

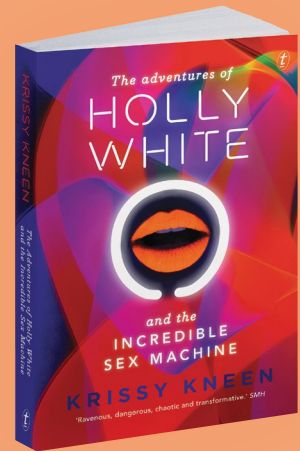
The Adventures of Holly White and the Incredible Sex Machine



Krissy Kneen

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FICTION, TRADE PAPERBACK

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Praise for *The Adventures of Holly White and the Incredible Sex Machine*

'Witty and seductive, sexy and funny, with just a hint of the surreal, *The Adventures of Holly White and the Incredible Sex Machine* is a book that I can see appealing to many readers new to her work...A riotous romp through the imagination of one of Australia's most accomplished sex writers.' *Books & Publishing*

'A joyful and ambitious mix of science fiction, coming-of-age, adventure story, literary fiction and, of course, erotica. It revels unselfconsciously in bringing these different elements together and is always playful and quirky.' *Australian*

About Krissy Kneen

Krissy Kneen is the award-winning author of the memoir *Affection*, the novels *Steeplechase* and *Triptych*, and the *Thomas Shapcott Award*-winning poetry collection *Eating My Grandmother*. She has written and directed broadcast documentaries for SBS and ABC television. Her latest novel is *The Adventures of Holly White and the Incredible Sex Machine*.

A reader's introduction to *The Adventures of Holly White and the Incredible Sex Machine*

The Adventures of Holly White and the Incredible Sex Machine is a coming of age story, but one that is like no other. It details a girl's transition from innocence to experience in her sex life. We meet Holly on the brink of adulthood: a beautiful young woman in a close circle of friends. She has pledged a vow of abstinence with these friends, and although she has a very handsome boyfriend she has never even had a passionate kiss with him. Her vow is quite useful to Holly because, unbeknown to her friends, she is hiding a rather disturbing secret: every time she becomes aroused

her vulva begins to glow bright blue. Holly manages to keep her secret until she inadvertently joins an underground bookclub devoted to the classics of erotic fiction. The content of the books only inflames her repressed desires. Finding she can no longer control the urges and glows of her body, Holly sets out on a quest to discover the source and meaning of the power, guided only by the erotic writings of the classic authors. *The Adventures of Holly White and the Incredible Sex Machine* is an erotic love letter to the art of reading and a sexy romp through the philosophy of sexuality.

Questions for discussion

1. What is the book saying about Holly's pledge of abstinence? Do her friends take their pledge seriously? Do you think it is useful—or possible—to keep a vow of celibacy?
2. Holly's blue glow is literal in the book but it could also be seen as a metaphor. What other things frighten us about our own sexuality when we are young?
3. There is a quote from James Salter at the beginning of the book; 'It is impossible to control your dreams. The forbidden ones are incandescent. They burn through resolutions like parchment.' Is there really a special power to the forbidden?
4. Why do you think Mandy's bookshop is secret, hidden beneath a phone booth? What does this bring to the story?
5. Holly's home town of Brisbane, Australia seems like a quiet, neat suburban place and yet there is an edge of sex simmering beneath the placid exterior. This is a theme that many writers come back to (*Crash* by J G Ballard, *The Stepford Wives* by Ira Levin). Is there something about a veneer of properness that suggests a hidden world of

debauchery? Does repression automatically lead to clandestine sexual excess?

6. In this book the erotic classics have a transformative effect on Holly's life. What books have challenged you or made you brave enough to do things in a different way? Can books really change lives?
7. Holly carries her suitcase full of inflammatory literature to Paris. At one time each of these books has been banned for general sale. Books with sexual content have been banned throughout the ages, whereas many books containing violent scenes are readily available for sale. Why is sex banned when violence is not? Do you think there is an argument for protecting people from sexual content?
8. Holly manages to separate sex from love, and yet she is still able to love two of her sexual partners—Mandy and Nicholson. Do you think it is possible to separate sex from love?
9. Wilhelm Reich really existed, and he did believe that orgone, an energy expressed most purely at the moment of orgasm, could be stored and used as a power source. Whether you think Reich was a genius or a mad man, the idea is an interesting one played out in this book. Holly believes that books are inert, like batteries sitting on a bookshelf. They need the power of an imagination plugged into them to give them life. Do you feel that feeling of energy when you read sexual content? Do the words themselves have power over an imagination?
10. Sex and comedy is such a rare pairing and yet sex is often quite hilarious. Why is it that we treat it so seriously in literature?
11. The book has been called genre-bending. Do you think it falls easily into a genre? Where should it be shelved in a bookshop? Science Fiction? Literary Fiction? Erotica? Philosophy?
12. There are first-person scenes from the perspective of Nicholson as a child and then as an adult and yet Holly, the main character, is seen in the third person. Why do you think the author did this?
13. This book has a 'Happy Ending.' But is it a happy ending? Discuss.
14. Women have control of their sexual urges in this book. They are not passive participants. Where else in literature is this seen?
15. The book does not comment on Holly's bisexuality. Why do you think there is no real discussion of sexual orientation in the book?

16. Is there a difference between erotica and pornography? Does this book fit into either category?

17. There are cheeky nods to erotic classics throughout the book and not just in the titles of the chapters: the names of the characters in the book often mirror the names of characters in the erotic classics and there are details from the books hidden throughout the novel. Did anyone manage to spot some of these playful touches? (Eg: Nicholson is the name of Holly's lover in Paris and Nicholson Baker is referenced as the writer of *Vox*)

Further reading

Twelve Months of Erotic Classics

JANUARY

The Adventures of Holly White and the Incredible Sex Machine by Krissy Kneen

FEBRUARY

The Delta of Venus by Anaïs Nin

MARCH

Vox by Nicholson Baker

APRIL

The Story of O by Pauline Réage

MAY

Lolita by Vladimir Nabokov

JUNE

The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr Hoffman by Angela Carter

JULY

The House of the Sleeping Beauties by Yasunari Kawabata

AUGUST

A Sport and a Pastime by James Salter

SEPTEMBER

Venus in Furs by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch

OCTOBER

The Lover by Marguerite Duras

NOVEMBER

Eat Me by Linda Jaivin

DECEMBER

The Story of the Eye by Georges Bataille