

The Secret Garden (Revisited)

Written by

Sunday, 30 June 2013 15:41 - Last Updated Sunday, 30 June 2013 15:52

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by **Vesperae**

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Life happens in all sorts of messy and complicated ways.

But even at its messiest and most complicated, every day is a gift and a new opportunity to make life better for ourselves, and for each other. This is my mantra at the moment, because life is *extra* messy and complicated for me right now. But I'm OK, and I'm going to be OK. ;)

Unfortunately, I've been so overwhelmed with other considerations recently that I've been unable to devote the time and energy that the continuation of "Kayla" deserves, hence the multimedia offering from the archives in my previous installment, and the text offering from the archives below in this installment. But rest assured that I'm *aching* to share more of "Kayla" with you (as well as lots of other goodies) as soon as my personal distraction level recedes to the point that I no longer need a snorkel.

This is the second guest column that I ever wrote for Smoke Signals Magazine, originally published in the January–February 2004 issue, and presented here for the first time outside of the Smoke Signals Online membership area. (As I mentioned in my last, I believe that the Smoke Signals Magazine Archive is one of the coolest features of membership. If you're a member and haven't yet checked it out, you're missing some really great content that will likely reconnect you to delightful memories of the early days of the SFC.)

It's hard to believe that it's been almost a decade since I wrote this...

"A woman who smokes is attractive to me because _____."

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If you were to randomly select 100 individuals from our Community and ask them to complete and elaborate on this statement, there would certainly be striking similarities among many of the responses.

But given sufficient details as to what each finds erotic in a female smoker, it would quickly become clear that there are many significant individual distinctions from person to person. Very specific preferences in age range, cigarette brands and styles, style of inhalation and exhalation, level of daily consumption, age of initiation, personality, physical attributes, wardrobe, use of accessories like holders and cases, as well as numerous other particular nuances of interest demonstrate a great deal of complexity and diversity lurking just beneath the common label of "Smoking Fetish."

This broad range of individual interests really isn't that surprising, given our varied cultural and generational differences, as well as the multitude of distinctions in our individual developmental experiences. In a sense, there are probably as many varieties of the Smoking Fetish as there are individuals who identify with the term.

For the most part, it seems that we do generally respect each other's multifaceted interests, but what has always been a little surprising to me is the sense of frustration and even personal affront – to varying degrees – that a significant number of those who participate in the online discussion forums seem to have towards others who do not share or understand their individual Fetish preferences. Message board posts about sightings spoiled because the woman in question was smoking a brand or style of cigarette not personally favored, or about what a given poster personally finds distasteful about any number of attributes of smoking are relatively commonplace.

So why do we feel the need to express these things, and to sometimes even argue about them? Perhaps the motivation has to do with the sense of some fundamental belief being challenged, of some personal ideal being somehow diminished, of something almost sacred being questioned.

It seems reasonable to conclude that our individual attitudes and feelings about smoking, about what it means to us when a woman smokes, and about what enhances or detracts from smoking as an erotic act for each of us, arise from places in our psyches that deeply transcend the simple conditioning of repeated exposure to smoking during development. We must do something internally with that exposure in order for it to so significantly influence our lives. We

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must have had to somehow make sense of smoking, and to coherently integrate our experiences with it into our understanding of the world.

I believe that the profound depth and persistence of our reaction to smoking is the result of what amounts to the creation of some very elaborate and very personal internal over-arching narratives about women who smoke, including the importance of various symbolic elements like brand, style, age, etc. In other words, I believe that the development of an individual "Personal Mythology" of smoking is essential to developing a Fetish response to it. And based on the accounts I have read online, as well as my own personal experience, I also tend to believe that the core of our individual Personal Mythologies of smoking become mostly established and essentially immutable once we reach psychosexual maturity.

This would certainly explain the specificity and detail of our individual likes and dislikes, and it would also explain why we might be inclined to feel frustrated when a potential smoking stimulus somehow falls short of our expectations. If the symbols that comprise the stimulus do not evoke the internalized characters and narratives of our Personal Mythology of smoking, we cannot relate to the stimulus sexually.

Cognitive psychologists describe an adaptive and flexible relationship between human memory and perception. Once we are exposed to a given experience, we tend to consciously forget the objective details of that experience unless we are exposed to the same or a similar experience repeatedly. Positive or negative emotional arousal can also distort or enhance our recall of the objective details of a given experience. But what is perhaps most intriguing of all is the demonstrated phenomenon of subsequent perceptions essentially reconstructing and changing the recollection of the objective details of prior experiences. This especially tends to happen when the earlier experience is relatively ambiguous, and a later experience seems to provide information that somehow relates to or helps us make greater sense of the earlier experience.

All of these psychological mechanisms work together to provide us with the ability to adapt to our environment, as well as providing us with a relatively coherent sense of the world and our place in it. What we lack in empirical objectivity, we make up for in our ability to assimilate and respond to the vast quantities of stimuli that we are bombarded with on a daily basis.

But another important outgrowth of the relationship between memory and perception is our ability over time to connect together many specific experiential impressions, and to associate them with a given stimulus in such a way that the stimulus evokes some form of the memory

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and associated emotional arousal of all that the stimulus has come to symbolize.

Imagination takes such a cumulative stimulus response one step further, and certainly drives much of our early development. The stories that we create about the world around us as we progress toward maturity certainly have profound significance for the way we view and relate to others for the rest of our lives.

And in the case of the development of a sexual response to an act that is ostensibly asexual, there must be a great deal of reflection and imagination brought to bear on the act in order to sexualize it. There must be a wealth of established internal characters and narrative elements that combine to form a Personal Mythology that ultimately eroticizes smoking in a very unique way for each of us. These internal characters and narrative elements could be based on memories and impressions of actual smoking women or girls we have known or observed, on smoking models or actresses in the media, or on imaginary or idealized composite characters drawn from any number of these or other experiences.

My own particular Mythology of smoking grew out of being repeatedly exposed from a very young age to not only a perpetual haze of secondhand smoke from my parents' and other adult role models' cigarettes, but to a whole range of paradoxical and conflicting messages about smoking from a variety of sources. Smoking is repugnant to the uninitiated, but is obviously satisfying to the confirmed smoker. Smoking is something that a liberated woman does, but it is addictive. Smoking is a sexy sensual pleasure, but it is toxic and will damage your body and most likely dramatically shorten your life.

These messages came to me from personal observations, cigarette advertisements, movies and television, anti-smoking public service announcements, and "Health Classes" in school. A persistent combination of fear and fascination became attached to smoking throughout my childhood, and this ongoing emotional arousal elicited a strong urge to attempt to make sense of it all, and to incorporate everything I had experienced and knew about smoking into some kind of a coherent understanding. Eventually my reflections and feelings came to eroticize smoking for me by the time I reached adolescence, and at about the same time that I realized that I was a lesbian.

Once my reaction to smoking had attained a sexual dimension, my perception of smokers changed as well, and since I was in high school at the time, I had numerous smoking female classmates and occasionally teachers to admire from afar and privately fantasize about. I also

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had many smoking female classmates to observe and entertain similar fantasies about in college. My experiences observing these smoking women in my age group deeply expanded my impression of what sort of woman smokes, as well as maybe, just maybe, suggesting the sort of woman that I could be...

A significant part of my imagination became forever populated by these women, as well as all the images and impressions of their predecessors that I had internalized over the years. I came to see them as representing many different attributes that I found erotic, and freely projected my thoughts about smoking onto their behavior as I continued to observe and think about them.

I had never smoked a cigarette before, but as my young adult observations and reflections continued, I felt an increasing longing to experience smoking firsthand. The inhibitions of not wanting to injure my health, or to tarnish the squeaky clean image that I felt I had to live up to, had long kept any curiosity about actually trying smoking so firmly in check that I always just assumed that I would never become a smoker. But ironically, the circular interaction between my curiosity and my inhibitions continued to make smoking more and more attractive to me, until I finally just let my inhibitions go.

And once I had completed the psychological journey inward that allowed me to overcome my fear and deliberately embrace the risk of smoking, as well as completing the physiological transformation of conditioning my body to accept inhaling cigarette smoke, I experienced a sense of sublime consummation, and I had arrived at the most deeply erotic psychological and physical relationship to smoking that I possibly could for me, given everything in my life that had led up to my finally starting.

I was 21, and over the following year or so, as I began to process the experiences of becoming a smoker, and to integrate the identity of being a smoker into my personal and social life, the final elements of the core and foundation of my own Personal Mythology of smoking were established.

Once I became a smoker, I was thrilled to be able to share in a profoundly intimate variation of the same sensual experience that all of these women I had been intrigued by for so long experienced every day. But the significance of my own transformation was also privately imbued with all of these layers of meaning and symbolism that I had attributed to smoking, and had contemplated over and over again throughout my life up to that point.

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At 39, I realize that virtually any erotic response to smoking that I now experience relates in some significant way to the major themes and elements of all the stories I created in my mind about smoking prior to my mid 20s. Which isn't to say that I haven't experienced the expansion of those themes and elements, or the elaboration of those stories since that time, but the overall narratives have changed very little over the past fifteen years.

I often think of the development of my own Personal Mythology of smoking as being analogous to the growth of a tree, in the sense that once the roots, trunk, and primary branches were established, the appearance and shape of the tree has changed very little from year to year, and any new growth is dependent entirely on the support and nourishment of the underlying structure. And I strongly suspect that something similar could be said for each of us.

After having the opportunity to compare personal histories with other members of our Community via the internet over the last few years, what is most striking to me is that regardless of our individual tastes and preferences, just about all of us seem to have two main things in common. We each do seem to attribute many layers of very personal symbolism and meaning to smoking, and as we came to develop our Unusual Desires, virtually all of us did so in an ongoing state of guarded secrecy. I tend to believe that each of these things have the effect of reinforcing and amplifying the significance of the other, and ultimately intensifying both the strength of our personal Mythologies of smoking, and our sexual response to it.

It is as if we each live with this Secret Garden inside us, where our most erotic ideals live on and on as something akin to iconic statuary untouched by time or the outside world, and the greatest sexual thrill is the discovery of things that take us back to the people and places and thoughts and feelings that created The Garden within us in the first place.

The process of interacting as we do online gives us the opportunity to enrich our collective Mythology of smoking, but I think that it more importantly also helps us retrieve and consciously integrate aspects of our own personal experiences and reactions to smoking that may have been lurking within our subconscious minds for many years.

This has certainly been the case for me, and I have found that the discovery of little bits and pieces of myself in the stories of others has significantly helped me to flesh out the understanding of my own Personal Mythology of smoking, and in so doing, has helped me

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derive more pleasure from the indulgence of my Fetish than ever before. The process has allowed me to enrich my own Secret Garden in ways that I never could have imagined not too very long ago, when I only strongly suspected that I wasn't alone in my Unusual Desires.

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Vesperae's discussion and DS multimedia forum:

[The Sublime Desire of Cigarette Smoking](#)