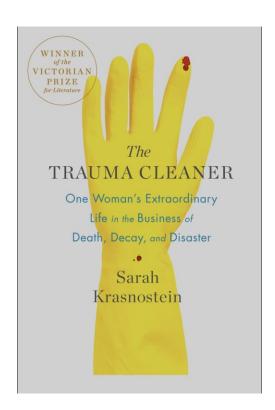


## THE TRAUMA CLEANER:

# ONE WOMAN'S EXTRAORDINARY LIFE IN THE BUSINESS OF DEATH, DECAY, AND DISASTER



#### **Book Summary:**

A Sandra Pankhurst biography including her sex change operation, child abuse, prostitution, rape, and other experiences.

#### **Summary of Concerns:**

This book contains aberrant sexual activities including sexual assault; sexual nudity; explicit alternate gender ideologies; alternate sexualities; controversial social and political commentary; references to suicide and hate; explicit violence; alcohol and drug abuse; and profanity/derogatory terms.

Adult

### By Sarah Krasnostein

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4	Sandra knows her clients as well as they know themselves; she airs out their smells, throws out their weird porn, their photos, their letters, the last traces of their DNA entombed in soaps and toothbrushes.
5	the bawdy (" I've had more cock than I've had hot dinners");
6	This isn't because their brains are any better than Sandra's or because they did less drugs or drank less or had kinder childhoods.
	It didn't start at the twenty-buck fuck shops. It didn't start in the barnlike brothel where the girls roosted like hens, wire on the windows and around the light bulbs to prevent the men from ripping them out of the ceiling. It didn't start with the boyfriends who stuck around only as long as her money lasted, or with the beatings from the cops who hated boys dressed like girls or with the women who wouldn't open the door when she stood outside pleading in the dark, naked and bleeding. It didn't start with any of that. It started when she was a little boy in a small house with a dirt driveway running up along the side.  Maybe his name was Glen. Maybe it was Daniel. Or John or Mark or Tim. The actual name matters only because it is a piece of information that Sandra chooses to keep for herself.
31	Bill continues to regularly attack Peter, his hot breath smelling of booze and his caterpillar eyebrows meeting in dark concentration as he sets about beating his child with his fists or the copper laundry stick. When he is feeling particularly sadistic he will tie the boy to the clothesline for better purchase. And though everyone turns away, and his mother's silence slices through him—still, Peter climbs in through the kitchen window every time he hears his father doing the same to her.
43	The chemicals she used in the early years of her cleaning business may play a role; so, too, her decades of double-dosing female hormones. Her drinking, and her years of heavy drug use earlier in her life, conform with the fact that trans people have higher rates of self-medication.  I once mentioned to her how I read that, even on the normal dose of hormones, the medical recommendation is to stay as healthy as possible through diet, exercise, and abstaining from cigarettes and alcohol. She hustles for more work and repeatedly tears herself away from the Velcro of her mind to crack jokes and, after a long day of driving between jobs that range from the distasteful to the apocalyptic, she returns home to cook herself and Lana a fillet steak, administers that speedily nibbling dog a sliver of Prozac, and pours herself her drinks after retiring to her couch to finally enjoy a few hours of peace.
	That things went fine there for a little while, until the Sunday morning she violated their agreement by entering his private sanctuary to serve him breakfast in bed, and then fucking seduced him.  And that is how he will always remember it: slightly wounded and wondrous, mainly for theatrical effect but also truly marveling about how naive he was to think that just because he could complete the physical act of sex with her, he was meant to marry her.
	He is constantly stoned.
61	Peter is not interested in tits, so he's barely thought about it. But to the extent that he has, he just assumed that the showgirls' sizeable bosoms are part of their costumes: made of plastic and somehow connected up and into the thick, bedazzled chokers they



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	wear around their necks when they dance up on stage. But then it dawns on him that some of the queens are actually living their lives as females, in real bodies that they weren't born with. Soon after this he overhears someone at a bar one night talking about taking female hormones and going through the ChangeHe also explains that the hormones will be detrimental to Peter's health; they will shorten his life expectancy.
62	Though his colleagues are quite accepting of him, Peter feels both acutely self-conscious and militantly committed to his makeup and his hormones.
63	He is always high. He vanishes on the weekends to go shopping with his club friends for cheap makeup and new clothes. He buys a blond wig from a shop in the city and, though in retrospect he will describe it as a hideous plastic helmet, at the time he feels "fucking gorgeous" wearing it into Annabel's and out on the dance floor. Peter drunkenly proposes late Friday night that they swap partners. Linda reluctantly agrees because she thinks it will save their marriage. People are drunk and loose on pills.
64	Holding hands on the way to the crowded bar, picking their way back across the room between sips of scotch and CokeHe cannot explain to her that although he is at a gay club, holding hands with a man and wearing a wig and makeup, he is not homosexual.
68	"I was suicidal. I was at a psychiatrist, and he put me on medication. I was going to overdose. I was going to kill myself and the boys. And I thought, 'What if I die and they don't? Or what if they die and I survive?'
78	Sandra is not close with any gay women or men, and she has no trans friends: "I don't associate with any sex changers at all."But her frame of reference regarding that community is her drag days. Her aversion is not to gay people or trans people but to the image of herself that she associates with that period of her life. She identifies her "straight" friends with a healthier, happier, safer, and more productive self.
81	They are very different from each other but all are intelligent, strong, and caring people in whom you can see a wicked sense of humor, a low tolerance for what they perceive to be bullshit, and a mainstream, politically conservative worldview. Sandra herself is a longtime conservative voter, a fact that initially startled me but which, on reflection, serves as a warning against the assumption that trans is an inherently radical position.
82	But as sensitive as Katrina is toward Sandra, there are moments when she exhibits an emotional astigmatism that serves to highlight the oceanic magnitude of Sandra's larger, lifelong battle for social acceptance. "My husband thinks Sandra is lovely. When Sandra met him, she said to me, 'He's the sort of man that I would like, but a man like him would never look at a person like me.' Sandra is very sensible. She knows that people don't like poofters and transsexuals, and she gets it, because she doesn't either, that's why she doesn't hang around them. They are usually warped, weird, dirty, and disgusting, and she doesn't want to be like that. She is working hard to support herself so that in her old age she can just have a nice, decent life, and I really hope that she has peace."
87	Transsexuals suffer the oppression of the homosexual, they suffer the oppression of women They can't vote, most of them can't hope to leave the country to enter





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	another country. Most of them can't get finance. All of them except for myself have been unable to carry on their previous profession. The only reason I could was because I'd been fortunate, by some accident, to have fooled the Registrar of Nursing into thinking I was a Miss instead of a Mister when I registered But I know doctors, I know psychologists, I know teachers, I know optometrists who have been struck off their registers and they have been refused entrance back into their professions just because they have had sex change surgery. So they suck cocks up in Victoria Street or take off their clothes four times a night in a strip club in King's Cross. Or they work as waitresses in hotels which is somewhat better, or perhaps worse, than sucking cocks.
88	They smoke and snort speed and drink nice cups of tea or gin and do their nails.
89	There is Nicole, small and gorgeous, a full-time showgirl and Peter's best friend, whose attributes include little hands, little feet, a deep voice, a dangerous mouth, and a sister who is a fucking nutjob. There is Carol, a bit of a lost soul, and also "a gay guy-girl" whose particulars are now lost to history. Peter tries heroin and hates it; he tries speed and loves it.
90	The shows are where he becomes comfortable using female bathrooms, which are basically unisex anyway. The shows are where he learns to shape an eyebrow, to shade a jawline; where light should hit and shadow fall, what should shine and what should be matte, how to make lips and eyes bigger and noses and foreheads smaller, how to erase stubble and add lashes. How to transform himself from a timid, skinny dude from the poor part of town into a poised and elegant woman. This is because if the cops catch men dressed as women on the street, they will beat the shit out of them.  The cops beat Peter and his friends for looking too much like men, or too much like women, or because they are something in the middle, "not ridgy-didge." The cops beat them for the same reasons that the state has made it legal to arrest them and fine them and imprison them: their very presence is, to use the legislative terminology, riotous, indecent, offensive, insulting; grossly indecent; an outrage on decency. They are told that it is illegal to dress as a woman, illegal to wear women's underwear, illegal to loiter in a public place for homosexual purposes, whatever that means. The ones who are arrested are fined, or they are jailed in men's prisons, like Pentridge, where they are raped.
91	He does the sex work between shows at night and he does it during the day. He does it because the stage is "pretty shitty money" and because sex and shows are his only choices. Though it is distasteful at best and, of course, dangerous, sex work is normalized in this world where the possibility of an adequately paid straight job (assuming you managed to receive the requisite education or work experience in the necessary domestic peace most often reserved for your cisgender peers) is virtually eliminated if you choose to live full-time in the sex you were not assigned at birth. Most of his friends do sex work on the side; if not, they're giving it away.
92	When Peter acknowledges that what he is doing is "pretty risky," he is referring to the violence from the police and not the dangers posed by street prostitution. If the cops catch him soliciting, they will arrest him or bash him senseless or both. So Peter and his friends rent a dark basement apartment in a beautiful old building on Grey Street where they can take clients. It's always safer to work inside—and you never take them back to your own houseHe buys furniture and clothes and costumes and makeup. As "the main supporter" of



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	the share house, he buys food and booze and drugs for everyonePeter lives now in an intensely social environment, a swirl of people—gay, lesbian, straight; queens and the moles that orbit them like lesser planets—all roiling together amid the audiences of bachelor parties and bachelorette parties and office workers out from the suburbs for a good time. Their shows have names like Les Girls and Play Girls and Belle Boys and Street Boys and Pokeys and Between the Sexes. His friends are guys and girls, "sex changers" and not.
93	They include those he will forget forever and those he will remember with forgiveness, like his boyfriend Frankie the Italian Stallion, "who'd fuck anything that moved, except the missus at home payin' the bills."On the coffee table in every house is a bowl of weed, a bowl of speed, and a bowl of mandies, 3 all graciously offered like mints for visitors to help themselves. No one carries drugs because of the police harassment they already attract by walking down the street in their own skin. For prescription drugs, there's a doctor in St. Kilda and another in North Melbourne who'll give you pretty much anything. The girls go back and forth between the two.
94	He is still taking hormone pills from his doctor in Carlton, but after hearing some of the girls talk about hormone injections, he visited their doctor as well. He has not shared with that doctor the fact that he is also taking hormones in pill form; he believes that doubling the hormones in this way will make them work better and faster. He willingly assumes the risks and will never express regret: "Yes, it probably shortened my life, what it done to my liver and kidneys. But it also gave me the life I wanted."
95	Stacey has the best tits you've ever seen. Renee Scott, one of the Pokeys Dreamgirls, was meant to be the first to get the tit job with the incision under the arm, to keep the scarring out of sight. But Renee either got sick or chickened out, so Stacey became the first to get it done. Like most of the other girls, she went to the fancy surgeon on The Avenue in Windsor. Unlike most of the other girls, her breasts are now enormous, and with the double doses of hormones she has also put on weight. She returns to the surgeon to have her nose smoothed to a more delicate slope and then to have her eyes lifted. Her beauty, her plump softness, the ease with which she moves through the world as Stacey all mean that passing is never a problem. She is proud of the incredulity she regularly encounters. People say, "You're not a drag!"
96	As Celestial Star, she has hair the color of a Coke can and transcendentally long legs, and she gets introduced on stage as the Girl with the Big Personality on account of her forty-eight-inch bust. The girls call her Celestial Monster in mockery of this abundant bosom As everyone says, "mandies make you randy," a fact of which she is acutely aware each time she wakes up naked under a sink full of vomit in the bathroom of an empty bar, not knowing when she passed out, but feeling like she had another pretty good night.
97	Stacey shoots up speed with a little glass syringe that glints like jewelry, and she drives across the city between the house she is renting in Brunswick and the shows she's dancing in and the brothels she's working at. She makes good money in the twenty-buck fuck shops, those dark terrace houses along Nicholson Street in Fitzroy. The trick is to get the guys in, get them excited, and get them out as quickly as possible. The more she can do fast like that, the more money she makes.



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101	So despite the constant threat of police violence, normalized by a society in which homosexuality is officially a mental illness and a crime, the fact that Sandra and her friends now have commercial venues to visit should not be taken for granted. When Hillier and her partner, "drag impresario" Doug Lucas, first approached the Prince of Wales Hotel in 1977 about establishing the regular gay night that would become Pokeys, the manager doubted that a drag show could fill the pub's entire first floor.
103	They are the only ones who are stabbed in the guts, still, by the term queer; who always stumble over the word transgender because, to them, there are only guys and girls, really, and regardless of whether you've had The Change or just put on a frock for the night, they will call you a girl and mean itIn the same way that he, who insisted at various times on running male-only bars, clearly prefers the company of men or queens, Sandra prefers the company of straight women. That's who she feels most herself with. The fact that her drag days were a period of adolescent experimentation from which she felt the need to move on must be understood in the context of her entire life.
105	"But we didn't realize what the consequences would be, didn't think about the complications. Could I have worked? Could I have done prostitution? Life has a funny way of working itself out, because it probably would've been quite tumultuous for the child."
106	And Maria comes in, all swagger, to watch her red-haired girlfriend with the amazing tits. Maybe Keen has it in for her. Maybe he has it in for dykesIt is a time of becoming for both of them; Maria is three months pregnant with their child, and Sandra is pregnant, in a way, with herself, about to start the process for the bottom surgery that will complete her transition.
108	She is scared that it will come out that Maria's girlfriend is actually a drag queen in the club where she was killed and, also, that Maria was pregnant with their baby.
109	The cops are cracking down again. She cannot make money by turning tricks down Acland Street or Robe Street or Fitzroy Street or any of those streets. So she goes to a brothel on the Nepean Highway. When the freeway expansion goes through years later, this house will be demolished, taking with it the small, dark rooms where she knelt or lay facedown: bound, bleeding, white-pale; quivering like something slapped down on a butcher's counter. This is unregulated submissive BDSM work, work Maria never would have allowed her to do, work that is "like a mind fuck:" the bottom of the food chain. This is where, like Maria, she just lies there, internally wounded, and does not get up. But she is not Maria, and something continues to beat inside her. She supplements what she makes there with quick money from the cheap brothels in Fitzroy.
114	"Up in the country," he said—happy that day because it was his last before moving back home to New Zealand—" this boy broke up with his girlfriend and made a homemade shotgun and shot himself in his garage.
126	After corresponding with Professor Shan Ratnam in Singapore (who had, at that time, five years of experience in sex reassignment surgery) and reading the literature he suggested, the two surgeons "decided to go ahead and do one." The surgery was successful.
127	It wasn't that this surgery had never been performed before in Australia—there had been "eight or nine cases" in Melbourne. Rather, it had been performed extremely rarely





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	and somewhat covertly. There was word that a small group in Sydney was performing operations, that a surgeon at St. Vincent's Hospital had been treating transsexual patients for several years, and rumor had it that over at the Royal Melbourne Hospital there was a surgeon who would operate on a Sunday morning in a locked theater and transfer the patient to Mont Park mental hospital for clandestine postoperative care Was there anything that united the patients he treated over his career? "An obsessionalism about wanting to get their surgery," he says. "I think that's what impressed me the most. The older ones, with professions and kids and wives, sacrificed a lot. Yet to them it was worthwhile. Transsexualism is not a choice."
128	She had already had the feminizing rhinoplasty and an eye lift; was not in possession of any obviously male facial features that could cause "incongruencies" after her surgery, making it more difficult to integrate socially as a woman. She had breasts and soft hips and moved with casual grace in her own skin.
129	Though the sex work she does and the drugs she takes and her overriding need for constant company frequently mean that she is not in control of herself or her environment, she is excellent at acting otherwise to conceal any vulnerability.
131	Due to her earlier robust display and the fact that she is a transgender sex worker, he thinks she is trying to scam extra drugs "You think I'm here for drugs? If I want drugs, I can buy drugs on the fucking street. How dare you think I'm going through this for"
133	In 1980, Kalgoorlie was still the Wild West. Still very much that frontier town of miners and prostitutes, people arriving for the gold, working long hours on short-term contracts and divided by gender, with the attendant drinking and fighting and fucking.
134	Sitting in the hot car, Sandra listens while the madam explains the hours, curfew, job prices, payment protocol, and the requirement to keep her doctor's book up to date; also the house rules, which culminate in the admonition that should she fuck a black man, she will be thrown out.
136	While many of the women are hepatitis B positive, and there is "a bit of chlamydia, a bit of gonorrhea," the overall rates are not high in the early 1980s, despite the fact that "practically no one used condoms."burn out. Some women take a few days off when they are menstruating; others just insert a sea sponge and keep working. Like them, Sandra is there to make money.
137	"So I go to myself, 'Fuck, what'd I do last night? If nothing else, I'm a good slut." When they have chuckled and drunk from the bottles she buys for the house. She shares with the other girls what she's been taught. To put a towel down on the bed. To slide across the bed, melting into "the goddess look." To say, "Put your arm around me and kiss me." To heat a glob of Vaseline in one hand while the customer is thus distracted, then to throw a leg up near your head and reach that hand around the outside of the thigh and underneath, placing the lubricated fist in front of your crotch. "I have this thing that I don't actually have sex with them," she says. "If you get the position of your arm right, and warm up the Vaseline right, they'll fuck your hand! I'll say, 'Just kiss me a bit more' (not that I want to, but to distract them), and they'll get off like a rocket. Bang bang bang. Straight onto a blanket, you do the actress bit and then off you go. So I never really have sex. It's quite ingenious really. That's how I make my money."



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To assist her in this, she pops a lot of pills. This she also shares with the girls: "Mandies make you randy, make you screw like a fucking viper and be making a lot of money."
No one is sure how the rumor starts, but word gets around that there is a drag queen working on Hay Street.
She is tall, huge-breasted, she has large hands. But so does the Swedish girl in the room a few doors down who is taller, bustier, larger.
How she opened her robe so that she was perfectly naked. How she leaned back on her elbows and splayed her legs. "Do I look like a bloke?" she asks evenly. "Do I fuck like a bloke?" She addresses this question directly at one of the men. "No," comes the muttered reply. "Well. You'd best get word 'round town that you're dreamin,' she says lightlyIf someone told her then that eighteen years later this town would elect a transgender former prostitute and brothel madam as a local council member, she would have died
laughingBack also to the doctor who refills her prescriptions for hormones and for drugs.
Their relationship is amiable and, while not intimate, it is a significant one in Sandra's life in that it is the only one that she has consistently maintained from the period following her sex reassignment surgery through her last years as a sex worker, through the time Sandra "was heavy on drugs, alcohol, and things like that," through her various relationships, businesses, and health issues.
The improbable name of this man is Mel David Brooks. On this night, he is on bail for previous charges of burglary and aggravated rape. Brooks pauses near the front door where he makes both women kneel low to the ground. He forces them to remove all their clothing. He unzips his fly and removes his flaccid penis. He forces it, again and again, into the mouth of each woman. After a while, he decides that he wants to turn the porch light off. Though she is terrified, Sandra tries to preserve the possibility that a client might come along and inadvertently scare Brooks away. "You can't turn the light off—it's on a timer," she tells him. So he steps onto the porch and looks around for the fuse box. Jenny stands up and he barks, "Get back down on your knees!" Then he turns the power off at the main switch and the house disappears into darkness.  He returns to the hallway, stopping to prop the front door up from where it dangles on one hinge and shove it closed again. The nearest occupied house, another brothel, is at the end of the long street. There is no one to hear Lucifer barking. Sandra is shaking, silently crying. Jenny tries to talk Brooks down. She tells him, "Whatever you want, we'll try to do it." He shoves his penis back into her mouth and then into Sandra's, where he ejaculates. Her stomach lurches. "Keep it in your mouth," he warns. She is going to vomit. She grabs the towel that Jenny has been wearing and furtively spits into it. The dog is circling them, mouthing at their arms, wagging his tail; now he thinks it is all a great game. "Get into the bedroom!" Brooks shouts at both women. He pulls up the blind so that he can look out over the front yard. He forces Sandra to kneel and repeatedly and painfully forces his finger into her anus. "Lick my ass!" Brooks says as he turns around and bends over slightly. She can see clearly how dirty he is and, revolted, grabs the towel to wipe him. He warns, "Do it properly. Pull the cheeks apart." She tries not to vomit.



#### Content **Page** disobey him although she thinks he will kill them both anyway. The doorbell rings. ...Brooks nods. "Get dressed, both of you. We're going for a walk." Sandra reaches for her leotard but he allows them only to wear towels. He grabs their hair again and walks them out of the house and across the road into the deserted and vast public park. They walk for some time, deep into the park, until they come to a chain-link fence and cannot go any farther and become just shapes moving on the dark grass; a lion tearing into its prey in the moonlight. "Spread your towels on the ground," Brooks commands, releasing their hair. He makes both women alternately kiss him on the mouth and suck his penis. Nauseated from the violence and the pain and the terror and the smell of his beastbreath and his dirty skin, Sandra feels even sicker as he repeatedly shoves his fingers into her vagina. She knows from the way he is talking and behaving that her life is in danger. "Get in the sixty-nine," he tells them. Sandra starts crying again. "Don't worry," Jenny whispers to her, "It'll be all right." Sandra flinches as he shoves his finger again into her anus. "Lick harder! You're not doing it properly!" he shouts at the back of her head, which is now between Jenny's legs. Shaking, she tries to do what he says. She doesn't know how much time passes as he rearranges them, again and again, like dolls. She looks up for a moment and sees that he has just ejaculated. She does not hesitate. She punches him in the balls, as hard as she can. Brooks goes to hit her but she ducks, grabbing his testicles and squeezing them hard with both hands. He just looks down at her. 174 The first is her relationship to the police as a transgender woman in the early eighties. At the time of her rape, Sandra had witnessed and experienced years of institutionalized police violence toward transgender people. Despite this, she called on the service of the police and explicitly told them, in her statement: "I had better mention that I had a complete sex change at the Queen Victoria Hospital. Since then, I have lived as a normal female and have all the functions of a female." Then there is her relationship to the police as a sex worker. ...She had knowledge of thousands of dollars in bribes paid to a Consorting Squad detective by Geoffrey Lamb, the owner of one of the brothels she worked in. Just up the road from Dream Palace, members of the Caulfield police had been the subject of credible allegations that they attended an illegal brothel where they drank and had sex with the workers for free; one such gathering allegedly ended in shots being fired and a sex worker being raped. 185 A porn magazine is balanced on top of the books; a woman smiles out from the cover, a yellow star shielding her vagina. 187 After the rape, she is unable to work at all. Then, when she recovers physically, she finds that she is unable to do the sex work that has constituted her income for the last decade. She has Rick, and Rick has work, but that doesn't mean much; Rick's money is Rick's money, and her money is Rick's money. In addition to food, shelter, and transportation, her needs include the drugs and alcohol she requires to deaden her mind enough to live and to sleep, the ability to supplement Rick's lifestyle so that he hangs around, and the cosmetics and hormones that are not merely aesthetic but vital to her dignity. 189 So she turns up the radio and drinks in the dark and when she starts thinking about ways to kill herself, she gets up and she walks.



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197	The doctor thinks for a moment. "Well, just tell him that you're transgender, that you've undergone 'gender transformation' or 'reassignment.' That's a bit softer than saying you've had a sex change.""You're ah tellin' me you want to be a, ah, a lesbian now?" he asks uncertainly.
208	Her hands are still shaking as she pours herself a scotch.
279	My anger is Sandra's scotch. It is her wine, her sleeping pills, her years of speed and "mandies make you randy," her denial, her forgetting. These are the ways we numb the pain of vulnerability, but emotion cannot be selectively numbed.
280	The members of the government who passed and preserved laws against "homosexuality" and wearing women's clothes moved her toward disconnection. The members of the community who supported those laws, actively or with silence, moved her toward disconnection. The police officers of the 1970s who threatened her, the men who paid to beat her and to fuck her, her rapist and her girlfriend's killer and the bureaucrats who voided her marriage all moved her toward disconnection. The people who, even now, legislate and police and "pick" her gender, move her toward disconnection.
288	The photograph on this page depicts a nude woman bending over in a frontal view. Her breasts and pubic area are exposed. The caption under the photograph reads: Celestial Star See Figure 1.

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	6
Bitch	4
Cock	4
Cunt	2
Dick	1
Dyke	1
Fuck	64
Piss	3
Shit	41
Tit	4





Celestial Star

Figure 1

