

Donna Girouard

SHHH

“How do you feel about talking dirty?” my lover asked, a playful glint in his sea-green eyes, a shock of his once sandy now mostly salt and pepper hair falling over his suntanned forehead.

I didn’t even have to think it over. “No,” I said.

I am a highly sexual being, despite my Irish Catholic upbringing. I began fantasizing about sex at around age eleven, not long after I discovered its existence. I finally lost my virginity at sixteen to my twenty-six-year old band instructor in the back seat of his car, parked in a corn field. I have not had many sexual partners in my life, but I have had lots of sex. In bedrooms, living rooms, dining rooms, and kitchens. On tables, countertops, desks, carpets, bare floors. In beds, chairs, cars, tubs, bathroom stalls. My first husband and I once had sex in the ocean while tourists swam nearby and also in broad daylight under a blanket in a public park as workmen ran landscaping equipment and picnickers played “Stairway to Heaven” just across the way. My second husband and I committed indiscretions in a dark downtown alley, behind the dugout of the ball field on the town Common, on a pool table in our neighborhood bar after closing time, and in the back yard of my childhood home. We tried B&D, sex toys, and role playing to spice things up, the most memorable night being one All Hallows Eve when he dressed as a priest and I as a nun. That night, “Father Bob” seduced and brutally deflowered “Sister DonnaMarie” by candlelight, and afterwards he turned to me and said, “You know, we’re both going to Hell for this.”

So why, after a life of sexual games and adventures, am I still uncomfortable with dirty talk in the bedroom?

I maintain that a basic difference exists between men and women regarding the nature of the sexual act, its preparation, process, and ultimate (hopefully) success. I conjecture that women require a certain mindset, a level of concentration not necessary for men. If the

concentration or *zone* is interrupted, most women will find themselves back to square one and needing to start over, or possibly even at negative one, unable to restart at all. The source of the distraction varies, depending on the woman, but for me, conversation of *any* kind during the sexual act is almost always a thrill killer. Heavy breathing, groans, and other wordless sounds are about all I can handle. I personally am incapable of speech while in the zone, though I modestly admit to being a screamer during the finale. Furthermore, if my partner attempts actual words, they'd better be soft enough for me to tune out and not require responses lest they break the mood. A loudly spoken phrase, no matter how earnestly stated, indicating what he intends to do with *his* body parts to *my* body parts will no doubt strike me as either embarrassing or hilarious, neither response conducive to a successful lovemaking experience.

Perhaps I've seen too many cheap, cheesy porn flicks in my time to take sex talk seriously. Who writes such trashy, over-blown dialogue (no pun intended)? Certainly, only people of limited intelligence would consider watching such movies with the sound turned up unless the desired effect is high comedy. Real people, I contend, just cannot speak that way and expect to be taken seriously. Yet overly romantic or vague sex talk during the act will not suffice either, since it cannot help but sound forced and awkward. Imagine one's partner grandly announcing, "I am about to make passionate love to you!"

Yup, better luck next time, 'cuz we're done here. Sadly, therefore, the solution is *no* talk.

Oddly, however, I am unphased regarding the retelling of my many different sexcapades and will discuss them openly and without shame as part of casual conversation, as long as I don't have to say or hear said the actual words for the acts or body parts. Fucked up? Oh sure, and, yes, I can say that word when fully clothed and when the word "fuck" is used in that harmless context. I can easily "lmfao" online, for example, and not bat a fucking eye. But when naked with a lover or spouse and about to do the deed, hearing or God forbid having to use that word in the form of a request or demand is nearly always a deal-breaker for me, unless a great deal of tequila preceded the event.

Here's the part where I do have to blame the aforementioned Irish Catholic upbringing for my discomfort. My father never used any

even remotely sexual words in my presence. Ever. My mother handed me a slim volume on menstruation and conception as soon as I tentatively began asking questions and, while avoiding my eyes, said, “Here, read this.” When specifics were necessary, she used the non-word “*padah-dada*” to refer to, well, *down there*, and the word “pickle” for the man’s, well, you know. Once, when I was older and already having sex, she tried to say the anatomically correct word for the general area of the woman’s body that one day someone would write whole monologues to, but in her embarrassment (or ignorance) she mispronounced it, using a hard “g” instead of a soft one and putting emphasis on the wrong syllable. I flamed in shame and couldn’t bring myself to correct her. She added insult to injury by adding that, to ensure getting the most out of the experience, a woman needs to get her partner to focus on “the starter button.” ’Nuff said.

I can read and enjoy “good” porn with no problem—silently of course because hearing myself or anyone else read the gory specific sexual details does not impress, titillate or even hold my interest. Instead, I suffer from a combination of revulsion and mortification, especially if the reader is male. I become an innocent child while, right before my eyes, he morphs into the vilest sexual deviant imaginable. Please, floor, swallow me *now*.

Unfortunately, at forty five, I’m unlikely to change.

I looked at Terry’s disappointed expression and lightly touched my finger to his lips, trying to soften my refusal to his request to talk dirty. For me, silence during sex is not only golden but mandatory.

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