

Simply Service

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A publication dedicated to the
person living in a service-based
relationship.

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Linda "Bootpig" Hall (Editor)
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Living Authentically

slave Alia Al'Barakah

If someone had told me three years ago that i would be a slave in service to a gay leatherman, that i was going to find the core of my spirituality and my True Self in the form of heavy SM, that i was going to help produce leather events around the country, and that i would be happier than i ever thought possible, i would've thought that perhaps that person had serious delusional mental problems, either naturally or perhaps chemically induced. But here i am: a deliriously happy and fortunate slave in service to Master Skip Chasey. A devoted and humble slave who regularly communes with God in the stinging bite of a whip or in the fire-brand of a cane stroke. An awakened slave who can now see God in everyone and everything. A grateful slave that seeks to bring others to this River of Grace from which we can all drink our fill. i am as close to knowing Bliss than i ever thought was possible.

People who know me and who have witnessed my transformation have often asked me how this all came to pass for me. What did i "do?" What is my "secret" to achieving this joy, this fulfilling existence? i laugh inside when i am asked such questions because truly, my friends, i have no clear idea how i got to be so lucky. i have no formula, no profound words of wisdom, no path on which you can follow me in my fortunate footsteps.

Throughout this amazing journey of mine, i have tried to document or otherwise note the more profound moments in the journey so that i might share them with others so that they, too, might make the same amazing

discoveries about themselves. i suppose at heart that that was a really nice idea. But impossible. Yes, impossible because Truth can only be found in the experience. It cannot be shared or communicated or translated or articulated. Truth can only be experienced. Each time i set out to write down my experiences on this amazing journey of spiritual growth and personal discovery, i always walked away from my literary attempts very frustrated and hopelessly disappointed. The frustration came about because i simply could never articulate well enough the experience and lesson that i was trying to convey. The magic was **in** the experience. Period. The disappointment came when i would struggle and metaphorical concepts until the very magic of the experience that i was trying to convey was lost even to me. How very disappointing. And sad.

So anymore, i rarely seek to document or otherwise share my experiences in literary form, unless i am corresponding with my literary articulation of the experience, dissecting it into parameters with someone who was also a part of the experience, for the simple reason that i just suck at it. And because i am simply unwilling to let go of even an iota of the magic that there is to be found in the Universe when one is open and willing to experience whatever the Universe manifests for us. But there are some things, more tangible elements, of my journey that i am able and willing to share. In answering Bootpig's call for participation in her new e-list, i believe that this list is just such an opportunity to share and learn from our more practical experiences as slaves, submissives, and other persons of service.

For me, service is the focal point of my happiness. i know that, to some who are reading this, this sounds hokey and syrupy and disgustingly naïve. i know this because

until i met Master Skip i used to think these same thoughts of others when they would share similar sentiments with me. i would think to myself, "Good God, what a mindless moron this person is...", either unable or unwilling to think for themselves, to have an opinion, or to contradict or disagree with THE MASTER. i used to be very impatient with these types of individuals, because, truly, i just found them boring and irritating. i wanted to do what i wanted to do, when i wanted to do it, even if that meant doing something that my MASTER didn't like or didn't want to do. Obviously, in my early introduction to the leather lifestyle i had ZERO concept of protocol, obedience, respect, submission, surrender, or any of the other pillars that define the relationship of Master and slave.

So imagine my surprise (followed by acute dismay and alarm), when after the hook-pull ritual at Southwest Leather Conference in early December 2004, on my knees in gratitude and adoration (truly), i suddenly looked up into Master Skip's eyes and declared to him that i would do anything for him, anything he wanted of me. He acknowledged my declaration with a quiet and affirming, "I know, slavegirl." At the time, my declaration didn't register with me, or at least not with my mind or ego. In my heart, i felt light and free and as though everything was perfectly right with the world.

In the week that followed, i was riddled with doubt about this declaration. Why did i say it? Where did this come from? What did He think about it? What did it mean? How is it that in my service to Master Skip i feel more free, more centered, more my True Self, more connected with the Universe, than i have ever felt in my life as an independent (but kinky) woman of the world?

The answer is both simple and complex. The simple answer is that my freedom comes from living authentically. Authentically, i am a slave with a slave's heart of service and devotion and gratitude. Authentically, i am a divine woman of love and beauty and grace, and in coming to know that woman, i come to know my True Self, and hence, continue to

live authentically. Now, i promised Bootpig that i wouldn't spend all of my words on how Love is the answer to all things and how the concept of service is all about Love. Well, it IS, but i promised her that i would be more practical with my articles and sharing, so let's just stick with living authentically for a moment.

In order to find joy and peace and fulfillment in YOUR service, i believe that you must first learn how to live authentically. Friends, there truly IS an all-encompassing joy in service to your Mistress or Master or Sir or Ma'am, but only if that service comes from a place that is pure and loving and without conditions or expectations of reward or service in return (sounds like Love, right?). Living authentically is the cornerstone to leading a bliss-filled life.

What does it mean to live authentically? In a way, it means KNOWING AND ACCEPTING WHO YOU REALLY ARE. It means having the courage to live exactly as you are in a world that tries to compel you to be anything **but** that which you really are. It means tearing down the barriers that you have put up to keep the world out, to keep the world from seeing the real you. It means turning your scrutiny inwards, towards your own Self, to look at all the ugliness and unloveableness that you believe to be inside you. It means letting go of the stories and traumas and wrongs of our pasts that keep us in the past and out of the present moment (where bliss can truly be found). It means learning to love yourself exactly as you are. It means being painfully and wonderfully honest with yourself. Acknowledge the wrongs you have done to yourself and to others, the mistakes you have made. Own them. Embrace them. They have helped to make you the person you are today. Then forgive yourself. Make amends where possible.

Acknowledge the beauty within yourself. This for me has been the hardest step to living my life authentically. i was right up there ready to accept the ugliness and the "bad" things that make me "me." But accepting the "good" things about myself has been far more painful

and difficult for me. But it is a necessity to acknowledge and accept the beauty as well. Learn to know yourself for the magnificent creation of God that you are. You are here for a purpose, my friend. my journey of service has not been about finding that purpose (although i thought so at first), instead it has been about just being willing and open and vulnerable to the Universe to say YES whenever that call comes up for my service. That's it. That's what it is all about. A willingness to say YES when the call comes, without needing to know the outcome in advance, without needing to know why, and most importantly, without needing or expecting anything in return for that service.

As for me, i am still discovering the real Alia. Each day is an adventure in self-discovery, once i opened myself up to the process and allowed the Universe to unfold as it should. i am truly grateful for all that has come to pass in this process of spiritual awakening – the miraculous and the difficult alike. In closing, my prayer is that all of us – Masters and slaves, Dominants and submissives, and everyone in between – will find the courage to live authentically and to find your own bliss.

*About the author: **slave Alia**, known also by her adopted spiritual name of Alia Al'Barakah, brings the unique magic, mysticism, and erotic culture of the Middle East to her BDSM lifestyle. A practicing Sufi Muslim, slave Alia actively promotes self-awareness and spiritual development within the leather community by volunteering her time on special events committees and at venues where SM and spirituality are the focus. slave Alia is in service to Master Skip Chasey as part of her on-going spiritual and slave development. She currently serves the leather community as Chairperson of the Local Planning Committee for Leather Leadership Conference IX, as well as the Chief Financial Officer of the Southwest Leather Conference.*



From the Editor

Part of the joy of the editorial column is just a moment in time to share current thoughts. This issue is starting early, and slave Alia's article was the first one in. I continue to be awed by the amount of heart and grace in her words. Part of the fun of the formatting process is having the time to really linger over the words that are shared by the contributors. With one issue out and one barely started, I've already learned new things, and felt at peace finding a voice for others in service.

There was a time when slave Alia and I were two tough alpha females that couldn't be trusted to get along for 30 seconds. Believe me, we tried the patience of some relative saints in our lives. Our paths were so divergent that commonality simply couldn't be found. We had the best of intentions – we were each SURE our way was the right way. It wasn't in our skill sets at the time.

Our most recent visit was several days worth of relaxed, and very joyous, celebration of the service paths we find ourselves upon. It was a wonderful change and a reminder to both of us about how far we have come. Our relationships, our ways of meeting our potential for service are different but I find that the heart and joy we find from it are equally beautiful.

This month

I'm very excited about this month's issue with its range of topics. We have continuing contributions from Jen Campbell and others, as well as a new piece on a part of service many people avoid discussing, how do you serve when confronted with chronic illness? slave 754399 manages to show this topic in an entirely new perspective that I hadn't considered at all before reading it. Chronic illness had always been a great fear of mine, how would it affect my ability to serve? Now I know that service might be redirected, but it would never be without worth or use. Fortunately, I had read this article before Kansas City Leather University this past

weekend where I found myself trying to do demos and meet obligations while battling pneumonia and asthmatic bronchitis. What a whammy for me. It was very difficult to find myself unable to give much more than the absolute required and I found slave 754399's article in my head throughout the weekend as I had to be tended to like the winded, fragile thing I was – and have continued to be this week. But recovery looms! Blessedly, since South Plains is nearly here!

wonderwoman is back discussing how rituals affect the service headspace and prepare one for other tasks. I think it is an enormous talent to take seemingly small tasks and expand them into constant reminders of your belief system and choice of way of being. I've often thought the military is an outstanding example of using ritual and repetitive small tasks to prepare the mind for bigger tasks and faster response under pressure.

Thank you for the many positive words you have shared about the first issue, your friends

that have subscribed, and the beginnings of feedback and comments for inclusion in issues. I look forward to crossing paths with many of you as I travel this year. If you'll be at South Plains Leatherfest in Dallas, Texas later this month, I'll see you there.

Please remember that we would love to hear your thoughts, questions, opinions and article suggestions. Just drop an email to me at msolympusleather2003@cox.net

In Leather Service,

Bootpig

January's Feedback

"Your ezine came at a perfect time for me – it helped remind me of that center of me"

"The first issue of Simply Service was absolutely wonderful! I was surprised and delighted by its length and depth..."

"The Simply Service E-zine is very inspiring. The articles are all very well thought out, sincere, and logical. It's remarkable how large a surface they covered, from very broad subject material, to the very detailed, without confusion or fence-riding. The authors are obviously in touch with the topics they write about, and it's clear that they've had the experience necessary to write with such authority. *But the thing I* liked the most about them is that each author seems to uncover something personal about herself, and delivers it with a confidence that's stunning. I'm very glad to have been invited to read this; it's good to see that there are people out there who take their service seriously and personally. Thanks, C"

Serving while Sick

slave 754399

If a non consensual slave woke and found his body infirm, he would push himself to the last possible movement he could, but not out of love for his Master... and if unable to do the days work out in the fields or even around the house, he might fear for his life. But we're talking consensual slavery here. How do we respond when our bodies are sick, tired and sore? We know our loving Masters won't kill us for not getting a days work done, and yet we are often found pushing ourselves so hard that our Masters worry about our health.

How does one find balance in wanting to serve those we love and adore, without harming their property while doing this? Is being sick just a really great excuse not to serve?

No, obviously being sick is not at all a good excuse. Most service-oriented persons would push ourselves too far, and we don't want to see our friends end up in the hospital, or worse.

So what does someone like myself who has a chronic illness which causes pain and muscle weakness do on a bad day? I certainly don't look for excuses not to serve. In fact my biggest problem when Ma'am was first getting to know me as Her potential slave-boy, was being overly self-critical. As a switch I could recognize these things in myself because I'd seen my own slave-boy (boi Carlie) going through these very thoughts and self-flagellations, and yet I could not seem to stop myself from going into the same negative tail chasing scenarios. Ma'am, however, had a plan.

Every day since She realized this predicament, Ma'am has required me to have a daily meditation on how I may be of

service. It's become a wonderful and affirming way for me to realize what She was trying to get across to me, that everything I do is of service to Her. This morning I woke in particular pain and unable to sit up, let alone get out of bed. I meditated for a while, on how was I to serve Ma'am if I couldn't even get out of bed. And I realized, that even if I were stuck in bed, I could still serve Her spiritually; not religiously, but service of the heart and spirit.

A few of the ideas that came to me are: calling to tell Her how much I love Her, writing in my journal on the laptop, writing this article, taking care of myself emotionally, and resting whenever my body needed it. Now hopefully I could do more than this for Her on a daily basis, but spiritual service is a large part of why Ma'am wanted me as Her slave. And I can be proud of this and cultivate it in myself.

Part of cultivating that in myself, is of course to obey Her and meditate at least 10 minutes each morning on waking about how I may be of service. But another part of cultivating my spiritual service to Her is to take care of myself spiritually and emotionally. If I find myself becoming negative and my thoughts are depressed, I realized that often it is because I have not been spending enough time in doing the things that bring me to that happy place.

When I'm physically unable to curl up at Her feet, those 10 minute meditations in the morning become my time at Her feet, and writing an article like this, becomes of great service to Her. And sometimes those are all I need to cheer me up, and put my head on straight. But what if I needed more? Maybe a hot bath with some beautiful music can help improve my body, mind and spirit.

When it comes to service, intention seems to be the most important thing. If in one's heart one is intending to be of service by caring for his master's property, it changes the entire nature of a bath into a spiritual, sacred moment of caring for the Master's property rather than the guilty pleasure of one who

"snuck away" or "stole some time" for self. It has become clear to me, that if I notice myself having negative thoughts about something I am doing, even if they are seemingly thoughts about my Master and how to better serve Her, they are in fact not being of any help to anyone. It doesn't help Her to have me sitting in a tub worrying that I'm taking away from time that could be put into washing that tub, or those tiles on the walls, etc. However if my body is sore and tired, and I take those few minutes to truly enjoy the sensation while there in the tub, it can be truly healing. That is the true service. All the worries in the world can not help my Master. But 15 minutes in a hot tub letting all those worries melt away and be replaced by joyful thoughts, certainly can. Sometimes, being of service, is taking care of one's own body, mind and spirit.

*About the author: **slave 754399** is Shawn k. Michael. A switchy transgender guy, who recently won the title of US Daddy 2005 at South West Leather Conference, and lives in service to his Master, Lady Rhiannon, and as Daddy to his bois, Carlie (US boy 2005) and Patch (International Pup 2003). The bois and Shawn live in Southern California. You can learn more about them at their website www.3bois.com*



A is for Alpha

Linda "Bootpig" Hall

In a recent discussion with another slave, I blithely narrowed the definition of Alpha to "Dominance Light" but the more I've thought about it, the more I am aware that as an Alpha, I do have many of the responsibilities of Ownership. Their question about what makes me tick as an Alpha, and how I'm judged on performance was a valid one. My thanks to them for spurring this beginning thought process on defining it. That isn't the tricky part for me. I'm naturally a dominant personality that has chosen to be in service.

The tricky part is in teaching and managing according to the Owner's vision, and not according to my own. Believe me, as a dominant personality I have definite ideas and opinions on how a slave is developed, how they act, what level of priority they place on obedience. Most of the time, our outlooks on this are compatible, hence being in service to Him. As a slave, this active choice to manage on and in his behalf, is part of the honor and integrity of my service.

The other trick is embracing the trust that has been placed in you to make management decisions, and the accountability for those decisions, and not get lost in the fact that the perks often go to someone else, the Owner. It helps that in this case, the Owner actually does expect his life to be easier with slaves around and that He doesn't insist on being involved with every single thing, every single second. He would in fact, be offended if that constant presence were a necessity. There are those perfectly happy with high drama, hands on, high maintenance ownership. If they're willing to invest the time, fabulous, but it doesn't work here because it falls outside his objectives for a family.

Alpha positions mean many things to many people. For some, it means the primary partner, or the longest collared. I've seen it boiled down to a very petty, "Bitch I was here first, don't forget it". That way rarely works.

And in my opinion, it isn't Alpha, its territorial pissing and that is self-serving, not owner-serving or family-serving. The house could have the best dominant on the planet, but the alpha makes it an unreasonable situation.

Another situation that doesn't work is naming a non-alpha personality to the position. Don't ruin a great follower by suddenly demanding that they also be able to balance leading and following, dominating and submitting. Some personalities simply aren't cut out to be an alpha. The flip side of this, don't begin to expect that an alpha personality will sit quietly and yield to what they can easily see is nothing more than a hierarchal ego stroke.

The best simple description of our structure is a pack mentality. I provide nurturing care upwards and downwards on the food chain, occasional intervention with the big, growly in-charge male, and some discipline and consequences while "pups" are growing and learning. I am also expected to weather aggressive challenges from 'pups' as they grow and find their way, and show them an example more constructive than knocking them for a loop.

Do I do it all? No way. Do I bear some of the burden? Absolutely. This relationship even extends through what can only be described as a weaning phase, where they learn to be held more personally accountable to Him, they have less of a buffer with me, and we become more equal in status, ability and expectation. This phase seems to occur at about the two-year point. Just like in the animal world, this phase can result in some separation anxiety and growing pains, but it's worked through if the significance of the period is something all are aware of.

Some houses exist without formally established hierarchies. This one doesn't. Everyone works, several of us teach and travel frequently, we all have different volunteer roles, hobbies, community activities, training timelines, etc. The Alpha position is a job description and the person in it meets the qualifications of the position.

Some have said this sounds harsh. Actually in sitting down years ago and talking about what had worked in poly families and what hadn't, what we had survived, what we hoped to build, we kept seeing that a seat-of-the-pants routine with the assumption that an In-Charge unit has the answer to everything results in a LOT OF DRAMA. Structuring along the lines of a business, with a human resources department to assist upper management has streamlined processes and minimized drama to very small, liveable levels. When you hear someone blustering about poly with multiple slaves, no drama, a Master that is never stressed and never repeats himself, and everyone unquestioningly serves and obeys – find out how many is many, how long is a long relationship, and within what proximity these people have co-existed. All of these factors change the dynamics considerably.

The Alpha in this house, at this time, happens to be me. Over time, perhaps another would hold the position if their skills were more suited to the needs at the time. What are the skills? Start with the obvious: unwavering, proven loyalty; integrity; commitment. You think those are easy to find? Try looking, you'll find that they have gone the way of Samurai, and now appear almost eccentric in the midst of fast-food Master/slavery. For tangible skills, there is the ability to manage, to provide information without adding personal bias, to structure, schedule, develop, and implement plans that are in keeping with the Owner's defined vision of what is acceptable behavior. I find it amusing that I am in the professional field of Human Resources, and what I do as an Alpha almost exactly mirrors my professional position.

A is for Awareness

Being an Alpha means being on your toes. Just like any middle management position, you're aware of the Boss's opinions and objectives and you're also aware of subordinate opinions and objectives. Surprise! Sometimes these don't mesh. I know, I'm probably the only person that ever disagreed with an Owner, right? Experience

is important here. A newer slave may not quite fully understand how to present their difficulty with form and presence. I may act as a nurturing buffer for them. I may be called upon to suggest alternate means of dealing with the situation. I am absolutely expected to be able to demonstrate the skill of speaking properly in regards to requests, or differences of opinion. Thankfully, he trusts in the people he chooses to serve him, and is not above asking for an opinion or perspective from the slave mindset.

I may also, with awareness of his preferences and objectives, talk to them alone and remind them that they are dangerously close to being inappropriate or asking for the wrong thing. As an example, someone in need of attention, may think that they can demand play to meet this need and receive it. They might need to be reminded of attentions they have received, but aren't "counting" in their inventory and how possible consequences will include not only an unmet demand, but probably losing a number of the unappreciated attentions as well to help them get their priorities back on track.

Self-awareness and self-management are highly valued skills around here, and care is given to the development of these skills. Any monkey can be taught to set the table in a pleasing fashion, becoming evolved and invested in their own service requires personal ownership of their goals and commitments. This is a difficult area. An Alpha must sometimes realize that they can teach skill, refining, nuance, but they cannot teach desire. The student must bring that to the table.

Awareness is also important at the time of interviewing a prospective new member. One has to be careful to avoid personal bias, and really look at it as a job interview. It is my job to make that initial call on their potential and discuss strengths and weaknesses with him. In talking with other families, this is a privilege that is rare. This is not in reference to play partners, but in reference to potential service members in the household. I think this is an area that has the most potential for abuse by

Coming Events

February 25-27, 2005
Dallas, Texas
South Plains Leatherfest and International Master/slave
<http://www.southplainsleatherfest.com>

August 26-28, 2005
Indianapolis, Indiana
Great Lakes Leather Alliance
<http://www.greatlakesleather.org>

Space permitting, we'll be happy to list upcoming events that specifically include classes, workshops, facilitated discussions or other service-based offerings. I'm sorry, munch groups and similar meet n' greets will not be listed.

an alpha. Do you have the guts to make the right decision based on the Owner's vision, and not on your personal insecurities or fears that a prospective may trigger? Sometimes, it's even easier to be tempted in the other direction. What if they're really neat and you like them, but all signs in the interview point to team player issues, or commitment issues, or inclinations to drama? Can you ethically disassociate from your interest and report on these possible negative outcomes?

A is for Accountability

I have a great deal of accountability as an Alpha. Sometimes, a great deal more than I would like to have. This is a most difficult lesson to translate to other slaves on occasion. Their mistake is my mistake. Their slip of the tongue is my slip of the tongue. They go to great lengths to share their "shame", their sorrow or their guilt at having

that affect on me, but they forget that I accepted that possibility. What I prefer is that they go to great lengths to not repeat such a behavior. This is often lost on them until the lesson repeats several times.

In the event of my error, that is a lesson for everyone and there is very little that does not get shared when it can be a learning lesson for every person involved.

I'm aware of this level of accountability, but it doesn't always mean I'm comfortable with it. It can be very difficult to stand and be accountable for an action that you know you would not have engaged in, but they did.

This doesn't mean I'm punished for every infraction someone else accomplishes. Notice I didn't use "mistake". Mistakes happen in the learning process. Accidents happen. There comes a time though when it's a choice to behave inappropriately, rather than an uneducated mistake. When this does happen, he'll look to see if He and I were clear with them about a rule, coached them appropriately, provided the necessary resources. If I did all of that, and they still made a decision to be inappropriate, then that falls on them. If I failed to do that, he'll look at where I failed and we'll discuss it to improve the next time, and there might be possible consequences for me. Again, just like a middle management position.

A is for Action

I don't have a lot of time to just sit. There are schedules to maintain and tasks to follow-up. He doesn't really want to check in on simple things like did the laundry get picked up at the cleaners, is the guest room ready for so-and-so's visit. It's my responsibility to keep the calendar, keep track of who is traveling and when, plan for special events, menus for upcoming entertaining. I delegate routine tasks, and I usually do it on Sundays to line the week out. It's a wild combination of estate manager, butler, domo, personal assistant, valet, event planner, psychologist, nurturer, tap dancing and tight wire walking.



symbolically reinforces a slave's inability to cover or hide anything from Master. The shaving of the cunt does the same: it results in a smooth, pleasant sensation and exposes the slave completely to Master. Shaving the cunt makes the slave's desire, Master's marks, and any essence spilled onto it.

After the body is thoroughly cleaned, the ass is lightly lubricated. The lubrication is a sign of Master's care and regard for the slave, by making it easier for him to access that passage. The symbolic meaning of rearing the ass every night, regardless of even the physical presence of Master, is that the slave is reminded daily of her place and potential use, reinforcing role and utility over preference and expectation.

Upon presenting herself to Master to be inspected, the slave stands before Master with legs apart and hands clasped behind her head, mouth open. The thorough inspection with flashlight lets Master examine the slave's preparations, and symbolically reinforces her status as property, as the inspection evokes imagery of an animal being inspected for auction.

The entire preparation and inspection routine is a lovely ritual that reinforces status, role and body-consciousness. The attention to detail in the preparation of the body also prepares the mind and spirit of the slave for service. The practical and spiritual value of this ritual is immeasurable.

wonderwoman is a 42 year old slave female with over five years in real time service. Her priorities in service include obedience, the Master/slave relationship as a spiritual path and the drive to be owned property once again.

My Favorite Teacher

slave a

Perusing the life of Mother Teresa and her writings and those of people who knew her or served under her I have found some interesting little philosophical tidbits.

I would like to share four of them with you.

In one passage there was mention of her reluctance to provide service that was not requested. She created environments that provided service and waited. Of course she didn't have to wait long, but those of us who are pure of heart usually don't.

Since her own calling had been a private affair between her and the Lord she acknowledged that other people had their own callings. She did not see herself as "special" because she was answering a calling but instead felt as though she had joined the human race by having one and that each of us follow the dictates of our callings. If such is the case she did not feel it was her place to interfere with the lives of others. Some people were simply answering the call to die.

She thought it insulting to an individual's integrity to answer a need that had not been expressed. Because of the strength of her conviction and the charisma she was gifted with she was able to create many different types of environments. It was assumed if an AIDS victim showed up at one of her AIDS houses that person wanted the services that house provided. They didn't have to ask for every muffin, hand towel or smile so I don't see this philosophy as license to simply sit on one's butt waiting for commands but once the environment is established it might be best to simply carry on without much ado. To stay busy in the creation and maintenance of an environment affords the served some privacy. I am sure the Sisters of Mercy kept themselves very busy and didn't sit and stare at those they served expectantly awaiting a

call. It is a fine balance between providing an environment, awaiting a call to direct service and not interfering. It's a tight rope I walk everyday.

Another story really moved me. She spoke of a man who was desperately poor in India who came to her "soup kitchens" every night for dinner. He found some paid labor and that afternoon he found Mother Teresa in the street and handed her his small earnings. He spoke of being honored to contribute to the works of the great Mother Teresa. She knew if he gave her his money that he would have no money for food and show up that very night at the soup kitchen but she accepted the money.

There is so much in that story. She did not presume to know what was right for this man. She repeatedly argued that she was not a social worker. She had no interest in "bettering" people's standard of living. She did not project her values onto other people. She had no urge to tell this man to keep his money and save it so he might get a place to live and feed himself. That was not her place. She also had a little difficulty swallowing the great Mother Teresa reference but realized quickly that his perception was his business and it was again, not her place to project her values onto him. If his world was a richer place because he viewed her as great, then he was free to do so. This is a concept I struggle with today myself. I have a desire for a low status, but that in itself is a desire for status. Mother Teresa allowed those she served to determine her status for her, and if great was the status du jour, she would oblige. To have responded in any other way to the donor would have shamed him, controlled him, corrected him... basically... DOMINATED him. She was not in the business of domination.

The next story I would like to share is a simple quote I use all the time in my daily life as an affirmation of my place. She presented before WHO Congress in the United States her work, her plans and her needs. Afterward she was approached by a Senator said to



her, "We both know what you do is simply a drop in the bucket compared to the need out there. How do you keep going?" Her reply was simply, "Not all of us are called to success, some of us are called to serve."

Wow. There was no "successful conclusion" to service for Mother Teresa. She released expectation of outcome. Service does not produce "results". Now THAT'S something to think about.

The last tale was for me the most profound. When a new volunteer met her for the first time Mother Teresa held in her arms a baby whose death was imminent. "How can you face this?" she was asked, "How can you retain calm and joy and peace in the face of this horror?" Mother Teresa responded by indicating the baby with a cock of her head, "This baby is only the Christ in his most distressing form, like St. John and Mother Mary at the foot of the cross, I do not seek to change the destiny of this child, I am simply honored to witness."

Big huh?

I use the precepts I gleaned from these vignettes of the life of Mother Teresa in my daily life serving a sadistic owner. I do not serve unasked. There is a standard for the environment in which he lives and I have been commanded to maintain that. If I have the urge to do something outside of my limited realm I ask for permission. It is very simple, for to do otherwise might rob him of the direction HE has been called to.

I also work diligently on my relationship to status. My desire for a low status is still a desire. I seek daily to allow the world to define my status. I do not succeed. I hear often that "submissives want to know their place." Well, what if we don't get one? What if our place is actually no place at all, just a tool, one that is so frequently used no one bothered to put a hook on the pegboard for it? Mightn't that be more wonderful?

Of course, called to service not success is just such a handy mantra. It frees me up for

graceful reception of direction and correction. "But that way won't work" doesn't have to be in my script anymore. So what? Maybe failing at whatever we're doing will be more textured, more rich, lead us to new people, places, ideas... We are so success driven as a culture, it's kind of refreshing to release it.

And the last, the honor to be witness. That sums them all up for me. If I maintain the state of mind that I am honored to have been invited to witness Master's life I no longer ease his way for his way is between him and his God. I no longer strive to derive my own status at his expense nor do I dare to presume I know what success is. I am simply attentive, flexible and ready to answer the call.

All of these ideas run contrary to much of what we hear about service to a leather Master. To not seek to please or ease is unheard of. To not seek humiliation but instead the humility to be whatever it is I am needed to be, even if that is great, grand, the boss or the center of attention is a far more gratifying place than demanding I be treated in ways that make me feel submissive. Far more refreshing to actually submit than to insist upon constructs that fool me into thinking I do. To release expectations of outcome, to not care if I or we fail or suffer has freed him to really make the decisions, to in fact BE dominant. If I am not dependent upon success, on the good girl, on the comfort of knowing I am "good at what I do and therefore have job security", but instead rely upon his dominance I actually end up with a direct connection to my D/s relationship instead of a direct connection to my own ego. I had that before we started this process. And to stand as witness, just witness, honored to breathe the same air, knowing each of us are just the Christ in one of many degrees of distress and be ok with that, because who I am I to determine what the end result of that distress might be?

Can these precepts work in your relationships? Have I wandered so far from leather that I am not even a slave anymore? I hear so often, "I am allowed to want what I

want from a relationship." Are we really entitled to set the parameters of our service relationships based on what we want? Or in fact, do we just need to serve, in whatever form that takes, even if it means holding a dying baby instead of crawling around on the floor in a thousand dollars worth of leather hamming it up for the crowd. And if we are called to crawl on the floor hamming it up for the crowd can we take the applause and the lauding with grace and not project our own need to be humiliated onto them? Can we hear "yes Ma'am" and not flinch? Were I to succeed at this credo would I be rendered completely ineffective? These are all questions that ramble through my brain as I develop as a slave, or perhaps develop AWAY from being a slave.

I would love to start a dialog with you based on some of these ideas, for I find their contrariness attractive. Creating structures for us to feel submissive, seeking reward and approval, trying to make people happy, wanting the power to effect change in the lives of people we love... all of these are easy... their performance relies upon our submission to our own imaginings of who we are and we remain in complete control of ourselves, our environments and often those in them. Could we actually submit to OTHER and allow "who we are" to change as dictated by external forces, a dominant for instance? Is "honored to serve" an identity?

slave a is an owned 24/7 slave to Master Scott in Phoenix, AZ. They have been together twenty years and practicing Sm on and off for the duration but only became interested in D/s ten years ago. Five years ago they changed their orientation to Master/slave. They have done presentations on protocols in the southwest and are members of SASM, GWNN, MAsT and APEX.



Earned Respect or Proper Manners?

Lady Wylllo

You have most likely heard the old line (or used it yourself), 'Respect has to be earned and I will not call anyone Master / Mistress until they have earned it from me.' Is it truly a privilege of earned respect or a matter of good manners to call someone by their chosen title?

When we were children we were all told (or at least I hope you were) that we should say please, thank you, yes ma'am/sir, excuse me and other such pleasantries as well as referring to our elders as Mr. or Mrs. So-and-so. These were meant to show respect to our elders and to show that we deserve to be respected for our own behavior. Currently you rarely hear parents enforcing this in their own children and most parents do not use manners themselves. This lack of etiquette has shown to change the basic skills that used to be a standard practice. A new age of self focus has emerged and the affect has grown to near catastrophic proportions.

So why are manners important? The expectation that we earn someone's respect, or they earn ours, does not have anything directly to do with using basic manners when addressing someone. Unfortunately there seems to have been some cross-over of the terms 'manners' and 'respect'.

Let's start with how we got to this point. Within the SM lifestyle titles used to be given when earned, therefore to address someone by their chosen title was based on their experiences and skills that they worked hard to excel in. In comparison, today someone may read a few websites and/or books then announce their status based on what they read. Their skills usually lack the basic level

of knowledge required to complete the simplest of actions. Hence, the age of 'earned respect' has arisen.

Manners are a conduct related to a ceremonious behavior and are a basic skill that we all can use a little more often. They are the rules of conduct and behavior which are a part of basic etiquette. Etiquette can be used by the most heinous person who may never deserve respect from others for their actions. Calling someone Sir, Ma'am, Master So-and-so or Mistress So-and-so has little, if anything, to do with respecting their actions but it is an action that may result in gaining the respect of others. It is not always necessary within SM to actually use the titles of master or mistress since sir and ma'am are generally (check with the person first) quite acceptable.

Manners are also the basic premise of servitude. Whether you are in a committed relationship, or 'lend' yourself out for services, the use of proper etiquette and manners is essential. The knowledge of where to stand, when to speak, what and when to ask questions, how to approach and many other aspects are an integral part of servitude. What you say is just as important as how you behave. 'May I ..., Ma'am?' will be warmly welcomed over just assuming you may, or should, do something that may not be required at the time.

Respect can only be earned if shown to others without expectation. Think of the people you respect most of all and pay attention to how they address others. If you respect them there is probably a reason. Respect is a form of admiration such as holding someone in high esteem or appreciation. You may respect their skills, their presence or even their appearance and you may even respect their use of manners. Someone that is often respected is also someone that usually has no ulterior motive to gain acceptance. They are, generally speaking, someone who behaves consistently in a pleasing manner that is appealing to a majority. They are respected because they present themselves in what is

believed to be their normal behavior; which includes the way they interact with others.

If each person was to wait for the other person to show respect we would end up in a vicious circle of 'wait and see' while we each waited for the other to behave in a way that we observe as respectful. What also needs to be considered is that each person may identify respect with completely different elements, so how one shows respect may be viewed as less than respectful to someone else. However, the use of manners can quickly earn the respect of the most hardened individuals.

Earned respect should be based on shown behavior which is much more telling of how a person will treat you then what name they use to identify themselves. Observing their behavior patterns while interacting with others will tell you much more about a person and offer the opportunity for you to determine their skill levels, how others respond to them and how they manage various situations. We can all talk about what we could have, should have, or would have done at any given time but how we actually deal with the situation is what respect should be based on.

So the next time you are at a public function and you are introduced to someone, remember that you are about to make a first impression upon someone that may be monitoring your behavior just as much as you are monitoring theirs. Using good manners is the first step to developing a relationship built on respect.

Wylllo is a Canadian currently living with her dominant in the United States. A 20+ year veteran in the Leather lifestyle, she has experience primarily in service based relationships, many of them platonic in nature.

Her strengths include protocols, masochism and the role of 'alpha slave' for large gatherings. She offers training one on one about basic protocols and pain tolerance (using spirituality as the anchor) for beginners and experienced slaves. She believes that



February 2005

For our midrange selection, I've chosen Bed, Bath & Beyond. (http://www.bedbathandbeyond.com) While I don't think you can purchase silk sheets here, you certainly can get some quality merchandise, at a bit less than one might find at Neimans.

One thing to remember when shopping for sheets (as well as other linens) and that is to consider both thread count AND location of the material. Just because a sheet has a 600 thread count does not make it a fine sheet. Only long staple cottons (Egyptian, Pima, Sea Island) will make the high thread count worth while. Also, make sure that the manufacturer isn't pulling a scam and using a two ply thread and then doubling the actual thread count. Thread count is how many threads are found in a 1" x 1" square. Long staple cottons in a high thread count are very silky and lustrous to touch and sight.

As an example of prices, BB&B has 300 ct Egyptian cotton sheets for \$119 for a queen size set.



Let's move on to our fantasy bedroom:

Queen sheet set (includes pillowcases): \$150.00

Plain white dust ruffle: \$ 50.00

Monaco velvet duvet cover: \$100.00

The Seasons light down duvet: \$250.00

Bedford chenille throw \$ 30.00

Monaco window panel (2) \$ 80.00

Chiffonade sheer (1) \$ 35.00

Grand total: \$695.00

More shopping to find what you need with Bed, Bath & Beyond, but MUCH less money. Same effect? Probably close enough, unless you really do have a lot of money to spare.

Bargain

Target: <http://www.target.com>

My favorite section. Anyone can put together a great bed if they have a \$3k budget; can you do it on a lot less?

Target, my favorite bargain retail store, has 300 ct Egyptian cotton sheets inexpensively, as the Buckwheat Collection shows. Let's put together our standard of sheet set, duvet cover and duvet, bedskirt, curtains for our window and a throw for the chair.



Bed linens, including skirt and duvet cover \$162.50

Down Duvet \$ 70.00

Chenille throw \$ 19.99

Linen curtains (set of 2) \$ 29.99

Sheer \$ 14.99

Grand total: \$297.47

Care and Upkeep

Now you've invested this money in your bedroom but how do we care for these items and make sure we get a decent return on our investment? Most people use, and recommend washing, rather than dry cleaning for bed linens. Washing bed linens is recommended because the more linens are washed, the softer and more absorbent they become. One can use either hand or machine washing, but observe the following points:

Be gentle when laundering bed linens: use a gentle wash cycle and use just a little gentle soap. Ivory Snow (powder) works well, but some people swear by Woolite. Another very good brand of soap to use on linens is Dreft, which is recommended for use on babywear. Whatever you use to wash bed linens, follow the package directions. Place delicate, embroidered or fringed linens in a lingerie bag before putting them into a washing machine. If you take a look at your bed and immediately think "hot, sturdy" then maybe you should check out www.flylady.com and rethink your chore list.

Use cool to warm, not hot, water to wash bed linens. Wash colored linens in cool water. Soft water is important: Hard water forms a soap scum that make linen stiff and dull.

Launder bed linen stains when fresh. If allowed to set, stains may be permanent. It's amazing how many stains may be removed with cold water and a bit of Ivory soap.



Please remember, if you'd like to make contact with any of our contributors, please send an email with their name in the subject line to msolympusleather2003@cox.net. I'll be sure your correspondence is forwarded on to them.

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My enduring thanks to the contributors in these pages that have opened their lives to share. Thank you for sharing this adventure with me.



