



BITING

THE

WHORE

**THAT
FED
ME**

**MY
SELF-IMPOSED
EXILE FROM
PORNLAND**

Portland, Oregon. An emerald paradise tucked 'tween snow-capped mountains and roaring ocean. Icy rain and steamin' coffee. The world's fattest junkies, hairiest dykes, and most passive-aggressive liberals. Plus more strippers, call girls, and self-described "sex workers" than any place should rightfully have.

Everything you need to know about the city is distilled in the fact that it has only one daily paper, two free weeklies, and three free strip-club magazines.

Those who make their living in the city's sex industry—an estimated 2,000 strippers alone—call the town "Pornland." When I first moved to P-Town nearly ten years ago, it seemed as if there was a strip bar on each corner. It's almost as if Rudy Giuliani had used a giant broom to sweep all the sex shops out of 42nd Street, and they all landed way out here in Bigfoot Country.

Nowhere on earth, with the possible exception of Annie Sprinkle's dungeon, does pornography struggle so boldly to paint itself in redemptive, artistic, community-building, empowering, "sex-positive" (gak) strokes.

Pornland's porn apologists go one step further than trying to make it respectable. They make it cutting-edge...empowering, even. No other city on earth more aggressively nurtures the idea that taking off one's clothes in a dark smoky bar filled with swollen prostates automatically qualifies one as an artist, or at least a "sex worker," rather than a stripper, or, Goddess forbid, a whore.

Obviously, taking off your clothes doesn't make you an artist any more than taking a shit. Sure, I realize that even a sanitation worker is capable of performing his job with some measure of grace and nobility...but he's still a trash man. One can scratch their balls with a certain degree of finesse, too...but they're still scratching their balls.

If there's one thing more retarded than pornography, it's the attempted *intellectualization* of pornography. Porn is theorized to death up here. Most of the "literature" that attends Portland's sex industry is glutted with fatuous, transparent, misguided screeds about our "rights" and "free speech" and "pro-sex attitudes," and "educating society," as if leaving a trail of Twat Slime up and down a brass pole was not only the ultimate act of artistic expression, but also of political commentary. Whores magically become goddesses, proving that the only thing more ridiculous than arguing that pornography objectifies women is trying to argue that it doesn't.

Not to mention the starkly ironic fact that pornography and "sex-positivity" are natural enemies. Pornography actually **DEPENDS** on the partial suppression of sexuality, or nude chicks wouldn't be so special that people would pay to see them. The most farcical thing about this whole "sex-positive" crusade among sex workers is that if people were **TRULY** sex-positive, meaning sexually healthy and functional, the industry would **DISAPPEAR**. Fat flaccid old men with cockeyed toupees wouldn't be throwing dollars at 18-year-old meth-addicted runaways with

snare-drum-tight skin and shaved-bald beavers.

Still, to fend off the fundamentalists and the local D.A., this amorphous mass of pimps, hos, and johns that calls itself "the industry" has to justify itself. To survive, it must struggle to appear "classy" in the same way the habitual sinner strains to appear righteous. Therefore, it must pretend it's something that it isn't. Flipping through these free strip-club magazines, it's astonishing how often the word "classy" pops up in the ads for strip clubs, lingerie-modeling emporia (known affectionately as "jack shacks"), and call girls. One escort service calls itself "Classy Ass," and if ever a pair of words didn't belong together, it is those two. But that epitomizes the industry—it sells ass, but with a thick, phony lacquer of "class."

The industry floats atop a fluffy pillow of fantasy. Chief among these fantasies:

The strippers have to pretend they like the johns.

The johns have to pretend the strippers like them, too.

Sorry, but I just can't pretend. Strippers don't create anything that lasts. There is no message in their performances besides, "Guys like to look at my crotch." And I'm supposed to respect them? To view them as goddesses? As artists? How many of them could draw a stick figure or write a sentence? How many of their brains could burp up one...just ONE...original idea? Their entire job is to prey upon men's lonely vulnerability and suck money from their pockets.

You can paint a turd all you want, but you're still selling gash for cash.

I'M A MAN OF STRANGE TASTES. I generally find that there's nothing less funny than a comedian and nothing less arousing than pornography.

Porn held a fascination for me when I was 12 and had never seen a live, breathing vagina, but once I actually started **HAVING** sex, pornography seemed degrading. And not to the girls...to **ME**. Why should I pay for something I can get for free? I've never paid a dollar for sex in my life. I've never even bought a porno mag.

To me, sex is instantly corrupted when money enters the equation. I'm not sex-negative, but it might be fair to call me cash-negative. As I see it, sex is cheapened and distorted and, most importantly, rendered dishonest by money. That's what money does to everything.

I don't object to porn for prudish reasons, nor would I argue that sex without cash is necessarily uplifting. I hate pornography for overwhelmingly aesthetic reasons. I'm not saying it's immoral. But it **IS** artificial, and that's much, much worse. It isn't **BAD** and **EVIL**. It's **SILLY** and **TACKY**. Strippers and the men who ogle them shouldn't feel **GUILTY**; they should feel **FOOLISH**.

By and large, porn is stupid. Bad shit-rock and bad haircuts and bad childhoods and bad, bad, **BAD** taste. It's all a joke, told at its own expense. Pornography is little more than reality TV without clothes.

SO I WAS ONLY TEN DAYS FREE after a two-and-a-half-year prison stretch for domestic violence against a Portland girl who was more violent than me.

She was a stripper when I met her.

Before I got out, a friend had told me that ex-cons, no matter how much time they had spent locked down, almost immediately sense upon their release that their prison experience happened a thousand years ago and a million miles away.





He was right. The prison world, so alien to me when I entered it, became instantly foreign again upon my exit.

A writer friend had directed me to a local publisher of a free sex-industry magazine distributed in the billions of nude bars, jack shacks, and dildo huts which blemish Portland's visage like so many Kaposi's sarcoma dots.

There are at least one of these sort of rags in every major city. Their ads-to-editorial ratio is typically, oh, about 90 to one, and what meager editorial content exists is pure industry-promoting Kool Whip designed to make you patronize the advertisers.

The free Portland sex mag in question was a notch above the competition mainly because the publisher is a gracious and noble man, and his essential decency somehow leached into the magazine's pages. He was also a fan of my writing and created a job for me because he knew full-time employment was a condition of my parole.

Unfortunately, the editorial situation I inherited was awash with insufferably righteous "sex-positive" folderol cranked out by scribes who, if their homeliness was any indication, spent a lot more time writing about sex than actually having it.

THE MAGAZINE'S OFFICE was located on Burnside Street downtown near the river in the sleaziest part of Portland, a three-or-four-square-block chunk that is the city's only remotely urban sector. Homeless alcoholics with snot and blood encrusted in their gray beards. Black whores in stretch pants picking at scabs on their exposed bellies. A jack shack was located on the floor above us, and a nightclub that sometimes featured topless dancers was right below us.

A constant flow of drugs and thong-wearing 18-year-old call girls coursed through the office. Tattooed strippers would excuse themselves in the middle of photo shoots to go hit the meth pipe in the bathroom. And there was so much dried DNA on the back-room couch, you could start a new civilization with it.

Despite the steady stream of naked cunt that swirled around me at this job, I had no desire to fuck any of these girls, nor, saints preserve us, to shovel down under their makeup and silicone to see if anything human lied beneath it all.

The only interesting thing about most of them was that they were fucked-up enough to get naked for cash...beyond that, they were as subnormally unexceptional as your average prison convict.

Most of them displayed a hatred for men that can only come from constant exposure to how low and desperate and sweaty most men can be when nature has left them no other option but to pay for sex.

Almost all female "sex workers" seemed to HATE the men for whom they were paid to preen and smile...and this was never considered "biting the hand that feeds them." The more these miserable putzes worshipped and idealized the strippers, the more the strippers mocked them.

One busy lady who worked as a stripper, jack-shack model, AND call girl told me in confidence that she enjoys the

POWER she feels over these poor tricks. She enjoyed humiliating them and made no mention that her job might be degrading to her. She thought, like I do, that it's much more degrading for the tricks.

Who came up with the insane idea that it's more degrading to be PAID for sex than to PAY for it?

For all the fuzzy postmodern cunt-positive rhetoric about how hazardous this business is for women, none of these girls ever seemed to face remotely the same sort of legal hassles and prison time that their employers did. Oregon's legal system tends to overprotect females, even predatory ones. In the two years I worked there, I never saw one girl get busted for prostitution, but their bosses kept getting slapped with one sex-crime charge after the next.

I witnessed one case where a willful, oversexed, violent 16-year-old who wanted to be a "sex worker" so badly that she provided false ID to a jack-shack owner wound up being considered the victim, and the owner, even though he was acting in good faith, went to jail for promoting child prostitution.

So I developed a hearty contempt for all these goddess-artists. I despised the johns, too, but my loathing was tempered with some bemused pity. I didn't pity the girls. I didn't see how sex workers were any more exploited than any other worker. And I sure as fuck couldn't feel sorry for girls who earned in a five-hour shift what I made in a week.

SO I'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT that I was inappropriate for the job. The magazine became a Trojan Horse inside which I crouched, ready to pilage the industry. I was paid a living wage to bite the whore that fed me. I was allowed an almost unconscionable amount of editorial leeway, and I stretched it every time. It was as if a monkey had taken over the controls and was pushing all the red buttons. Like a tomcat playing with cockroaches, I systematically fired one sex-positive columnist after the next, then made a public mockery of them in that month's issue.

I replaced them with writers whose abilities I admired, but I still wound up writing more than half of every issue myself. I called my monthly column "The Industry" and designed a logo for it that featured a toxin-belching smokestack. I ended my first column with a joke:

Q: What were "sex workers" called 20 years ago?

A: Whores.

I'm not sure how Webster's defines it, but for me, the word "whore" has two meanings:

- 1) Someone who trades their sexuality for cash.
- 2) Someone who does something they don't want to do for cash.

I WAS WRITING EXACTLY WHAT I WANTED TO WRITE, so I didn't consider myself a whore. I couldn't write about the sex industry with any degree of honest respect, so I relentlessly lampooned it. The writers I hired weren't much kinder to the industry. "I Hate Sex" and "The Cum-Hungry Genius" were columns written by females who routinely took potshots at pimps, johns, and hos. The author of the

latter column called one of her monthly installments "Female Castration is Where it's At."

The magazine created an understandable buzz. People were reading it, but their demographic barely overlapped with those who patronized our sponsors. The readership and the target advertising audience were not the same group and may even have been at odds with one another.

People in the industry didn't know what to make of it all, and most of them, dumb bricks that they are, took it at face value. We received countless phone calls requesting directions to "Stinky's" nightclub, where the women are so ugly, people pay them to get dressed.

Our competitors tried to use the editorial content against us, wooing advertisers with the notion that these articles, rather than all the jack-shack ads that surrounded them, were unforgivably sleazy.

About six months ago, I hired someone whose pen name was "Office Partridge" to write a column called "Hard Justice." He's the son of a fairly well-known feminist author, and maybe he's still rebelling against mom a little bit.

It was less than a month ago that he handed me a column whose lede was, "Strippers are garbage." He continued:

Uh, excuse me, ma'am? Could you get your fucking life out of my way? I'm trying to look up your asshole. Thanks. I can look at the place on your body that shit comes out of. Anytime I want. For a dollar. And you have feelings? I can see your pooper! Is this a joke?

Youch. Truer words were never spoken in the magazine, but the context couldn't have been less appropriate. "It's as if we did a magazine with ads for coffee machines," said one of our designers, "and every article was about how much coffee machines suck."

I grimaced, knowing the article would cause trouble. Then I ran it.

It caused more trouble than I anticipated. I was unaware that many of these strippers were able to read, but apparently they can. All the whores responded with the sort of outrage peculiar to those who've been hurt by the truth, the oddly familiar shock that comes when the obvious is articulated clearly for the first time. If you aren't REALLY whores...if we didn't REALLY hit a nerve...if you weren't REALLY ashamed deep down of what you were doing...then why are you freaking the fuck out?

Fanning the fire, our competitors trotted the article around to our advertisers, who began threatening to pull their ads. Without consulting me, our publisher yanked the offending article from the magazine's online version, replacing it with a bent-over-backwards apology. He wrote that we'd convened an emergency editorial meeting in which the staff expressed shock and dismay that this article,

which was supposedly handed in at the last minute, flew in under our radar and somehow got published. He wrote that Officer Partridge would never write for us again. He wrote that we'd never publish anything like it again. He wrote that the next issue would be chock-full of apologies and sundry expressions of our bottomless remorse for ever suggesting that women who trade sex for cash are whores.

There were several problems with what the publisher wrote. First among them was the fact that this "meeting" had never occurred. Another was that the article was handed in way before deadline. By foisting all the blame onto Officer Partridge, the publisher was offering me an easy way out. If I, too, pretended to be shocked and outraged, my job was secure.

But I couldn't do it. The problem, by and large, was that I agreed with the article. I wouldn't apologize for all the money in the world.

That's because I'm not a whore.

SO I QUIT.

As I was clearing out my desk, two whores from the jack shack upstairs came down to "confront" me, only to be further outraged when they realized I wouldn't apologize. *No, honey, you aren't a whore. You stand in a cubicle sticking dildos up your ass for cash while some schmuck watches you and beats off, but you're not a whore.*

The magazine's staff is still scrambling to repair the damage. They've hand-delivered written apologies to all the clubs and jack shacks and have hired three Mexicans armed with box cutters to remove the offending article from all remaining copies.

They hired a sex-positive stripper to replace me.

Funny—no one said we were "biting the hand that feeds us" when we repeatedly made sport of johns, whose money greases the entire industry. One female columnist routinely wrote fantasies about murdering men whom she felt had inappropriately drooled over her. In the same issue as the offending "Hard Justice" column, she gleefully and remorselessly wrote about a real incident where she'd punched some guy so hard, she had pieces of his flesh stuck to her hands. And no one was offended by that. Nor did anyone object to the same issue's "I Hate Sex" column, which was an extended murder fantasy regarding a man who had committed the murder-worthy crime of stealing the author's panties. Without a hint of irony, both of these articles openly advocated violence toward johns, while "Hard Justice" merely made unflattering comments about strippers.

Such are the dangers of Goddess Culture—the girls get away with murder, while brimstone rains down upon males who do nothing worse than imply that girls...EVEN THE WHORES...are less than sacred.

IT'S ALL FURTHER PROOF that one can never tell the truth in a medium driven by advertising. I spent almost as much time in the porn industry as I did in the Big House.

It's been less than a week since I left, but it already feels like a thousand years ago.

Just like prison.



"I'm a man of strange tastes. I generally find that there's nothing less funny than a comedian and nothing less arousing than pornography."

