

Xaviera Hollander Interview

Former call girl and house madam, Xaviera Hollander, talks about her kinks, desires, and *The Happy Hooker*.

"I always say I can do without a man for about 24 hours. Then I go hunting." Such a statement, so openly and unhesitatingly made, could only have come from Xaviera Hollander—deported madam, polysexual sensualist, and bestselling author of the autobiographical [The Happy Hooker](#). Hollander operated, with a blend of business flair and sexual fervor, the most successful brothel in New York City. Observant and articulate, she also grew to see her two years of catering to customer's desires as a personal service, as well as a way to make money, and herself as an intimate therapist, as well as a prostitute. As she tells in her book, she readily acceded to demands of every kind, however way-out, enjoying making people happy and being paid for "something I'd have been doing anyway."

Born in Java during World War II, she is the daughter of a Dutch physician, and spent her first years in a Japanese internment camp. Later, she lived in Holland and South Africa before heading for the US, where her ability to converse in seven languages soon landed her a secretarial job in a United Nations delegation. At the time, she says, she was sleeping with any man or woman who caught her fancy, and it was an easy transition to combining earnings with yearnings. But it only occurred to her to cross this line when a rich Dutchman gave her \$150 after a night's pleasure. At first a private call girl, Hollander seized an early chance to take over the goodwill (i.e. names and telephone numbers) of a retiring madam, and so acquired an illicit business that prospered for two years, surviving several switches of address following police raids. The first indication that here was no ordinary libertine came when she collaborated (with Robin Moore of *The French Connection*) in writing her outspoken book. *The Happy Hooker* was a project that involved her in a coast-to-coast promotion tour on which she acquitted herself so competently that she was enlisted for leading television and radio shows, and signed up by a top lecture agency. But her downfall was in the making. By an extraordinary malfunction, a TV spy camera planted in her bedroom broadcast inadvertently 35 minutes of frenetic sex on a commercial UHF channel, to the astonishment of unprepared viewers. With the FBI alerted, Hollander was soon to make another unforeseen public appearance, this time in headlines on the August front page of the *New York Times*, when she turned state's evidence before the Knapp Commission investigating police corruption in the city.

The notoriety brought her a deportation order from the US, and she had to leave New York on a day booked for this exclusive Penthouse interview—later completed in Toronto, Canada, and London, England, and originally published in the August, 1972 issue of *Penthouse*. It became clear at that ill-fated meeting how the sudden twist in her fortunes had undermined her finances, for a man from the Internal Revenue Service interrupted to deliver a lien on the profits of her book. It was the first time, noted our reporter, she had dropped her constant smile. Shocking or repellent as they may be to many, there is no reason to doubt the honesty of the outlandish opinions expressed and the extraordinary experiences recounted in this uninhibited conversation. Hollander does not attempt to disguise matters to her undoubted discredit, like the family indiscretions she recklessly disclosed in print, to the distress of her closest relatives. We believe that her frank answers, which make no concession to polite usage, constitute an important social document.



Penthouse: What happened after your sister read your book and learned about your affair with her husband, your brother-in-law?

Xaviera Hollander: I never heard from my sister, but she wrote to my mother, who sent the letter enclosing a clipping from Johannesburg's leading newspaper. There was a front-page picture of me in the good old days in South Africa, and an article quoting the passages in which I described making love to my brother-in-law. Her letter stated that she was upset and infuriated and she couldn't believe that her own sister would have done that, and that she had questioned her husband, who luckily for me had lied and said he never had and it must have been out of my fantasies. Even though the surname was changed to Hollander, my first name Xaviera was well known, so a lot of people recognized me. He got kicked off the school committee, and my sister said it was a big scandal in the suburb where they live.

So one of the results of the book was that her husband lost his job?

No, it wasn't his job, just something he did on the side. But he certainly lost his reputation, even though the book was banned in South Africa. I wrote my sister—actually she's my stepsister—a letter and apologized for what I'd written in the book, and said it was all based on fantasy and maybe a Freudian desire for making love to her husband. Earlier this year, my aunt was sitting under the hairdryer and she looked through the German magazine *Quick* and came across some nude pictures of me. She had never heard about the book; Not only that, but she read about what almost happened with my uncle. So she ran out with her hair wet and curlers still in, and went home and gave my uncle hell for about two weeks.

You mentioned your sister in such a way that she was easily identified, yet you wouldn't mention the names of important customers. Why did you protect them and not your sister?

Remember that when I wrote the book I never thought it would get worldwide attention and be a bestseller in translation. I'd never have mentioned her if she'd been living in America. I also regret what I wrote about my parents, and how my mother caught my father with another woman. In Holland, this caused a lot of aggravation and I even tried to stop the translation. Eventually they took out that part when they translated it.

You seem to have experienced most forms of sexual deviation. Don't you draw the line anywhere?

There are a few people whose scenes disgust me. One man I wrote about in the book had nine girls pee on him, and another wanted a girl to shit on him. Anything with dirt involved is too far out for me.

Was that the kinkiest thing that ever happened in your house?

No, there was a public official who came regularly to be tied up and beaten, then locked in the bedroom closet to watch my girls with their customers through the keyhole. He got his rocks off by watching other people fuck. Once he fell off his chair or made some noise and my customer rushed to the closet, whipped open the door, and recognized the official inside—who was very well known. It was a big embarrassment but somehow he got a kick out of being embarrassed. That's very kinky. We got other masochists who wanted to wash lingerie and scrub floors as servants, some who wanted to be tied up and made to bark like a dog. It's pathetic, but for them it's excitement, and there's a demand for it. So it's a kind of service.

In your experience why do men usually go to prostitutes? Is it because they don't get satisfaction from their wives?

About half of them. They'd complain that their wives were dead in bed or wouldn't do things like oral or group sex. Also there's often boredom in marriage, a lack of communication. The wife doesn't compliment her husband's lovemaking after four or five years, doesn't make him feel he's the best. But he loves her, he loves his family, and he doesn't want to go through with a divorce. He doesn't want a regular mistress or an affair with somebody like his secretary because she'd have to be seduced and is liable to fall in love with him and want to get married. So he comes to us. A man might like the excitement and atmosphere of a bordello, the idea that there are girls waiting for him to choose from. He might be married to a skinny little blonde and dream about making it with a voluptuous dark-haired Amazon. Then there are the sexual minority groups, the people who are accused of being freaks and weirdos. I've always been sympathetic towards them.

Infection apart, there must sometimes be clients whom a girl finds repulsive. How does she cope?

First of all, few customers require more than 15 or 20 minutes, depending on what they pay. For that little while, the girl has to tell herself that it's all part of the job. She must just shut her eyes and try to imagine she's sucking on that famous ice-cream cone *The Sensuous Woman* talks about.

Some readers of your book were surprised that you refute the idea that prostitutes never climax with a customer.

Every woman, married or not married, even with the hottest lover, sometimes has to fake orgasm to please and reassure her partners. Women simply do not come every time—often for reasons that have nothing to do with what goes on in bed. Prostitutes are paid for giving pleasure, so if we don't actually come we fake it to make the customer feel happier. But if a man's a good lover we don't have to fake. If a girl has 10 men a day, factory

style, or working a convention, that's one thing. But I had a select group of clients spaced out between the girls, and there were very few girls who didn't climax at least once in awhile with their customers.



How much has the so-called sexual revolution cut into your business?

Not too much. One thing that is cutting into the prostitution market is swinging. Once couples have found about swapping they find the kind of variety men come to brothels for. But swinging is only happening among the younger people, and they seem to be sexually free only with other young people. The young wives wouldn't go to bed with men of 40.

In Western society, a girl is usually looked down on for prostitution. Doesn't that worry you?

A lot of it is jealousy. I enjoy what I have been doing because I like sex and I like money. I think my book has opened the eyes of a lot of women to the idea that prostitution is not a forced business. I think I was better off

as an honest madam saying to a man, "It's going to cost you \$50 or \$100 to make love to me," than as a secretary kissing the boss's backside, cleaning his desk, fetching his sandwiches, and maybe going to bed with him to keep the job or get a raise.

Are you acceptable now that it's all in the open?

The moment my book became a bestseller, I got invitations. Ben Gazarra had a fundraising party for a peace march. Shirley MacLaine and Betty Friedan were there. All the big writers, actors, everybody. I got invited through the novelist, Terry Southern. The secretary asked: "Would you mind if we put your name on the list of invited guests?" I said: "No, it's all right." When I got the list there I was right at the top. A year before, I would have been rejected. No one would have thought to invite a hooker. But the author of a book, a best-selling author, that was something else. So, standards change.

What about the women's lib people?

Well, I have seen them change their attitudes toward prostitution. I read in the *Village Voice* about a conference they had where they knocked prostitutes. They said: "You are nothing but oppressed sisters, you're forced into the business." Then when my book came out, they changed almost completely. They called me up and invited me to give a lecture in Connecticut for 1000 women on the subject of female sexuality. And they even wrote a letter to the immigration service, to Mr. Marsh, the man who was responsible for getting me kicked out. They said: "We want her here. We need her for women's liberation ideas." They even made up a petition to keep me in the country.

You wrote about being good to your girls. How did you operate a happy house?

I've always taught my girls, "Look like a lady and act like a lady and you'll be treated like a lady." No matter whether you call yourself a whore or a call girl or a prostitute, you're doing something illegal, and that lots of people think is sinful. But if you look like a whore, wear your makeup like a whore, and wear wigs, and have everything artificial and act whorish, you'll be treated like a whore. You'll be treated like a doormat.

What about the money?

Money is important for building up class and reputation. I'd rather not go to bed with a truck driver. I'd rather go with a company president or with a lawyer. I guess you might say I'm a capitalist, you have to be selective.

Do you have any idea of how much money you earned in total?

I don't want to have it printed.

Some of the people who came to you had power of one kind or another; political, financial, legal, whatever. Did they tend to be more straight in their sexual needs and demands?

I noticed the bigger the politician, the squarer he'd be. Politicians are about as square as you can get.

By square you mean sexually ignorant?

Ignorant, uptight. "Don't put my name in your book I don't want to be seen by anybody." They didn't want to hang around the place. They didn't want to mingle.

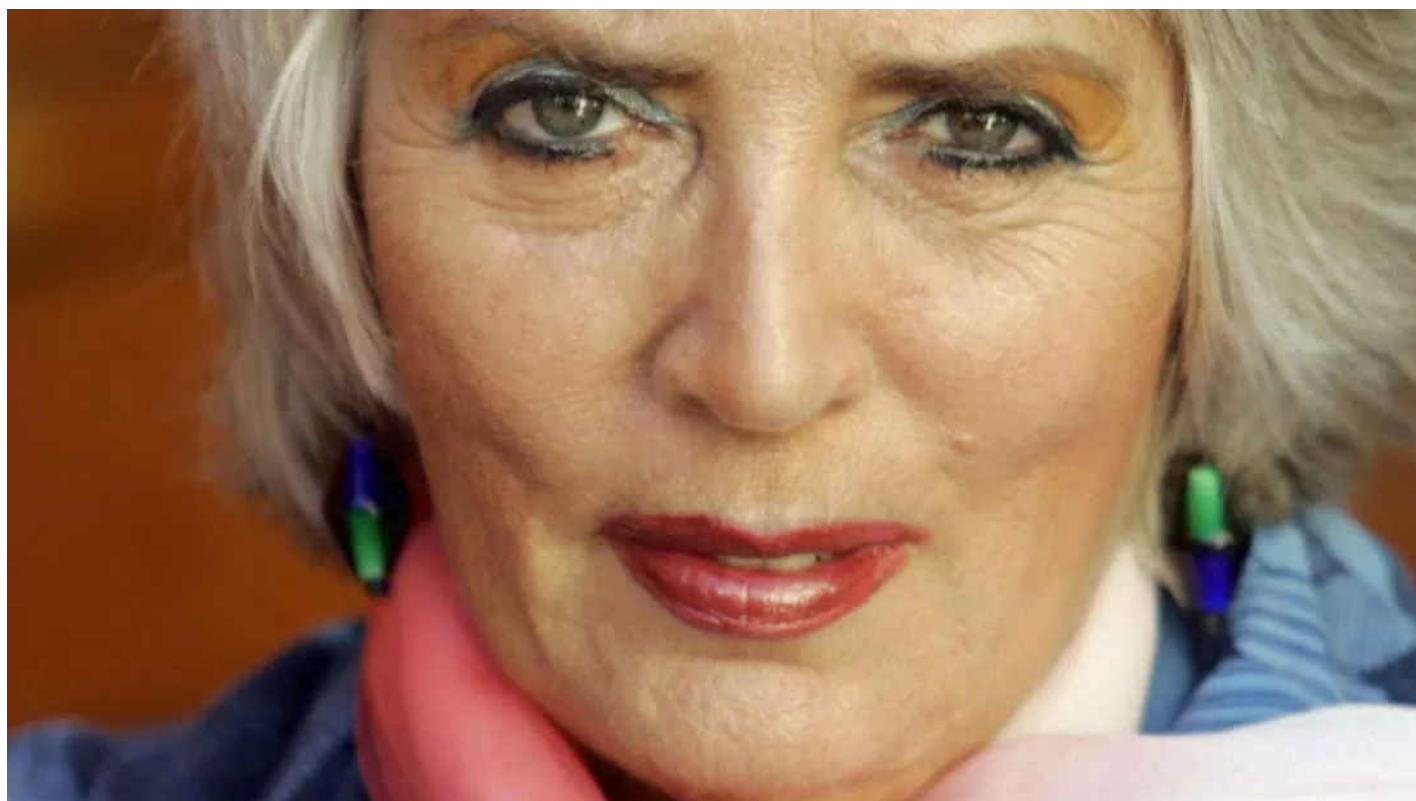
If sex is a symbolic act for love and a part of love, did you try to provide your clients with more than just sex?

All a client really wants is sexual fulfillment. Even so, I always try to give him some emotional pleasure, as well. That's why I never rush. That's why I never wanted my girls to rush. One of the reasons why the price they paid me was high was so that my girls wouldn't say: "I don't make any money because I spend too much time with one man." I would always try to make a man feel like he was a king, like he was the best in bed. However, I was honest, too. If a man was an absolutely lousy lay, I would tell him. I would say: "You're complaining about your wife being bad in bed or being frigid. But look at yourself first." Then instead of just sending him home with a tremendous inferiority complex on how to fuck would say: "Come back. Let me teach you the next time how to appreciate your own body more and how to appreciate a woman's body afterwards." I would make him into a good lover by teaching him to release his inhibitions.

Did men ever thank you for resolving their problems?

Yes, quite a few times after a man had been through my place he'd say: "My wife is also inhibited and she has read your book." So the wife would invite me, on a social level, for a drink. I'd talk and get into her head and she would come out with her complaints and frustrations. Sometimes, if she were broadminded enough, she would go for a three-way scene and ball with me just like her husband.

It's amazing that a lot of men get turned on by watching their wife get off with another woman. But they would not allow their wife to make love to another man. And the wife would not really be keen on seeing her husband with another girl.



The established institutions and older people have always seemed to be down on sex. How do you explain that?

Because to them it was a perversion. Many years ago to be gay or homosexual was something horrible. Now, many people aren't ashamed to be homosexual anymore—they're even proud of it. Then there are the

transsexuals. Guys and women have operations performed to change them. There are also minority groups of masochists and sadists.

What about them?

Well, masochism and sadism and leather fetishism—that's still misunderstood. I'm a masochist sometimes. That's why I'll say "Pick up that rope" or "spank me" or "rape me." It's a balance. Often a masochist is a person who has a dominant position or job. Presidents of companies, TV producers, people that have leading functions.

They have nobody who tells them what to do.

Right, and it is the same with me. I had all those girls, and the Johns, and everything I said, they did it. So my empire grew, but there was nobody to fight with. At that moment, you want to become a masochist. And that's why if people say, "how can you be a masochist" or "how can you be a sadist," I always say it depends on how you put your head, you've got to straighten out your head.

Presumably the sexual liberation is confined to the big cities?

I think so because in the small cities there is gossip and there is no anonymity.

While you've had experience of the enforcement of anti-sexual laws, at least the law allows published books on liberated sex.

One day I'm sure there will be a book called *The Happy Murderer*. They even made a book, *The Sensuous Hooker*. I think everything is a matter of timing. [The Sensuous Woman](#), for example. It was a bestseller, 7,000,000 copies were sold. It's a hilarious book. It shows you what America has to learn. The country goes crazy about a book by some bird who maybe never was approached by a man and all of a sudden she blossoms out and becomes a great girl in bed because she learns how to please a man. And then my book comes out and opens the door to the house of prostitution. So all of a sudden the housewives from Iowa say: "Hey, what is my husband doing when he goes to New York?"

Do you think that some of those people are ashamed to let anyone know how ignorant they are about sex, because everybody is supposed to be hip?

They're hip in groups but in bed they're not hip. And they're also afraid. There are so many women in their thirties and forties, women who have everything materially, but who are insecure, and bored stiff. Their fur coats and the diamond rings are the emblems of insecurity. They say: "Listen John, give me the Cadillac or you don't love me." Someone asked me: "When does a woman become a prostitute?" I think a woman can be a prostitute when she exchanges her body for something material. A housewife can be a bigger prostitute than a hooker because she rejects her husband's desires with "Oh, I've got a headache." But when she sees that fur coat or the diamond ring or the car, she comes across. I saw a young good-looking twenty-nine-year-old man at Detroit College who had never cheated on his wife, and he was married seven years. She was blackmailing him every step of the way. He said: "My wife is a negative hooker. If she does it, she does it lousy, and she does it five or six times a year and it costs me \$10,000, \$20,000. So I think I'm better off paying you \$100."

What about young people and sex, are they pretending that they know about it, pretending that they are liberated, or are they really more free?

They are a lot more liberated than the previous generation. I can see that they are. I can listen to the kids talking at college. But it's still in a square way. To them fucking is one thing but oral sex and lesbianism and homosexuality is another thing. Young kids like to prove themselves by showing how often they can make it but they don't really know how to turn a partner on. The same with young, college aged girls.

You think even kids should try all kinds of sex?

I would certainly advise college kids not to marry the first girl they meet at high school and then go to college and have babies while they're still students. That's stupid. I think that kids nowadays, with a cheap tourist fare, should go to Europe, travel around a couple of months, and make love to other girls and boys. Let them see some of the world.

When you give a lecture, what do you tell people? How do you start?

First I ask: "Why are you people here?" No answer. I say: "Okay, let me try to answer. You are curious. You read a book about a hooker, a girl who liberated herself, who is not forced into the business, and who loves what she is doing. So you want to see what she has that you haven't. How does she turn on men when we can't? So there is envy. I've got something that you don't have. What is it? What makes it different for me? But there is also the fact that you want to know, you want to learn." Then the audience start saying "Yes," and I start answering questions. Women are very sympathetic towards my book. I thought they would spit in my face, sometimes.

When I went to Kingsboro College, I heard there was supposed to be a planned demonstration of female students, women's lib, and I said: "Hey, where are the rotten eggs?" But they didn't protest. They were critical for the first minute. But I said: "Please don't be too hard on me." Hard on! Bomb! The audience caught on right away. If you're discussing something in the field of sex you should open with a double entendre. You've got to hit them right in the stomach where they don't want to get hit yet, where they love to get hit. Notice that women are more curious about my lectures than men. I've given lectures not only to college kids but also to adults, which is even more interesting to me because those are the people who really need information.



It must be difficult for them to stand up in an audience and ask personal questions about sex.

It is. But they do it. One woman said: "I'm 29, I've been married eight years, and I like oral sex. I like variety in sex—you know, with my husband. But whenever I approach him about different positions, he is very square. He says: 'What are you, you're not a whore. Why do you want all those dirty, different positions?' Usually it is the man who comes to me complaining about his wife. This was one of the first times I had a woman making this complaint about her husband. What I found out from my lectures is that people are great at gathering in groups and listening with big ears. But when they get to the bedroom, they don't open up. And that's what is wrong with Americans. They're prudish and puritanical in the bedroom. Outside, they're full of words and action.

So far you haven't mentioned lesbian sex. Don't most prostitutes have lesbian experiences?

Of course. It's almost an occupational hazard, because a lot of men who come to a house are bored with straight sex and the more common variations, and they want to have two or three girls at a time. That often ends up with wanting to watch two girls do it. At first, some of the girls are uptight about it, because they've never gone down on another woman, but after a few times they start really enjoying it.

Did you ever get lesbian customers?

No, the only time women came to me was when their husbands called up for a girl for the two of them. But after they read my book a lot of girls said to me: "My god, now I know what's wrong with me—I'm a lesbian. I never dared express my desires, but there's nothing wrong with being a lesbian or heterosexual or bisexual." Once I was talking to college kids about oral sex, and a young kid interrupted: "What's wrong with good old fashioned fucking?" I said: "What's wrong with it is that it is old-fashioned. You should try oral sex. You might like it."

Did the audience applaud?

Of course. I wouldn't use four letter words, but I would really give it to them.

Let's get back to lesbian sex. Your message is that you can't find out until you do it?

Right. By trying sex with other women, I know how to please a woman almost more than a man would know. By being a voyeur, I can enjoy looking at other people, watching their activities or listening to other people and enjoying it, as well as being an exhibitionist, I know how it is for them to look at me. So you should try everything once. People say, how in hell can you enjoy it if somebody spansks you? I have tried it and I like it. I don't like too much pain but if it is very sexy, it is stimulating. But I am afraid to fool around too much with people that are sadistic to me—once I was beaten up and wound up in a hospital. But sometimes my boyfriend, who is a very peaceful man, bores me stiff. I'm very aggressive. Once I told him: "God damn it, get that rope and tie me down, spank my ass and have your way with me."

In the two and a half years you were a prostitute, did you ever have the experience of paying either a man or a woman?

Not directly, but I helped maybe three young boys—eighteen or nineteen years old—that I really liked. There was one incident with one of my own girls, a beautiful tall South American redhead, but it was accidental. With three other girls we'd gone to the house of three young stockbrokers who paid \$100 a time. Pat, the girl's name, and I were just sort of sitting waiting and I had always liked Pat and I had made love with her quite a few times in my house. She really turned me on because she's got a beautiful body. So I decided to go down on her and it was absolutely fantastic. After she'd been with the customer and it came to paying she said: "Look, this is \$100 for the customer and \$100 for you. I charge you two times 50." I said: "You must be out of your mind." "No," she said, "you make me come twice, you've used my body twice." So I said OK but it was like a slap in the face. She never got any business from me any more, and finally she apologized.

Is your own fantasy life masochistic or sadistic?

Sadistic, definitely. I can really freak out when I play the master. Men tend to be selfish and there were times when I hated them. But I also felt sorry for them because the masochists had no other sexual outlet. There are very few good masters, women who can handle slaves.

What else about your fantasy life?

Once a man with a marvelous French accent called me up, and just talking to him for 45 minutes, I developed a fantasy about what he'd be like and how we'd make love in every possible way. I don't usually like masturbation but this time, I used my fingers and a vibrator and I came four times.

