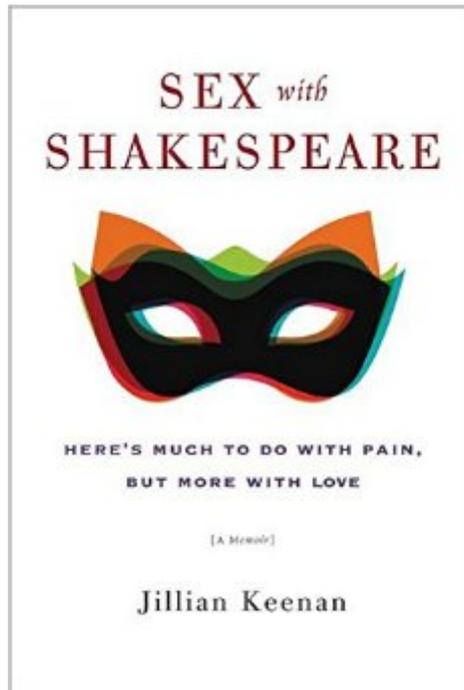


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# Sex With Shakespeare: Here's Much To Do With Pain, But More With Love



## Synopsis

A provocative, moving, kinky, and often absurdly funny memoir about Shakespeare, love, obsession, and spanking. When it came to understanding love, a teenage Jillian Keenan had nothing to guide her—until a production of *The Tempest* sent Shakespeare's language flowing through her blood for the first time. In *Sex with Shakespeare*, she tells the story of how the Bard's plays helped her embrace her unusual sexual identity and find a love story of her own. Four hundred years after Shakespeare's death, Keenan's smart and passionate memoir brings new life to his work. With fourteen of his plays as a springboard, she explores the many facets of love and sexuality—from desire and communication to fetish and fantasy. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Keenan unmaskes Helena as a sexual masochist—like Jillian herself. In *Macbeth*, she examines criminalized sexual identities and the dark side of privacy. • *The Taming of the Shrew* goes inside the secret world of bondage, domination, and sadomasochism, while *King Lear* exposes the ill-fated king as a possible sexual predator. Moving through the canon, Keenan makes it abundantly clear that literature is a conversation. In *Sex with Shakespeare*, words are love. As Keenan wanders the world in search of connection, from desert dictatorships to urban islands to disputed territories, Shakespeare goes with her—and provokes complex, surprising, and wildly important conversations about sexuality, consent, and the secrets that simmer beneath our surfaces.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Jillian Keenan has written a moving and courageous book that beautifully reveals the internal and external forces one must confront in coming to terms with sexuality outside the mainstream. Anyone who shares similar desires instantly recognizes her experiences and struggles. As someone who shares both her "kink" and her love of Shakespeare, I could not put the book down. Keenan is a clever and humorous writer who is also able to convey the dark emotional scars she suffered along the way.

In this wonderful book, Jillian Keenan tells a story of discovery and sexual awakening as she comes to grips with then explores her spanking kink. Through this memoir filled with joy and heartbreak, travel and contemplation, sex and kink, Jillian weaves her knowledge and love of Shakespeare to illustrate her life as well as moments of her life to interpret Shakespeare. What she does so well is to do all of this seamlessly. There is never a dull moment, never a time when her story is not being propelled forward. Jillian had my attention from beginning to end. Her story gave me a lot of moments of self-reflection that offered me an emotional response that many books simply don't offer me. It's why I don't read many memoirs, but I read this one and I'm glad. Jillian Keenan lays her intimacy bare for all to see and it's an act of bravery that deserves applause. It's not an easy thing to do being this honest. It opens a person up for ridicule and criticism and dime-store psychology. She's heard it all and so have I. People think *Fifty Shades* is some window into the world of kink -- it is not. It's a fantasy born of a writer who doesn't seem to understand the mind of people who feel and are these things. Jillian celebrates and respects her sexuality and in turn respects ours.

This is a thoroughly-entertaining memoir unique for its candor about a subject that rarely sees the light of day: fetish sexuality. Jillian Keenan writes eloquently about her quest to understand, to be understood, to escape the burden of stigma, and to find love. Though such are the aspirations of all people, her honesty is nothing short of pioneering in this context. By writing under her own name, she asserts her dignity and dispels the suspicions of perversion and sickness that often force fetishes underground. Her example here will guide readers on their own journeys toward acceptance and fulfillment. Keenan revels in Shakespeare's appreciation for the complexity of human beings, with exegesis that reveals beguiling possibility in the relationships between King Lear and his daughters, Ophelia and Hamlet (imagined as a frat bro in a polo shirt), Prospero and Caliban, and the lovers of "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*." She also remarks on Shakespeare's influence on our language and the ideas it communicates. I learned, for instance, that "lonely" is a Shakespearean coinage, a word without which it would be nigh impossible to describe the modern

lived experience! Very importantly, this is a work brimming with humor. Readers who may not feel completely comfortable with the occasionally "taboo" subject matter will find themselves laughing regularly, their squick reflex disarmed completely. Lastly, on a more serious note, this book is also recommended reading for people who continue to punish children with spankings. Keenan confronts the relationship between her spanking fetish and her childhood experience, asserting that punitive spankings did not cause the fetish, but were a source of trauma because of it. The "weird" (and the wayward) will take comfort, as I have, in this work of great empathy and imagination. (And I have no doubt that "vanilla" readers will love it, too!)

I was not surprised by the one-star review that characterized this memoir as a pack of lies. (Hi, Jillian's mom! This isn't all about you! And what kind of mother takes her 17-year-old daughter to a foreign country to live with strangers, one of whom is a drug dealer, anyway?) Ms. Keenan's revelations here may differ from those in her earlier pieces because she's mustered up the courage to share more detail. I can relate: When, as an adult, I mustered up the guts to confront my mother over a brutal beating she'd given me when I was a child, she went hysterical and told me that I was lying--that she had no recollection of it, so it couldn't possibly be true. To the reviewer who says a child can't possibly have sexual feelings or a sexual orientation, I (and legions of experts of child development experts) can attest that many of us indeed had. I have the same orientation Ms. Keenan does, but have told no one about it, not even my husbands, not even my counselors. I applaud her for her bravery in coming forward, for letting so many of us realize that we're not alone. She has given voice to my long-held conviction that spanking of children is not only child abuse, but child sexual abuse. Her scholarly romps through Shakespearean sexuality are a treat, agree or disagree as you might about her conclusions. And her final chapter, in which she initiates her husband into kink as he initiates her into vanilla, I found funny and charming.

This book was so refreshing and engaging! I know very little about Shakespeare, and even less about the BDSM community, but, to me, this book is mostly about a search for love and understanding (something we can all relate to). Keenan writes in a way that is clever, approachable, funny and very engaging. I highly recommend the book to anyone looking for a great read!

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