

BOOKS

Sexpert witness

Happy Susie Bright Day! Have some porn.

BY ERIN SEXTON

Buying an anthology of porn or erotica is a lot like buying a scratch-off lottery ticket. You might get lucky and break even and sometimes you hit it big, but most of the time the best part is over when you've scratched the ticket or cracked the spine.

For the past 10 years, though, many have awaited the annual release of *The Best American Erotica*, Susie Bright's handpicked collection of the finest dirty stories of the year. The renowned queer writer and sexpert comes to Powell's on Feb. 24 to promote the release of the brand new 2003 edition.

Busy on tour, Ms. Bright swapped e-mails with *Just Out* to talk about, what else, porn.

Erin Sexton: Congratulations on having a day named after you in your hometown of Santa Cruz, Calif. How did this come about?

Susie Bright: Every year the arts editors at our local paper honor a number of artists living in our area who they believe are "making a difference," so to speak. When the paper announced its awards and held a ceremony...the mayor came and presented me with this incredible declaration of "my day." I had never met the man before or had a clue that he was so familiar with my work. His pronouncement of my day made me cry!

ES: Were there any special festivities for Susie Bright Day?

SB: I had a party. I encouraged my fans on my mailing list to have some sort of celebration, and I got the *funniest* reactions. Lots of people had special orgasms for me.

ES: *Best American Erotica* is celebrating its 10th anniversary. What are people writing about that they didn't write about 10 years ago?

SB: Much more far-reaching material about gender identity and, you might say, "gender disposal." And more than that, women don't feel like they're charged with writing "as women" for the feminist cause. Women authors who want to speak in the voice of a male protagonist will just go ahead and do it.

ES: Not only have you written an obscene amount of erotica and porn, it seems you've read a lot of it. Can you speak to the quality as of late?

SB: [There's] more than ever, and so the cream is still the top 10 percent, but it's a bigger pool of cream! Tremendous variety in the point of view and voices I hear from; it's like a road trip across sexual America.



PHOTO BY MARK GELLER

Susie "Sexpert" Bright comes in, er, to Portland Feb. 24

ES: The 2003 edition has a good sampling of all types of styles, fetishes, sexualities and gender expressions. Do you genuinely like most of the stories and subjects?

SB: Yes, I fall in love with them. But maybe you mean, Can I jill off to every story in my book? No. Some stories I pick because they make me laugh or cry. They get to me emotionally, and I feel their genuine erotic pulse. There's something universal they're touching upon.

Then there's the ones that have me fanning myself briskly...and they often come as a complete surprise. I never came in my pants to a gay male fantasy in my life until I read Aaron Travis' "The Hit." ...That story is so insane, so hot, I defy anyone of any sexual preference to resist it. You're screaming (it's a crime thriller) and reaching for the vibrator at the same time.

ES: What do you see as the "next frontier" in porn and erotica?

SB: In both the first Gulf War and now, in Bush's latest aggression, I've seen an upsurge in manuscripts by men where the story concerns a man who "gives up" his masculine assertiveness in some fashion. He gets fucked in the ass, he wears a pink baby-doll nightie, he gets sexually overwhelmed and is "taken."

The first time I saw this, I thought it was just because a lot of people had been watching videos like *Bend Over Boyfriend*, and it was just the effect of gay sex loosening straight men up. But since now I see that this has *only* happened in wartime situations, I have a new theory, which is that this is the side of men that spills forth from the unconscious when the überman is called upon to go forth and invade, balls out. In erotica, the balls are desperately pulling up. [□]

SUSIE BRIGHT reads from *The Best American Erotica 2003* 7:30 pm Feb. 24 at Powell's Books, 1005 W. Burnside St.

When not selling advertising at *Just Out*, ERIN SEXTON reads a lot of porn.



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