene they're writing for me. Worse, they never (okay, almost never) get to the good part (by my definition), because they don't like what I like.

**Rule of thumb:** No matter who we are, nobody **ever** likes exactly what we like, except maybe our beloved – and even then, probably not always, but we accomodate. And the more detail the writer goes into when writing a sex scene, the more chances she runs of imposing her fantasy while smashing ours all to hell. We careen into the realm of **T**oo **M**uch **I**nformation, nor are we happy to find ourselves there.

It isn't as big a problem when we're younger. We don't have the Been There, Done That t-shirt yet, and we're willing to believe that this thing the writer is writing about that we have never tried might be something fantastic that we would love. Wait twenty years while taking some chances and making some mistakes along the way, and unless we're reading the writing of our kindred spirit, somebody else's idea of a good time doesn't work for us anymore. We can do those scenes a whole lot better in our heads, or in our beds.

So. I don't like explicit sex scenes anymore.

But I won't impose my tastes on you.

And, though I've already said everything I need to say about the RWA and censorship, (here (rated R), and here, and here, I haven't said all I can about you.

If you're a writer, you are not primarily a romance writer, or an inspirational writer, or a science fiction writer, or a literary writer. Or an erotica writer. You are a writer, first, last, and above all else. And as a writer, you cannot stand silently watching censorship happen, just because it isn't censorship of **you**. If you're a writer – hell, if you're a **reader** – and even if the books a group or organization is attempting to censor (*transitive verb*: “to examine (as a publication or film) in order to suppress or delete any contents considered objectionable”) are books you hate, you have to speak out against the organization that is working to silence the creators of those books. (And if an organization is willing to take your money, but is not willing to represent you equally with its other members, **or its other members equally with you**, and is actively working to shunt some members of the organization into second-class citizenship, then no matter where you stand in the organization's heirarchy, it is working to sideline you, make you conform, or lessen the power and reach of your voice.) None of us are the same, but all of us are together anyway, and our one hope of

survival is to stand together, for each other, every goddamned time the hammer comes down.

We cannot silently permit some of us to be silenced, cannot give our tacit approval to the abomination of censorship, cannot by the act of omission lend our support to fascism, simply because we are not immediately affected by fascists.

**FASCISM?!?!**

Yes. Fascism.

Definition of fascism? The most notable characteristic of fascism is the separation and persecution or denial of equality to a specific segment of the population based upon superficial qualities or belief systems.

Sound familiar?

How about this, then?

“Romance means means a story in which a predominant part of the story line focuses on the romantic relationship that develops between CHOICE #1 one man and one woman / CHOICE #2 two people on more than a physical level.”– with a million other possibilities left out. You don’t like any of those other possibilities? That’s okay. You don’t have to like ’em. You just have to acknowledge that the rest of the world is not you, and that someday, somehow, someone may decide that not every aspect of your life is something that would meet with the approval of censors.

Because we are all different.

But we are all together.

Think about it. Think about where you are sending your money, what you are supporting, what statement you are making when you say, “I belong to this organization.

And understand that if you stand with facsism, you stand against your own freedom, for no one in a fascist organization is free.

**We are all different. But we are all together.**

The RWA is a private organization, and as such, can do what it damn well pleases.

But so can you.

**Quit the RWA, dammit, whether you love erotica, hate erotica, find it repulsive, or consider it an abomination. Quit because you are a writer, not a fascist, and whether individually the board of directors are lovely ladies or not – and I'm sure they are – collectively, they are perpetrating fascism. And on your way out the door, be sure to tell them why you're quitting.**

Contents © Holly Lisle. <https://hollylisle.com> All Rights Reserved