

“I Want Them To Feel Everything”: A Conversation with *SfSx* Creator Tina Horn

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Abstract

Sex is omnipresent in Tina Horn’s graphic novel series *SfSx*. Investigating consent and coercion, sex work and censorship, the demonization of female sexuality and the exercise of radical, gender-inclusive queer pleasure, *SfSx* de-sensationalizes kink without reducing its eroticism. Along the way, it offers a vision of the new worlds these complex intimacies might allow us to build. This conversation between Tina Horn and Anna Ziering, held across 2022 and 2023, considers *SfSx* as a queer and kinky subcultural text that participates in literary conversations about sex, power, race,

and resistance. It contributes to the growing field of Kink Studies by asking questions about visual, artistic, and literary representations of sex, and the place and purpose of these texts within and outside the kink community. It also considers the roles that love and sex play in politics, the power of bottoming, the interplay between state violence and BDSM erotics, and the possibilities and potential problems of sexual technology. Throughout this conversation, Horn considers how her dystopian sci-fi horror comics reflect and respond to the state of our world today.

Sex is omnipresent in Tina Horn's graphic novel series *SfSx*. In a not-too-distant future in San Francisco, a fascist Christian group known as the Party rules with an iron fist. It legislates sexuality and punishes any "perversion" of which it disapproves. A group of queer sex workers known as the Dirty Mind risk arrest and torture by operating an underground dungeon, resisting the Party's twisted efforts at "purity" as they pursue pleasure, love, and community at any cost. In *Volume 1: Protection*, the Dirty Mind invade the Party's headquarters to rescue imprisoned lovers, exposing its torturous "Reformation" tactics to a nation that turns out not to care. In *Volume 2: Terms of Service*, the group—and some unexpected new allies—face new challenges, including futuristic technologies of control and a dangerous men's rights movement from whom the Party has marshalled support.

AZ: Thank you for joining me to talk about *SfSx*. Your fun, important work celebrates sex, sex work, and queerness while reckoning with frighteningly relevant issues of power, abuse, and state violence. I'm excited to learn more about it, and to introduce the text to more readers.

TH: I'm excited that *SfSx* is serving its purpose as a portal for sharing thoughts and instigating conversations.

AZ: I'll begin with questions about representation. You are a queer, white, cisgender sex worker. Many of the characters in *SfSx* are queer and trans sex workers of color. What does it mean to have this primarily queer-of-color world created largely, though not entirely, by a white woman? Do you see any tensions there and, if so, how do you manage them? Is it important to you that your creative team reflect the characters that you're working with?

TH: I'm invested in representation, in large part, as a material labor issue. That's connected to my identity as a sex worker. Often, the people who get paid for telling sex work stories don't actually have a background in the industry. The same goes for queer stories and

the queer community. The *SfSx* characters don't get paid—they're not real! But if *SfSx* were to be adapted for television or film, the characters would be played by more trans people, more people of color, more under-represented people, who *would* get paid.

Representation on the page matters too. The stories we hear and the characters we encounter are the ones we learn to care about. As a creator, I have the opportunity to create more representation. So why wouldn't I? I always want to be mindful—I don't want to be appropriative, and I don't turn to diverse representation as a mode of virtue-signaling. I think about it carefully; it's a rigorous process of always asking myself, *am* I being appropriative? What are my motivations? Is this blackface? Am I role-playing or trying on what it would mean to be a trans woman of color? How can my work help create empathy? I try to attend to places and times where that might be inappropriate, but overall I think increased representation is an intrinsic good.

I wish the creative team for *SfSx* shared more of the characters' identities, but due to some practical considerations, the team is primarily composed of white people, some cis, some trans, mostly queer. That's one of the many reasons I was thrilled to hire G. Romero Johnson, a trans person of color, to illustrate *Terms of Service*. I feel so grateful to have been connected to G., in part because of that labor issue—I'm able to pay them! But I'm also grateful because they bring their own experience, knowledge, and skill to the project. There's a scene in *Terms of Service* where Denis, a genderqueer POC character, is full-frontal naked for the first time. I had a conversation with G. about what Denis' junk should look like. And G. said, "I already thought I would draw it in a way that you could interpret as intersex." That creative decision was made by a trans person. Being able to give G. that freedom was important to me.

AZ: As a medium, graphic novels have their own particular challenges and opportunities for representing not just people, but sex itself. *SfSx* is graphic both in genre, and in its visual representations of sex. *Volume 1* opens at a sex party, and readers immediately see sexual and erotic acts—including pegging (anal penetration by a dildo), full-body suspension, and vaginal fisting—that are not usually visually represented outside of pornography. Can you share a bit about your intentions for visual sexual representation in *SfSx*?

TH: My career has focused on sexuality in a lot of different media. I got my start working as a professional dominatrix in client-based services, and entered the queer feminist art-porn scene in the Bay Area around 2008, first as an on-camera performer, then as a producer and director. By the time I started making comic books, I had experience making visual representations of hardcore explicit sex—especially the kind of queer sex that is often censored even in porn.

I think these media have the power to make people uncomfortable in necessary and important ways. I'm invested in showing the many ways people can experience pleasure and play with power: how people fuck, love, and relate, how friends and communities play together. That's both an artistic goal and a political goal. If I have the freedom to go for it, I'm going to push it as far as I can.

Comics and graphic novels are unique in their use of imagery and language. Writing an explicit sex scene for an artist to draw is different from writing a sex scene in prose fiction or describing sex in non-fiction. People often have a hard time reading about sex, or writing about it well. But to paraphrase Annie Sprinkle, the solution to bad sex writing is not *no* sex writing—it's *better* sex writing! Sex is so full of symbolic and metaphorical potential, of emotion. To me, that makes it perfect material for storytelling. I've experienced pushback—pushback that put not just my

artistic integrity but my livelihood on the line. Maybe part of the reason that there aren't great stories about sex is that people encounter that pushback and decide it's not worth it. Maybe part of what makes me unique is that I'm just stubbornly obsessed with sex. I don't see any reason for storytellers or media creators to be coy about it.

I'm frustrated by the lack of representation of sex overall, and the editorial constraints on what can be represented in comics in particular. I'm not necessarily set on being graphic for its own sake. There are artistic ways to represent explicit sex acts that aren't themselves explicit, such as the hand sex scene in the Wachowskis' film *Bound*, which relies on showing arm movements and muscles flexing. A limitation like that is okay—it creates creative possibilities. But arbitrary censorship disrupts my ability to tell the stories I want to tell. Image Comics has been wonderful. They've never once asked me to change a single thing about the book's content. That's hugely liberatory for the kinds of comics I want to make, and the work I want to do in general.

AZ: We've been talking about the challenges and opportunities of visual and multimedia representations of sex. There is also a long history of literary representations of kink and BDSM (bondage/discipline, dominance/submission, sadism/masochism). The word "masochism" was derived from the fin-de-siècle Austrian novelist Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, whose 1870 novella *Venus Im Pelz* (*Venus in Furs*) depicts a man who longs to be the "slave" of a cruel woman. The French author Marquis de Sade lent his name to sadism. How do you see *SfSx* in relation to and in conversation with that literary tradition? What does it add that is new or different?

TH: Both Sacher-Masoch and de Sade told stories that came from their own fantasies and libidos. Our association of them with BDSM is largely due to the nineteenth-century sexologist

Richard von Krafft-Ebing, who, in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), named the erotic interest in receiving pain after Sacher-Masoch, and in inflicting pain after de Sade. He took those stories and used them to encapsulate what he was conceptualizing as deviance, as sickness. That was part of a legacy now spanning three centuries in which queerness and sexual difference are seen as pathologies or paraphilias, as sicknesses to be cured—a perspective developed in sexological discourse in the nineteenth century and sustained through the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) well into the twentieth (for homosexuality) and the twenty-first (for sadism and masochism). That legacy is deeply related to storytelling; the self-narratives of masochists on which Krafft-Ebing based his theorization of masochism, for instance, frequently include references to *Venus In Furs*.

I see my work as deconstructing those inherited ideas about queerness and BDSM—those legacies of hegemonic oppression, of institutions and systems conceptualizing marginalized people as sick. Maybe bringing us back to a literary tradition of storytelling, entertainment, art, and inquiry, rather than case studies and pathology, can help us—queers, perverts, and deviants—conceptualize ourselves in different ways that are not defined against the status quo.

AZ: *SfSx* is part of a wave of new kink and BDSM cultural texts that have come out over the past decade. Some of these, like the TV shows *Billions* (Showtime) and *Bonding* (Netflix), are mainstream narratives that employ BDSM for shock value, and are often not coming from within kink communities. Others are deeply rooted in kink communities, but these tend to get less funding and be less accessible—texts like Yin Q’s web series *Mercy Mistress*. Could you speak a bit about *SfSx*’s place in this new wave of texts? Who is your intended audience?

TH: *SfSx* has a lot in common with *Mercy Mistress*. Both were crowd-funded, and emerged from the communities they depict. Any money circulating is moving within those communities rather than for a corporation's benefit. For *SfSx*, I want audiences both in and outside the kink and sex worker communities. The book also appeals to fans of comics, science fiction, and horror, who come for the genre and are introduced to this new, queer world. But it doesn't spend a lot of time explaining things to unfamiliar readers. There is an educational aspect, but the story goes beyond showcasing the existence of kink. That's the background to a more exciting, more frightening story.

AZ: The story of *SfSx* is frightening in large part because of its villains: the leaders of the Party, a fascist Christian government that understands sexual pleasure as a threat to society, government, and God. As is so often true—and as *SfSx*'s visual art makes clear through references to the 2017 white nationalist march in Charlottesville, VA—their focus on sexual purity is tied up with a focus on racial purity and white supremacy, and with a conservative religiosity that purports to justify these aims. All of these ideas are tied together by the Party's slogan: "Purity, Order, Salvation." You deal with these very real and important issues by employing a range of genres, including science fiction and horror. How would you describe *SfSx* in terms of its genre position?

TH: *SfSx* is a lot of things. It's dystopian, for sure—although many real problems and situations are only recognized as dystopian when they affect white people. It employs horror, and it uses humor both for levity and satire. It's action, it's adventure, and it's science fiction; a lot of the dystopian aspects are achieved through future tech that allows for Kafkaesque bureaucracy and invasive surveillance. Sometimes it's hella serious. When people are reading it, I want them to feel everything. I'm a glutton for making people feel everything it is possible to feel.

AZ: *SfSx* is also a love story. The Dirty Mind, a group of sex workers working to rescue loved ones who have been disappeared by the Party, isn't motivated by politics. Instead, they are driven by love—romantic love, platonic love, and love for their community. Could you talk about why you decided to center love stories in a series about sex work, resistance, and politics?

TH: *SfSx* isn't about people who set out to make a better world. They're not trying to fight the power, take down the government, or alchemize some change in society. I've intentionally resisted that storyline. Sometimes it's a nice utopian fantasy to imagine that if we could just do X, Y, or Z, the world would be better for everyone. But in movement work, it's so often one step forward, three steps back—or even, “we've won this fight, but shit's still fucked.” I don't know if I believe that things can be fixed, and the characters aren't trying to fix things. They're just trying to survive.

The most important love story of *SfSx*, to me, is community love and friendship. The story's main conflicts arise within the community. In *Volume 1*, the protagonist, Avory, used to be a sex worker at the Dirty Mind, which considers itself a kind of family. But her friends in the Dirty Mind feel like she abandoned them when things got hard. The Party had just raided the Dirty Mind and disappeared their leader, Jones, when Avory decides to marry her lover, George, and to leave the Dirty Mind behind. Avory and George are in love, but getting married also allows her a safer life under Party rule. When George is taken into custody and tortured by the Party, the Dirty Mind reunites to rescue him and Jones. *Volume 1* is mostly George and Avory's love story, which includes a deliberate gender reversal with George as damsel in distress.

But *SfSx* is also about sex. Both Avory and George are bisexual. Bisexuality doesn't fit into conventional narrative structures—you

can't always "legitimize" bisexual characters by showing their full sexual range. In *Volume 2*, it was important to me that they each got plot lines where they had gay sex. That plot line became quite central to the story on Avory's side; for George, it offered levity.

AZ: George is a bottom and a masochist; he gets pleasure from pain in consensual erotic encounters. Bottomhood has been theorized by a range of scholars, from the white gay male psychoanalytic tradition of Lee Edelman and Leo Bersani to the queer of color and Black feminist lineage of Kathryn Bond Stockton, Darieck Scott, Nguyen Tan Hoang, and Juana María Rodríguez. It is also a living term that is constantly being negotiated in BDSM spaces. What theorists, educators, and BDSM community members have most influenced your thoughts on bottoming and on bottoms? What definition would you offer?

TH: Overall, cis women are conditioned to accept vaginal penetration by penises as the default sex act. Even things like pegging are seen as inversions of what's normal. But in queer experiences and as a sex worker, I got to have conversations about other ways sex could look. Sex acts don't have to look any particular way or mean any particular thing. You can conceptualize them in your life and your art however you want to.

One theorist that really impacted me was German communist Bini Adamczak. She wrote a piece about "circclusion" in 2016—the action of wrapping or surrounding—that has since become very influential in thinking about sexual bottoming. It challenges the idea that being penetrated is passive; it reconceives sexual bottoming as active and powerful. Anyone who has been penetrated sexually knows this is true—that there is potential for being active in that act.

I've also been influenced by Leo Herrera's work on bottom shame. He offers an expansive queer meditation on masculinity,

perfection, and shame that considers everything from racism and misogyny in purity culture to the idea of what it means to be a receptive sexual partner. Chingy Nea, who goes by The Gay Chingy, and Sheree Rose, who is well known for her work with supermasochist Bob Flanagan, have also influenced my thinking.

AZ: You're discussing bottoming as receiving penetration, but it also often serves as an umbrella term for masochism, submission, and the position of powerlessness—all of which might but do not need to include penetration. A lot of theory work struggles with these semantic distinctions: bottom versus masochist versus submissive. People use the same words to mean different things. How do you distinguish between those terms, and how do you decide when to use each one?

TH: It's important for us to acknowledge that these categories aren't identical: for example, not all tops are sadists. I try to use more specific language. If I'm talking about power play, I use the terms dominant and submissive. For pain play, I use sadist and masochist. For play that involves penetration and genitals, I use top and bottom. But I'm not really attached to any particular word meaning one particular thing. I've been influenced enough by the semiotic tradition that I find that absurd! As an educator, I'm more interested in asking about the most useful way to talk about things, in a way that invites people in and supports them in their erotic development.

AZ: In *Volume 1*, George uses the skills—endurance, pain tolerance, humor—that he developed as a masochistic bottom to survive the torture he endures under the Party. Although it's a truism within the BDSM community that the bottom is the one in charge, it's rare to see bottomhood represented as a form of power, as a set of skills. Why do you think that is?

TH: I'm always trying to understand why people are so afraid of sex. I'm starting to think that a lot of the fear around pornography is actually a kind of bottom phobia. So much of the resistance to porn—particularly the resistance that comes from radical anti-porn feminism, from people like Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon—has to do with the interpretation of bottoming as abject. This perspective takes porn very literally, then argues that porn is inherently unethical and should not exist. A woman getting fucked, men ejaculating in women's faces, dick slapping, rough blow jobs, gaping—all of these are seen as inherently exploitative or degrading. That perspective assumes that being penetrated is something awful that happens to a person. At the same time, like I said, being penetrated is the default of what sex is supposed to be for women. We're supposed to either learn to love it or learn to take it, to accept that this is what sex is going to be for us no matter how we feel about it. And that extends to gay male bottoms and trans bottoms. I think that's a misunderstanding of penetration, certainly, and a misinterpretation of sex in general. I think people are threatened by the power of bottoming, and they cope with that fear by constructing it as inherently exploitative or degrading.

SfSx looks at bottoming in a different light. In the tradition of action-adventure comics, the characters navigate perilous situations using special skills. Because I was writing about sex workers, I got the opportunity to ask—okay, what are sex workers' particular skills? What are their superpowers? Casey can do incredible bondage, and Sylvia's ability to codeswitch is a kind of shapeshifting. George becomes, effectively, a masochistic superhero! Because he has all these bottom skills of endurance, pain tolerance, and humor, he has power.

It's vital to note, of course, that the things the Party does to George are not sex; nor are they under the umbrella of BDSM practices. They are not okay, they are not justified, and they are

not in any way acceptable. They are torture—he does not consent. That makes it very different from the consensual erotic pain he enjoys with Ivory. But if somebody is torturing you against your will to make you feel bad, and you can—through your own force of will—feel good or even not feel broken, then I think you have taken back the upper hand. That’s bottom power.

AZ: Historically, BDSM developed as an erotic interest in conversation with—and a mimicry of—institutional modes of violence. We see this overlap in, for instance, the BDSM usage of tactics, such as whipping and handcuffs, that are part of the iconography of chattel slavery. There was a feedback loop between state-supported violence and erotic fantasy where state violence became eroticized. People have strong feelings about that complicated interplay: if it looks too much like violence, it can’t be sex, and if it looks too much like sex, it can’t be violence. In *SfSx*, we see the second half of that loop, where erotic fantasies and techniques of consensual erotic violence are redeployed as non-consensual state violence. We’ve seen this sort of thing happen in real life. At Abu Ghraib, for instance, U.S. soldiers abused and sexually humiliated prisoners in ways popularly interpreted as “sodomasochistic torture”—an event and a discourse explored in detail by BDSM scholar Margot Weiss. “Reformation” as a practice resonates with this kind of abuse, because it—like the torture at Abu Ghraib—is an instance of state actors employing *as torture* a set of techniques that can be pleasurable in specific, consensual erotic BDSM contexts. The prisoners at Abu Ghraib were tortured with forced nudity, for instance. This is distinct from BDSM play involving ‘forced’ nudity—which is of course fully consensual, with a playful pretense of being ‘forced.’

The Party’s “Reformation” program uses a similar kind of torture to Reform people with non-traditional sexual interests—queer and kinky people, in particular. It uses BDSM gear and techniques like bondage, sounding, and forced orgasm to cause

pain and aversion to the kinds of sex that used to bring pleasure. But as much as those practices *look like* and take inspiration from BDSM practices, they are *not* BDSM, because they are not consensual and do not offer erotic pleasure to the people forced to experience them. My question here is: how do we reckon with the *real* violence that results when the state re-appropriates the mimicry of itself generated by BDSM and once again employs it to enact real violence and support its real power?

TH: A friend of mine, Jillian Keenan, author of *Sex With Shakespeare*, is a spanking fetishist—a spanking bottom. Jillian conceives of herself as a spanking fetishist by nature, as a masochist whose erotic interest in spanking predates being spanked as a child. She comes to understand her experience of being spanked as a child as a form of sexual abuse, because spanking was already sex for her. She adds this objection to the many reasons to avoid familial corporal punishment and physical abuse—because that abuse might be compounded by its experience as a form of sexual abuse. If your child is a masochist, and you spank them, you could be sexually abusing them. The theoretical framework of Jillian’s book got me thinking—if you’re a kinky person who enjoys certain painful activities, and if those activities are then used to non-consensually torture you, that torture is akin to sexual abuse. It’s rape, essentially.

People often see rough sex in porn and interpret it literally as abuse. But what if the state and the people in power were weaponizing the consensual modes of torture that people have experienced as pleasure, as community, as culture, and perpetrating those modalities of violence against them in a non-consensual way? That would be very cruel. So that’s what I had the Party do. We know that the state regularly perpetuates sexual violence in a more conventional, less direct sense. But there’s a particular kind of psychological cruelty to sexual violence. What if state torture rose to that level of cruelty for the sadomasochistic? What does it

mean for the state to perpetuate sexual violence against someone when it knows full well that the people they're violating are into this stuff in other contexts? They think that they're using these techniques to recondition their victims out of being perverts, but they don't actually understand what the techniques mean, how consent functions in BDSM, or how power play works. So it's unlikely to work the way they want it to.

We can think about this in dialogue with so-called conversion therapy. Conversion therapy is violence. It's psychological torture. It uses a very warped idea of what queerness is to intimidate people out of being queer. People in power misunderstand what queerness is, what kink is, then use that misunderstanding against queer and kinky people in very traumatizing ways. The question is, what effect does that trauma have on people? I think part of the cruelty is that it extinguishes pleasure by forcing its victims to adopt the state's overly literal views of sex, power, and eroticism. It's a kind of ideological warfare, forcing victims to adopt state perspectives, to think literally about things that they had this very prismatic or dialectical understanding of, maybe not intellectually but somatically or sensually. I wanted to explore that cruelty, so I wrote that brainwashing quite literally with Jones. Jones used to be a professional dominant, or pro-domme—a sex worker who dominates clients. In *Volume 1*, she is taken by the Party and subjected to the “Reformation,” in an attempt to eradicate sexual variation in favor of “purity.” After being “Reformed”, Jones is brainwashed into serving as an Agent of “Reformation”; she becomes a state torturer intent on targeting the Dirty Mind, her former community of friends, lovers, and sex workers.

AZ: Questions of sex tech drive *SfSx*. *Volume 1* is primarily concerned with Reformation, while *Volume 2* is invested in sex robots and a virtual, interactive pleasure network known as “wetspace.” As a term, wetspace has resonances with BDSM phenomena like

subspace and other “headspaces”—altered states of consciousness induced by BDSM activity. What was on your mind as you developed wetspace?

TH: I wrote *Volume 2* in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, when our needs of embodiment and the possibilities of technology were in unprecedented relationship to one another. Wetspace is a kind of reimagining of the Internet as advanced sexual technology, as a virtual reality space. I was thinking about consciousness going into another space, mediated by technology. I’m not a scientist, engineer, or computer programmer. Everything that I know about technology comes from reading theory about things such as artificial intelligence from scholars like Donna Haraway. But science fiction has a tradition of visual imagination unconstrained by time and space—an imagination of technology that can transform the space you feel you’re in. And because comics are a visual medium, you can have any visuals you want.

I wanted *Terms of Service* to contribute a reminder that technology is about both hardware and software, that sex technology might include what I imagine as “wetwear” and also employ the more abstract aspect of consciousness. What does it mean for a human consciousness and a human body to interact with sex tech software that doesn’t come packaged with hardware? But it also takes up hardware questions very directly. Through the character of Stacy, I wanted to critique some of the ways that people think about sex robots—to get away from seeing them as talking dolls that you can stick your dick in, and to consider questions of labor, consciousness, and subjectivity.

AZ: In *Volume 2*, a Party villain uses wetspace to seduce and locate Denis, a member of the Dirty Mind. Denis was subjected to “Reformation” before we meet them in *Volume 1*. They have a sex tech brain implant that allows state agents to control their experience of pleasure and pain. Denis feels lost and abused after

experiencing perhaps the purest form of the sort of sexual assault you described earlier. Because of this trauma, sensation is particularly enticing to them, and they become almost addicted to what they can feel in wetspace. What does Denis' experience in wetspace mean to you?

TH: Denis experienced “Reformation” as an adolescent, and their ability to feel desire and pleasure was taken from them against their will. After they escape from Party custody, they are taken in by the Dirty Mind, with whom they fight fervently for sexual freedom and survival. They participate in the jailbreak adventure in *Volume 1*, and are pivotal to rescuing George. They feel a connection to sexuality through community, culture, and activism. They don't think much about the fact that they can't access the sexual pleasure they are fighting for until they have their first taste of it via wetspace. That experience kicks off an almost obsessive hunger for pleasure at the expense of everything else—a pure desire. They feel the unfairness of it, and they begin to resent the fact that their friends and lovers have access to this kind of pleasure, unmediated by restrictive and invasive tech. When the Dirty Mind leaders try to protect Denis by limiting their time in wetspace, Denis feels like the Dirty Mind is refusing Denis the very sexual freedom that the group is fighting for. Denis has to reckon with what they would sacrifice, what lengths they would go to, to pursue their own individual sexual pleasure.

AZ: You mentioned Donna Haraway, whose “Cyborg Manifesto” (1985) is a feminist posthumanist classic. How has her work influenced your thinking more broadly, and *SfSx* in particular? How would you define a cyborg, and how do you see Stacy in relation to that tradition? What do you want readers to learn from Stacy, and from Avory's relationship with Stacy, in *Volume 2*?

TH: One of the projects of *Volume 2* was to make Haraway's theory humorously literal. If the gayest thing you can be is a cyborg,

I'll write a cyborg that's gay! Although Stacy isn't technically a cyborg: a hybrid of something organic and something technological. She's an android, a machine that resembles a human. And she's not exactly gay, but she's very queer.

Stacy is basically the most sophisticated sex doll that was ever made. She's metal and silicone hardware, with an AI software component, a machine learning algorithm that takes in scripts. But all the scripts she is given are male sexual fantasies, primarily intended to satisfy men's rights activists. Those scripts don't include any sexual imagination; they're written by people who are limiting themselves to what they think they're *supposed* to want. So they don't work! Her AI needs more scripts and more training, which are provided by sexually deviant political prisoners like Avory. As Stacy develops, her desire—for sexual pleasure, for coalition, for political action, for community—turns out very queer. That's despite her being quite literally programmed by the patriarchy! But it's also, in a funny way, a direct result of that programming.

I've been interested in the relationship between technology and sexuality for a long time; it has changed quickly and dramatically, particularly in terms of sex work. The relationship between technology and creativity has also changed quickly and dramatically. As we speak, our attention is being called by the labor movements of Hollywood, by the Writers Guild of America, to all kinds of injustice in the way creatives are treated. One of those modes is the way that corporations are increasingly using AI in a way that constitutes an existential threat to creatives' livelihood.

AZ: Can you say a bit more about the real world in which you wrote *SfSx*, and how it has influenced the series? What drove you to write these books? What other real-world events and problems informed the plot and direction of the story? How has the world changed since you wrote *Volume 1*, and—if you can tell us—what

issues, themes, and topics do you anticipate wrestling with in *Volume 3*?

TH: In some ways, things are better than they used to be. But in a lot of ways, the world is getting worse. The Hollywood labor movements and strikes have brought to the forefront the dystopian possibilities of AI. Sex workers and queers are being surveilled, policed, and bureaucratized out of existence. Policy discrimination against trans people is increasing in countries including the United States and Russia. Dystopian authors don't take any pleasure in being proved right—at least, I don't! I would love to think that *SfSx* could help people realize that they don't want to be the villains in these stories. In the meantime, we have to keep fighting. We have to keep trying to survive, and to thrive.

I am looking forward to writing *Volume 3*. *SfSx* has been successful, but I still have to pursue various side hustles. I've spent the last year on a non-fiction, cultural criticism manuscript based on my podcast, *Why Are People Into That?!* That manuscript is almost done and scheduled to be out in June 2024. When that's done, I'll have the financial space to consider how to make *Volume 3*.

Every story arc in *SfSx* is inspired by a sex- or gender-based social problem that I find interesting and scary. The great comic writer Alan Moore, author of *Watchmen*, says that if you want to write horror, you have to be honest with yourself about what scares you. When I sit down to write *Volume 3*, I'll be reckoning with whatever in the realm of sex and technology currently scares me the most. I'm excited to lean into the mad scientist, body-horror direction of *Volume 2* as I ask the question, "What do the enemies of the Dirty Mind—the enemies of sexual freedom—think safe sex actually is? What are they scared of? What do they want? And what would happen if they actually got it?" I have some ideas for how that would manifest. But that's all I'll say for now.

AZ: Thank you for these beautiful and important books. I hope that our readers will find them as compelling as I do.

TH: Thank you!

Resources for Readers

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