

Simply Service

Written by and for those in service-oriented relationships

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Short-Term, Full-Time Service by c.dale

Sometimes we find ourselves in situations where someone is going to provide full-time service for someone for a short period of time. I'm not talking about a relationship that broke up after a short amount of time. I mean a situation where there is a goal (or goals), a timeframe, and an expected completion date, or end, to the time of service. For this article, I'll use examples which last at least one week.

In my experience, there are three different types of these arrangements:

1. Training, or "touch up" training.
2. To accomplish a specific goal, not related to training.
3. To serve someone you have an on-going arrangement with who doesn't live with you.

Training

There are usually two reasons why someone goes into training, of whatever type: either the servant wants to gain a specific skill or set of skills, or the whoever the servant defers to wants him to gain a specific skill or set of skills. A tendency I've seen is that if we are talking about the former situation, the training can be a lot more broad and ephemeral, while, when the top sends someone for training, it's usually a very specific skill that's wanted. Another thing to take into consideration is that, if someone is being sent for training, the person in charge of the training is usually expected to produce specific results for another person, not for herself. This opens up a large area of discussion which is best discussed in another article. However, in any case, since we're talking about having goals, timeframes, and completion dates, what I'll say below will apply.

Goal-Oriented Service

This can be anything from taking care of someone ill, to helping someone move, to painting someone's house, to serving during an extended vacation. There is a specific task or goal, it will be completed, and that's that.

On-going Arrangements

A lot of us have long distance relationships, and some of us even have multiple households where we live. This can get kind of rough, but I think the ideas I have below can help with the bumpiness of sometimes serving full-time, and sometimes not.

Here are some hints and tips for managing this type of situation, whether you are to be serving or to be served:

- Talk about what the goal is.

When in training, the overall goal may be to "train someone to be a good slave." Fine. Define what that means, figure out how long it will take to do that, set up expectations and goals, and be clear about it. Otherwise it can be a clusterfuck. Long-term goals can afford to be fluid, but when someone is serving for a short period of time, efficiency is necessary. You want to streamline it as much as possible, in order to get the optimal results. So, knowing the goal beforehand will help with that.

In some situations, it's very simple: Help me move/transition to another state/house/etc. I'd classify that in the category of goal-oriented service.

In the third example above, it's not so simple. However, no matter how ephemeral the overall goal is, it's good to focus on specific ones. For example, I live part-time with my boy, and part-time with my mother. Every time I go to stay at my boy's place, I have certain goals in mind. Sometimes it's cooking. Sometimes, it's even: We're both tired, and have hosted/travelled/etc. for the past few weeks, it's time for us to just play, watch movies, and talk. Sometimes we work on attitude. Each time, I have a plan, and an idea of how long it will take to do the specific things I need to do. Without a plan, and without knowing what I'm going to be doing, it's just one

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Short-Term, Full-Time Service by c.dale

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big party, which, while fun, doesn't really get us where we want to be.

- Talk about the amount of time this will take.

One time, a servant helped me move myself, my stuff, my family and my pets from one state to another. We decided it would take three weeks to pack, move, unpack, and help me get everything settled. We ended up with a few days left over, but that was perfect for the situation. Also, decide what will happen if the task needs more time. Or less. Will the servant have enough time off work? If it takes a shorter amount of time, do you like each other enough to just hang out afterwards? Are there other things that can be worked on?

- Prepare, prepare, prepare.

Since this e-zine is written mostly for/by servants, I'll address this issue from that point of view. First, prepare yourself. If you are not going to be close to your home, make sure you have a great packing list. You can find a lot of good ones online on travel websites. Make sure that you are in good health, and rested, with as much energy as you can manage to muster. Also, it's likely that there are a LOT of things that you will need to know in order to get the job done, everything from how to address the person/people you'll be serving, to where things are in the kitchen, to needing someone's complete rolodex. Before you enter into this service, start making a list. Imagine yourself in this position, and think about what you'll need to know to get the job done. Of course, sometimes, information will not be available to you, especially in training situations, and there will always be times when you will still not have the amount of information you'll need, when you need it, but it's good to get a head start. There are also situations when the servant will be hosting the top at his home. The servant should try to prepare as much as possible by providing maps, menus of options, such as dining, entertainment, sight-seeing, etc. You should know as much about the top as possible.

Tops who are reading this should also make lists of things the servant will need to know or have access to. Like I said before, it's a short period of time, and it's good to streamline the process as much as possible.

- Talk about, or decide what kind of protocol will be in place.

Some people are really laid back, especially when doing things such as moving, painting, etc. But FIND OUT, or, tops, DECIDE, how this is going to work. Are you just friends, and the servant is just helping out for the fun of being around you, or because you are family? Will the situation be more formal? For the servant, if the protocol is laid back, do you think the top might find it interesting if you sat on the floor instead of the furniture? Think about this. It can make a huge difference in the quality of service, as well as the rapport.

- Figure out if there will be play/sex/etc.

This is important, because a lot of times, people assume

that because there will be full-time service, there will be play or sex. This is certainly not always the case. Those kinds of expectations and disappointments can really put you in an awkward situation. Find out how that's going to work, and what kinds of things might happen during this service.

- Be prepared to alter your bioschedule.

I don't see this addressed very often, but since I have been a night person all my life, this is something that I've dealt with in the past. If the servant is going into a situation where his sleep schedule, etc, is very different from the top's, he may find himself worn out pretty quickly. An example of this is that, when I am working with a servant to get something done, he can pretty much count on staying up until 2 or 3 am. This means that if he normally rises at 6am every morning, and insists on getting up at that time each day, he's going to be suffering from sleep deprivation, which is all fun in play, but is not such a good thing if he's going to serve me to his fullest capacity, and stay healthy.

- Decide what kind of outlet is good for the particular situation.

Short-term arrangements can get pretty hectic. This means that tempers are likely to flare, people may feel resentful, etc, and there needs to be something in place to handle this. Some people like to journal. Others have nightly meetings to just talk. Find out what works best for the situation. But DO address this issue, either with yourself, or the person you're going to be communicating with. It's very important for the sanity of all people. (:

- Closure.

This is something that can happen a number of ways. First, tie up any loose ends. If something didn't get done, try to arrange for it to be done by someone else if the servant cannot stay. I've found it helpful when I have given feedback, positive or negative. A servant, or a top, can deal with the lack of a strong connection during the time of service himself, or he may want to ask for help. If you're close enough that you can sever the connection with physical affection, hugs, sex, whatever, that's a good thing. But it may be that one last cup of coffee early in the morning, served just right will end the thing just fine. Some people are interested in rituals. There are a million ways to close it off, but find one of them, even if it's by yourself with your favorite coffee and some think time.

As you can imagine, this type of service can take many forms. I've found that being prepared for what you're going into can make things flow much easier, resulting in a rewarding experience for everyone involved.

c.dale: I'm a 40 year old top who lives in MS and TN. I've owned and trained several slaves in the past 7 years, and have been a sadomasochist for a lot longer. I have just recently become interested in education, history and community, and hope to become more involved in leather events in the future. When I'm not involved in sadomasochistic activities, I enjoy travelling, music, gardening, and hanging out with the other two generations of females in my family.

Service does not always mean Serious by morgana

I know a serious sadist who is fond of saying: "There are two types of people in the world: Those who get Monty Python and those who don't". It is one of many criteria he uses to choose his willing victims. This doesn't mean that if Every Sperm is Sacred and the Knights that go Neep don't bring a smile to your face then you're off his list of possibilities, it means that the ability to laugh is, to him, a very important quality when it comes to letting him beat your ass.

One question people often ask me when they find out I am a "serious" slave is how I cope with being serious all the time - they equate protocol and ritual (especially the physical like kneeling or standing to attention) with rigidity and oppression of the spirit. Every time I am asked, I laugh - to me the prospect that humor and fun would be missing from my relationship is as absurd and funny as Python's dead parrot classic.

This response is a truthful one too - because that *is* how I cope with dull, slow, tough or rough spots in my service relationships, I laugh and I have fun.

As a masochist I couldn't live without my laugh response - it is an involuntary action sometimes when my sadist owner is using me. Sometimes I laugh and cry at the same time (boy does he like that, bringing out two opposing emotions at once). Having a sense of humor, too, helps to diffuse the tensions that can simmer after a scene goes "wrong" for any reason. (I use that word simply for clarity, I don't believe mistakes, accidents, or unexpected outcomes are wrong). Let's face it, kinky sex can be pretty funny - a top I know spent 45 minutes looking for the key to the handcuffs once (me with limited ability to assist because I was wearing them). He stood me in the corner while He stripped the bed and upended furniture. As he crawled around on His hands looking and muttering, I eventually disobeyed my command and sneaked a quick peek in the mirror at the cane welts He had given me and spotted the key, firmly stuck to my left butt cheek with, ummm, body fluids.

Training too can be funny; then there was the time he was in a very serious "my little pony" mood and had me in full dress harness with tail. He then had me wear His new expensive leather bit. I forgot ask if I could leave teeth marks on it before He put it in ... so resulting request sounded "Mwwwstr, mwww, mwww, mmmwww?". He replied by repeating my sentence back to me mockingly. It was supposed to sound mocking anyway but it just sounded funny so little pony girl got the giggles so bad she "expelled" her tail which shot a few feet across the room then he got the giggles so bad He cried.

I have always laughed a lot - a staff member once formally complained that I laughed too loudly and too much! It is a great mechanism for coping with stress. In my work environment daily and hourly deadline pressures mean things can get pretty tense at times - the ability to crack a joke at the right time is critical to controlling that tension. Studies have shown that human, laughter is, first and foremost, a social signal - it disappears when there is no audience, which may be as small as one other person - and it binds people together. Like yawning, laughter is contagious; the laughter of others is irresistible. Laughter establishes - or restores - a positive emotional climate and a sense of connection, it can defuse anger and anxiety, and in so doing it can pave the path to intimacy. Which, I think, is a common goal for

those in service, to increase the intimacy of their service.

I did some research on the health benefits of laughing - I was going to say that it was a good tool in keeping oneself healthy - but I found out that the much vaunted health benefits of laughter are probably coincidental, a consequence of its much more important primary goal: bringing people together. In fact, the health benefits of laughter may result from the social support it stimulates. I am not sure I agree - give me a good act at a comedy club or a funny movie and I feel like I have done a 40-minute power walk; I am sweating, my heart rate is elevated and my sides ache from heaving with laughter. It's got to be good for you! Apparently laughter plays a big role in heterosexual mating too. Men like women who laugh heartily in their presence and both sexes laugh a lot but women laugh more - 126 per cent more than their male counterparts.

Formal service - although a serious concept - doesn't equate to a serious life. Focusing on laughing often and loving much has served me well so far.

morgana has explored a meandering path of power exchange for 9 years. She currently serves in the household of two Dominant male Sadists, one human, one feline - and lives an obscenely happy life in the seaside subtropical paradise of Katikati, New Zealand. She believes in Slow Food, spontaneous acts of kindness and actively pursuing a goal of excellence in service.

From the Editor by BootPig

Welcome everyone to the July issue, which I think might be the most eclectic collection of articles to date. Please welcome brand new contributor, c.dale and welcome back our beloved Tante Jen with more household wizardry, this month taking us into the bath and creating an oasis.

I have had the good fortune during July, and coming up again in August, to return to one of my favorite forms of service, bootblacking, teaching two workshops in the Phoenix area. While bootblacking has long been a familiar site at gay leather events, it is wonderful for me to see it becoming more and more welcomed in every type of dynamic, and understood for the service and art form that it is.

Looking forward, August and September are busy for me. Sir and I will be at Great Lakes Leather in Indianapolis; GWNN's Bash in Austin, TX; and SMOdyssey's Folsom Fringe in San Jose, CA. I have really enjoyed meeting readers from all over the country at various events and please say hello if we cross paths.

Slave a is back this month asking questions about excellence, and whether it detracts from a dynamic. This one felt close to home as I have struggled lately with finding my place. What does one do once obedience is a natural response? Sometimes it seems like we just go on auto-pilot. I know what needs to be done, and how he likes it. He settles

back into being cared for, and somewhere along the way, that sizzle just... fizzles. He and I re-visited our goals and visions. We talked about the importance to us of not just functioning smoothly, but keeping the dynamic as the priority in our lives we want it to be. Its just a normal part of a growing relationship as we find our way on this path together. Without fail, I overthink things on occasion and back myself into a corner, and blessedly, he can walk me right back out of it.

Thank you again for all of your well wishes via email, and thank you to each of you that have shared this newsletter with someone else.

See you next month,

BootPig

Linda "BootPig" Hall

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The Dirty Dozen: GWNN's 12th Anniversary Bash, Austin, Texas

We're very pleased to announce The Dirty Dozen, a weekend-long Bash celebrating the twelfth birthday of the Group With No Name, Austin's largest and longest-running BDSM/Leather/Fetish/Body Art organization. We've got an exciting slate of events scheduled for the weekend of September 16-18, starting with a celebratory banquet on Friday evening featuring a keynote speech from scene veteran and storied Greenery Press author Dossie Easton (co-author of *The Topping and Bottoming Books*, *The Ethical Slut*, and *Radical Ecstasy*, to name a few).

The fun continues on Saturday with a Dirty Dozen of demos and presentations, including for the first time a dedicated set of classes aimed at submissives and bottoms. Of course, our Saturday play party promises to be one not to miss, with a full house of local and out-of-town guests expected to light the place up with kinky energy. We round things out with our traditional Sunday picnic, an outdoor play party that's always one to remember. This year's picnic will also feature a special workshop by Janet Hardy and Dossie Easton drawing from their latest book, **Radical Ecstasy: SM Journeys to Transcendence**.

This year's banquet and workshops will be held at the Airport Hilton, a well-appointed and luxurious setting located conveniently near our party location. The Hilton is providing a special rate for GWNN Bash guests looking for lodgings, and it looks to be an exciting hub of activity throughout the weekend celebration. We encourage you to tell any out-of-town friends to take advantage of the special rates and join us for what promises to be an unforgettable weekend of fun and new ideas.

Bash Presenters -- Confirmed Presenters for The Dirty Dozen Include:

Janet Hardy -- **Janet W. Hardy** is a writer and sex educator, and founder of Greenery Press. She has also been published as **Catherine A. Liszt** and **Lady Green**. She is the author or co-author of many books on BDSM and sexuality, and frequently collaborates with Dossie Easton. Current Bash plans have Janet presenting on *The Ethical Slut* (polyamory workshop) and co-presenting *Radical Ecstasy: SM Journeys to Transcendence*.

Dossie Easton -- **Dossie Easton** is a San Francisco, California based family therapist. She is co-author with Catherine A Liszt of *The Ethical Slut, a guide to infinite sexual possibilities*, and *When Someone You Love is Kinky*. She is also co-author of *The New Topping Book*, and *The New Bottoming Book* with Janet W. Hardy. In addition to giving this year's Bash Keynote speech, current plans have Dossie presenting on *Processing Pain* and and co-presenting *Radical Ecstasy: SM Journeys to Transcendence*.

Dr. Charles Moser, Ph D., M.D. -- **Charles Moser, Ph.D., M.D.** received his Ph.D. from the Institute for Advanced Study in Human Sexuality; he is now a Professor of Sexology and Dean of Professional Studies there. He went on to earn his M.D. degree from Hahnemann University School of Medicine in Philadelphia in 1991. He is board-certified in Internal Medicine and am also a board-certified Sexologist. He maintains a private

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internal medicine practice in San Francisco, with a focus on sexual concerns and the medical problems of sexual minorities. He has served as the President of the Western Region of the Society of Scientific Study of Sexuality and is on the Editorial Board of San Francisco Medicine. He is in the process of forming the American College of Sexual Medicine and Health, an organization of physicians interested in the sexual aspects of medicine. He has published numerous academic papers on sexual topics, including nipple piercing, sadomasochism, safer sex, orgasm, and the effects of recreational drugs on sexual functioning. In addition, he is a frequent speaker and expert witness on alternative sexualities. Current Bash plans have Dr. Moser presenting his "Ask The Doctor" workshop, providing a venue to discuss meaningful health care issues and alternative lifestyles without shame or stigma.

Linda "BootPig" Hall and Whipmaster Bob Clark – **BootPig** is a former Ms. Olympus Leather, President and Secretary of the Phoenix boys of Leather. Currently, she teaches on service-related topics, and in conjunction with Whipmaster Bob Clark on SM topics at events all over the country. Her latest adventure has been developing and editing *Simply Service*, an e-zine newsletter that is written by and for those people in service-based relationships. Current plans have BootPig presenting a workshop on *Urban Legends In Slavery*, and presenting in conjunction with Whipmaster Bob a workshop on *Face Play, slapping, caning, and much more*.

Southwest Leather Conference: January, 2006

The 4th Annual Southwest Leather Conference (SWLC) <http://www.southwestleather.org> will take place January 20-22, 2006 in Phoenix, AZ at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. We are currently seeking local/ regional Public Relations Representatives from the Southwest Region to begin promoting the Conference in August 2006.

SWLC has risen within the National Leather Community and is recognized as "The Leather Family Gathering of Heart and Spirit" for its emphasis on interpersonal and spiritual dynamics with BDSM relationships and SM ritual practices. The event is a gathering of leather families throughout the country in celebration of the leather tribe of which we are all a part. The Conference's 35+ workshops also include a whole track about Leather girls!

~ About being a SWLC Regional PR Rep ~

1) We are seeking a total of 23 PR Reps to cover the leather/ bdsm communities in the states of AZ, CA, CO, HI, NV, NM, OK, TX and UT we need multiple reps in TX and CA.

2) All positions related to the SWLC are on a volunteer basis. A discount on SWLC Registration will be made available for Regional Reps who commit a minimum of 2 hours of volunteer time at the Conference itself.

3) Each PR Rep will compile a list of their region's bdsm/leather organizations, bars, dungeons, yahoo groups, tribe.net tribes, myspace.com groups, publications, magazines and any other sources of leather publicity in their region. Complete listings of organizations will also be made available. National publicity will be handled separately.

EarlyBird Bash Ticket Prices End July 16th!!

Because the Dirty Dozen's celebration is aimed first and foremost at our members, we're offering a special Earlybird Discount at the July GWNN Munch and Party only. For only fifty-five dollars, you'll receive admission to the banquet, seminars, party (with supper included), and the Sunday picnic (lunch included). Ticket prices will be going up after the July party and this discount is limited to two tickets per person, so come to July munch and party, buy your Earlybird tickets, then start making plans to get Dirty in September. Ticket sales are transferable and non-refundable.

Last Call for T-Shirt Entries

Calling all artistic types! Got an idea for this year's GWNN Bash T-Shirt? Submit an entry by the July Play Party, and your design could be seen on the chests of kinksters throughout the country. Additionally, the winning design will receive a free T-Shirt and a pair of play party tickets. For more information on submitting your one-color design, contact Jaime@gwnn.net or talk to him at the Munch. We need your participation!

4) Each PR Rep will promote and publicize the Conference, which includes over 35 workshops, Fetish Ball, The Dance of Souls/Ball Dance and three title contests: Southwest Master/slave ~ Southwest Bootblack ~ U.S. Daddy/boy

5) Publicity consists of e-mailing four pre-written press releases to the groups and organizations in your region between August 2005 and January 2006. There may also be some promotion involved, consisting of distributing fliers or bar-cards to clubs/bars in your area.

6) 'Fundraising Representative' is a separate position being recruited by Lady Patricia. If you (or someone you know) is interested in fundraising, helping to find sponsors and/or participating in Community Sponsorships for SWLC, please contact Lady Patricia directly at arizonanomad@hotmail.com

7) All SWLC Regional PR Rep positions report directly to the SWLC National PR Director, who in turn reports to the SWLC CEO.

Thank you for your consideration ... we'd love to have you on board!

please contact
girl debbie, sweetorchidsub@yahoo.com
National Public Relations Director,
Southwest Leather Conference 2006

Luxury in the bath by Tante Jen

Sybarite: voluptuary; a person addicted to luxury and pleasures of the senses. Sounds lovely, doesn't it?

Well, perhaps "addicted" is a bit strong, but I think that everyone who does NOT take advantage of some sybaritic touches in her life, both for herself and those she loves, is making a major mistake. Let's consider the one area of the home where this tenet can be carried to an almost foolish level: let's contemplate the bath/dressing room.

I'm currently working through a complete house remodel (including hardwood floors and the conversion of a half bath to a full), so I've been up to my elbows in magazines, books, "how to/DIY" websites and more time logged in at Home Depot WITH-OUT purchasing pervertables than one may wish to contemplate. So, happy readers, let me share some of this hard gained knowledge with you all.

First off, I don't think that most Owners will necessarily relish the slave heading toward the bath, gleam in eye and sledge in hand, so let's not actually delve into reconstruction; if your Owner would like that, you're probably already ready to take your contractor licensing exams and there's nothing I can tell you anyway. So let's see what we can do with furnishings and the best we can afford of soft goods. "Soft goods", if you're unfamiliar with the phrase, are anything that are ... well, soft: towels, wash cloths, shower curtains, rugs.

Remember our cardinal rule: buy the very best you can afford. It will avail you not to purchase cheaply made goods and have armsful of them when they will only unpleasantly abrade the skin. It's better to have a few good items than scads of bad: if you have the capabilities, you can get by with three towels per person and do laundry once per week. You say he throws the damp towel on the floor and it smells musty? Oh, my. Pick it up, dude; that's part of your job too, yeah? Hang it in an open place to dry and it can be changed out every other day on a rotating basis. Does he have longer hair? Okay, keep that in mind and we'll address that in a later part of this article.

Bath Basics

What do we need to have a basic, yet pleasant and luxurious bath? Let's take apart the most common articles found therein.

Towels: The same point of view that we had about sheets: never ever ever blend anything with your cotton (exception: linen) and buy the finest cotton possible.

100% cotton toweling is probably one of the most wonderful feelings against the skin. The two broad splits for fine cotton are Egyptian and Supima. Supima cotton is: Trademark of the Supima Association of America, a group of growers in the southwestern part of the US. An extra long staple cotton fiber, it is grown from controlled seed and the use of trademark is controlled. It was specifically engineered to be a rival of long staple Egyptian cottons. The finer the staple, the more loops one may get per square inch. This may be compared with thread count of a sheet: the more loops per square inch, the softer and more absorbent the towel will be.

Definitely consider your sense of touch when shopping for towels, but do not necessarily rely completely on it. Go where there seems to be knowledgeable salespeople and talk to someone. Ask probing questions: make sure that claims are not exaggerated by asking whether any sort of thread count is due to doubling threads or if there are fiber blends. Unscrupulous manufacturers will blend in Supima or Egyptian cottons with inferior short staple cotton and claim the terminology: think about the

care one must take to get 100% juice rather than "juice drinks", which are so often filled with high fructose corn syrup and dyes.

Remember when we mentioned hair earlier? If your Owner has long, lush hair, you might consider investing in one of the "microfiber hair towels" such as the towel by Aquis, which is specially designed to dry the hair gently and thoroughly and help retard split ends and breakage. The Aquis towel may be found online for a retail price of approximately \$20US. It certainly can be worth the effort to find this specialty item. Put it in your super-secret basket of spa goodies; it's a definite treat.

Hand towels: Here is the first place where blending a fine long-staple cotton with linen would be not only acceptable, but desirable. The difference in linen is the lack of "fuzz" that typifies cotton, even the fine stapled versions. Why is a lack of fuzz desirable in a smaller towel? If you gently pat your face dry after cleansing morning and night, a blend of cotton/linen will be less irritating to your complexion.

A point of taste here, but when considering the colours for your bath, it would be my suggestion to limit oneself to one strong colour and white. Speaking from experience, if you get too many strong colours in a small area, it will begin to feel stifling. Should you decide on any sort of shower curtain other than white/clear, find what is pleasing to your aesthete first and then begin to build around that. Of all the furnishings in a bath, the shower curtain is most dominant; the only parts that are stronger are the walls/tiles. Conversely, don't be afraid of strong colours; touches of black, deep green or deep red can add a dash of drama that is quite striking in proper circumstances. Besides, if you have two dark colours in toweling, think of the fuzz melds you'll get when they end up in the same wash/dry cycle.

Oh, of course, I know...you'd NEVER do such thing.

Washcloths: Everyone sees washcloths when shopping for the ubiquitous "sets" in department or specialty stores. However, if you're a person who actually uses cleansers and water on the face, consider some of the specialty items that can be found at shops such as The Body Shop. TBS has a "chamois" cloth that is very soft and silky to the skin and is a joy to use. Also examine various soft complexion brushes for that wonderful exfoliant feel. Always do remember to be very gentle with the face, whether it be yours or your Owner's. Clean does not equal damaged skin.

Down to the Nitty Gritty: Let's Consider Baths

After you finish with the face, consider the two ways you wish to view a bath: relaxing and invigorating. Since most persons I know use a bath as I do, for sheer voluptuous relaxation, thick, soft velvety washcloths gliding over warm, wet skin is the way to go. Everyone's tastes vary, but it is a lovely feeling.

Don't forget a soft mat for the floor, to cozy the toes in and out of the bath. This also has the added effect of helping dry the soles of the feet to alleviate worries about slipping on damp surfaces. Hair can make for a nice touch, but it will be harder for you to dry your Owner's back if he is standing on your hair, no matter how long it is; find a nice rug instead.

The Joys of The Spa Bath

Okay, so you say you don't have a fancy-schmancy bathtub or a room the size of a ballroom to do lots of sexy and/or exotic things for your Owner, hmmm? C'mon! I know you have a better imagination than that! Let's break this down and see if we can't give the Owners in our lives a rich, rewarding time. Who knows? If s/he enjoys it, maybe you'll get a treat yourself. (selfEd note: don't plan something good JUST to get strokes; it will come across as contrived and false. Just be a mensch, do a fabulous job and get a lot of fun out of how s/he looks covered in

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Luxury in the Bath by Tante Jen

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upscale soap suds.)

Preparing the bath: clean, clean, CLEAN that bathroom.

Nothing is more necessary to the relaxing spa concept than a sparkly clean, aired and fresh bath. While I'm sure that all y'all have flawless bathrooms, RIGHT NOW, with no worries ahead of time, let's get real: isn't there something you can do to make it better? I am fortunate enough to live in a climate where it is usually quite cool even in summertime, so I like to make sure that the bath has been aired out completely with open windows and nice breezes.

If your Owner can handle it, about an hour before the ritual begins, burn a pleasant scented stick of incense. Don't use anything "sexy" or heavy; it is preferable to lightly scent the air, not remind him of "Evenings at the Seraglio". Fluff the towels by running them for 15 or so minutes in a hot dryer; this will also heat them. If the placement of your bath works, you can also warm towels in an oven set on "warm". Do remember they are there; housefires are not particularly peaceful.

Secrete a boombox in the bath and put in long tapes or several CDs of calm, quiet music. Of course, everyone has different tastes, but ambient music or what was once termed "new age" can often make for a lovely backdrop. P.C. Davidoff (<http://www.silverlakemusic.com/art/adavidoff.html>) has some lovely CDs that are very calming after a hard day at the office.

Preparing the Pamperee: think "Japanese"

I love to soak in a nice hot bath and so does the partner. The one thing I do not like is worrying about sitting in water with dirt, soap scum and dead skin flakes. Not a pleasant thought, is it? Dependent completely upon one's mood, of course, one of the nice ways around this is to adapt something similar to the Japanese style of bathing. I won't get into the deep particulars of the ofuro; that's easy to find online. What I am going to get into a bit is how to adapt those practices to the American bathroom.

First part: clean the skin. Easy enough here, but don't do it with a conventional shower; instead, have the Owner stand on a double thickness of toweling, naked, of course. You have prepared, in advance, a basin of very hot water, a soft skin brush or bath gloves, a wash cloth, and some mild soap with a pleasing scent. Do be aware of the tastes of the bathee and don't slather someone who would not be appreciative of rose scented soaps with same. I am hesitant to present any thoughts on scents because I have my own personal hang-ups and I don't wish to appear gender-biased with scent.

After wetting down the skin thoroughly, proceed to scrub gently with the brush or gloves. You are actually cleaning and exfoliating the skin. Now rinse carefully, allowing the water to be soaked up by the towels underneath the subject's feet. Wrap your Owner snugly in some prewarmed towels (it sounds silly, but an oven on "warm" will work well for towel warming; don't forget about them) and begin to run the bath.

This is actually more effective if it can be done in two separate rooms, so that you can run the bath while scrubbing the skin, but that's usually not doable. If the Owner is skeptical of soap removal without scads of water, then have him stand in the shower, rinse him off and then do the towel wrap.

Second part: run the bath. At this point you want to begin the bath. Take into consideration when setting the water tempera-

ture two things: one, the composition of your bath tub and two: the personal taste of the bather. If the bath is made of porcelain over metal, it will significantly cool the water and you will want to gauge the water to be a bit hotter than comfort to make up for the heat transference. This is less necessary if your bath is fiberglass or modular plastic.

Third part: Relaxation. The water is warm and softly scented from the bathing salts added to the water as it fills. (Try making your own: http://ak.essortment.com/homemadebathpr_ojs.htm) Soft music plays in the background as the Owner soaks the cares and frustrations of the day away. This can be the best of times to try foot massage, or a manicure/pedicure combo. Fetch the Owner a nice drink or glass of wine to sip while you work on hands and feet, all the time casting seductive glances his way.

Whatever you do, make sure you've thought this through in advance. It's never a bad idea to do a "test run" and practice on a friend. Spa days are fun for those of us in service, too! Take turns being the "Pampered One" and allow your fellow persons in service to practice their skills. It's never good to stumble about, searching for implements needed; nor is it relaxing to watch.

Aftercare Starts at Negotiations: Health and BDSM by Lady Wylo

Many people within the BDSM community are very aware of their own health issues but rarely take the time to get to know those that they are about to have a scene with. I am not referring to tops knowing that a bottom has a cold, but rather both top and bottom knowing all of the health factors that may affect a scene. Heart conditions, anemia, Diabetes, varicose veins, and many other ailments that most people live with on a daily basis can account for many negative responses and reactions within a scene or appear shortly after, during the 'coming down' period.

Before you can offer after care you must know what you are facing from the pre-care standpoint.

Should your bottom be asthmatic, you will require their inhaler to be available during and after the scene. But if they have varicose veins in their legs you know that you cannot use a paddle on their thighs, have tight bindings or have them stand for long periods. If you are not familiar with varicose veins, they are blocked blood vessels that cause the veins to rise to a level that allows you to see them through the skin clearly, usually resembling a bumpy blue line. They are often surrounded by small red veins that look like spider webs and are generally seen on the legs but are known to also appear in the arms and sometimes the breast area. If you break one of these veins they can cause a blood clot and potentially cause the loss of a limb, or even the death of the bottom. This knowledge is not limited to just this type of condition as our choice of activity can always be potentially dangerous and negative side effects can often be avoided by discussing such matters during negotiations.

All participants should have at least the minimum education in first aid in case of emergencies such as a heart attack, sudden unexpected bleeding, or a situation that was caused by a miss-hit to a sensitive area. An additional item that all tops and bottoms should keep in their wallet at all times is a medical history letter. This will assist either party with preparations for the EMT should they need to be called. Known allergies, previous surgeries and current health information should be listed and the whereabouts of the document discussed prior to starting a scene. Situations that can arise may not happen during a scene but can also suddenly appear after a scene. Much like a car accident, or other sudden impacts, some people may not show symptoms for 24 to 48 hours after.

One common allergy that is rarely asked before a scene is latex. Latex allergies can be as simple as a rash to as serious as sudden asphyxiation. If you have any items that could potentially be used during a scene that have latex in them, you should research the allergy online and check for quick remedies that can be used to alleviate the situation, when possible. Not everyone is familiar with their allergies if they have not previously been exposed to them. Even if someone was previously exposed, there is always the risk that the allergy is relatively new as our bodies change constantly.

If either party is Diabetic then there are certain things that need to be discussed before a scene and then actions taken after the scene. Be sure that they have checked their levels recently before the scene begins; then reinforce the results afterward to be sure they have not dropped dramatically. Know how to give them a needle with the proper dosages of insulin in case they fall into shock. Keep fruit handy for after a scene to replenish their levels and prevent shock.

The above examples are only a small part of the knowledge that should be obtained for those specific cases. The negotiation period should not be restricted to simple questions and answers about who likes what done to them or done by them. The questions and answers should be expanded to asking if they have any known health issues that need to be addressed.

One particular issue that needs to be addressed is how a bottom is bound. No matter how well you know your partner, binding a bottom to the point of no escape can be very enjoyable but potentially dangerous. If the top has a heart attack and there are only the two parties available in the room, how will the bottom be able to remove their bindings and begin CPR and/or call an ambulance? This is something to be taken very seriously. If you are doing a rope binding scene, try to keep a knife available within a reasonable reach of the bottom so that they may move themselves over to attempt to release themselves if need be. I have also seen some cases where one hand is bound less tight than the rest with a knot within reach if quick release is warranted.

If you are in a public forum and would like to have a scene with someone, odds are you won't have time to research the information if they do have a condition that needs to be addressed. Ask them if there is any implement that cannot be used and what precautions need to be taken. It generally will not take much more time to complete such inquiries. In a public forum, at least one of the DM's (dungeon master/mistress) should have advanced knowledge of first aid care.

Some standard practices for everyone to implement are having a warm, light blanket on hand (this helps during the 'chills' after a scene), Gatorade or other similar electrolyte enriched drinks, fruits (to replace the sugars used by your endorphins), and something familiar to the bottom such as a pillow or sheepskin that they like to sit on. These items all play a part in the aftercare of the bottom; however, the top should have similar items for themselves available. Reciprocating care can help with the calming down period for all involved.

Some simple after care tricks can be easily added and enjoyed by both parties.

If the bottom is prone to bruising have them start taking vitamin K a few days before and for several days after a scene. This will help in repairing the damaged area. If a bottom plays on a regular basis (one or more times a week) a good rule of thumb is to take the vitamin K daily.

Keep hydrogen peroxide on hand for cleaning out open wounds.

Rubbing a cream composed of Witch Hazel, vitamin K and cocoa butter or shea butter on the bruised areas can be relaxing as well as therapeutic for both parties. Adding a little aromatherapy oil into the mixture would also help to 'bring down' both the top and the bottom to a more relaxed state. Use the same cream for massaging the top. Do not use a butter cream if you just had a fire or electrical scene. You do not want to 'cook' the skin you want to replenish it.

Taking turns brushing each others hair is a very calming practice. We all know how much going to the hair dresser relaxes us when they massage the scalp to wash it and then slowly brush it out. This same soothing effect can be a low action activity that can bring great pleasure after a scene. Not enough hair to brush? Try gently massaging the scalp instead.

Make a date for the next day or a few days later to give each other massages. This is a great way to accomplish additional contact and physically connect with each other outside of the scene.

Aftercare Starts at Negotiations: Health and BDSM by Lady Wylo

(Continued from page 8)

If there is enough energy in either party, lighting some incense and reading to one another in low light or sitting in candlelight can be very soothing. Play some soft music in the background to enhance the calming effect. If it is feasible, this would be a good time to discuss the scene and make note of how each person felt during the varying types of activity that arose.

Should the participants not live together and either leaves to return to their residence, it is good practice to set a time to call the following day. This will reinforce the previous day's activity and can offer both parties the chance to discuss the scene.

After care is not limited to the physical state of the body but also the mental state of all of the people involved in the scene.

Some participants can walk away from a scene without the need for long term care. There are those that may require a week of aftercare as their endorphins take longer to calm down. Constant contact, such as a phone call twice a day or seeing each other each day after a scene (when possible), can help alleviate any emotional breakdowns that can result from the 'drop' effect. When a scene is finished it is best not to separate both parties right away. An hour or more may be needed afterward to just be close to each other. Physical touch often plays a large part in how both participants will respond once they begin to 'drop' from the excitement of the scene. 'The more intense the scene, the harder the crash.'

Sub drop is commonly noted by many people as something that can happen during a scene if there is a sudden interruption or the scene is cut short without the bottom being eased out of the scene. What is not noted as much is top drop. Top drop can also happen just as easily if a scene is interrupted and the top can suffer very similar emotions that resemble depression. If you have ever taken mood altering drugs you will be familiar with the 'coming down' period once the drug starts to wear off. This is a similar feeling to what either party can experience after a scene, not just when the scene has been cut short or interrupted. Some may notice the depression right away but most feel it a day or two afterwards or even as long as a week later. The best remedy for this is to communicate regularly as noted before. Whether you see each other physically afterward is not necessarily as important as being able to talk to each other and share feelings.

Physical touch is very vital immediately after a failed scene. Soothing voices and physical touch (whether it is simply rubbing their shoulders while talking to them or just cuddling) can determine whether the drop effect extends for a few days or only a few hours. Regardless of how or why the scene failed, it can be a very emotional time and needs to be addressed without conflict or criticism.

If the scene was interrupted then ranting and raving about it will not help at all. You cannot change what happened but you can perhaps slowly move back into the scene and bring the bottom down properly.

In the case that the bottom needed to call a safe word then assess the situation and if both of you feel that you can continue the scene by going into a different direction with it, do so and, again, bring the bottom down properly. This helps both parties be able to accept the situation without either having unresolved

feelings. By bringing the bottom down properly the top is also bringing themselves down properly.

'Dropping' can inspire you to feel depressed, over sensitive and generally needy for a brief period of time. If you are already feeling these things prior to a scene it is probably best not to expose yourself to another scene until you have had the chance to balance yourself out. The effects could compound themselves each time you start to come down from a scene.

Communication is the most vital part of participating in BDSM activities. Knowing yourself first, your partner second and being prepared for events that can happen during and after a scene will make the experience much more pleasurable for all involved.

Lady Wylo
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<http://leatherandlight.com>

Wylo 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 BDSM can be a very spiritual experience for many people and using this as a technique in helping newcomers to pain play. She is aiming at learning as much as possible about every aspect involved in this chosen lifestyle and then sharing it with others (<http://leatherandlight.com>) as she considers knowledge only second to spirituality.

She is currently self-employed developing adult alternative websites, focusing on sales and promotion

hope's journal: Ongoing feature

As i was making Jeff's coffee this morning, i was thinking how nice it was to be able to serve him in this little way. It is a nice way to serve him first thing in the morning before our day has started. Now this would be an ordinary thought if yesterday morning i wouldn't have been thinking how easily he could do the darned coffee himself. After all, it was early, i was cranky, and it's just coffee for gawd's sake... he walks past the coffee machine two or three times before I even get to it...how hard could it be??!! But it's times like this morning that make me remember why *i* do the coffee – I do it to have an opportunity to serve him with a loving heart and a sense of servitude.

Now this coffee is just one example. i struggle at various times with service he requires of me, things i am expected to do. Why you might ask? Well, because before i am a slave, i am human. i venture to say that any slave who tells you they never have an internal struggle with a service task is either lying to you, or in denial themselves. And i will say that since becoming pregnant, i've really had to look at my attitude around service. Being hormonal and trying to be even kind some days is difficult at best *smile*.

Last year Jeff and i went to a BDSM conference in Denver called *Thunder in the Mountains*. (For anyone who has never been, and is in the area, i highly suggest going!) We were fortunate enough to hear a seminar on M/s dynamics by Master Jim and slave marcia. They are two of the most dynamic people i have ever met in my life. marcia made some very good points in her discussion. She told us that her Master has taught her to get her "heart and head in it" before she engages in any service activity for him. What he meant by this was that he expected her to 1) be capable of the service task (hence getting her head in it) and 2) be capable of doing the service from a place of love and devotion (hence getting her heart in it). Now i sat there and wondered why these two things were important. i mean, if a service task was assigned, and it was completed the best she knew how, that was the important part.... right? i mean, the Master got what he wanted.....right??? i had no idea how far off i was.

What followed was marcia's explanation. She went on to tell us how she could be given any task to do, however if she did it half way or wrong, because she lacked knowledge, but did it with good intentions, it still was not done to the Master's expectations. On the reverse, if she was given a task, did it correctly, but was angry, belligerent, or resentful while doing it, for whatever reason, the task wasn't done the way the Master has requested. Now, i could understand the first example. The task wasn't done right. That was easy to understand. But what escaped me was the total understanding of the later example. As long as the task was done – did it matter if i was unhappy about it?? Did it matter if i resented Jeff for having to do it – as long as it got done? Well, i quickly understood that yes – it did.

When i agreed to be his slave – it was because i wanted to serve him. i wanted this lifestyle – and i wanted to serve him with a loving heart. Here he was giving me opportunities to do what it was i said i wanted to do – serve him. And there i was being angry that it was too early, i was tired, i was sore, i was grumpy, i had something else to do, and on and on. Half the time, the only person who would have known my heart wasn't in it – yeah... that would have been me. From the outside it looked like everything was fine – but what was going on inside was an entirely different story.

So how to do both? Yeah, that was my question too. i learned that if my head wasn't in it, i have an obligation to clarify with Jeff what he wants. Above all he wants an effective and able

slave – not one who wastes his time or her own. i have an obligation to seek out instruction if i am unclear or find someone to do it if i am unable. Ok, that seemed simple enough. Now the heart, that was another story. When i found myself doing service tasks and my heart wasn't in it – well that is something i have to fix myself. i have an obligation to serve my Master with all my being, and with a loving heart – not an angry, resentful or bitter one – no matter what the reason. So when this happens, i have learned to sit down with myself for a minute and review why i am here with him. Why am i serving him? Why do i give myself to him daily? Yeah – i talk to myself a lot *smile* and soon i come up with my answer – because i want to...because i said i would....because i am his slave. And really, having this little chat with myself puts me in the right headspace to complete the task with my heart in it, rather than completing it just to get it done.

Now, going back to the human factor – i still have days when i have to stretch to get my heart in it....and even my head – pregnancy hormones mess with those brain cells. *smile* But thankfully i have an awesome Master who helps. While I was writing this, he wrote this to me:

"This subject is very important to me. To have your heart in it. It's easy to see if the task is done, but it is hard to see if your heart is in it. If your heart isn't there – it's then My responsibility to address it properly. To me this initially means asking myself: Why was her heart not in it? How can we prevent this in the future? To me, I think most of the time, if your heart isn't in it, then there's something totally unrelated that isn't right. So then the question: How does a Master keep it all in-line, especially the things he can't see - like what the slave is feeling, what is going on in her head?. Obviously, for us, excellent communication and body language is all we have. I love you slave. – Master"

See, not only do you get my journal – but a peek into the Dominant mind.....two for the price of one. *smile*

Now, while he understands the reasons i may fail – he also knows it doesn't excuse me from acting correctly —or him from helping me get back on track. The things we promised each other initially – we take them very seriously – and when one of us is having struggles or confusion – the other is there to remind them why it is so important – because *we* are so important.

What i have learned, more than anything, is my service to Jeff is very important – to **both** of us. But sometimes it's more important on the days when i feel like crawling under the covers and burying my head. These days i am working harder to get out of myself and be there for him – to serve him. Those are the days i have to work for it – it's not just handed to me. But with every new day, i try to put my heart and head in it – to serve him to the best of my ability – with everything i am. That is what he asks for – after all – why would i give any less?

Until Next Month
~ hope

About the Author: hope is a 30 year old dominant woman, who is enslaved to her Master, Jeff. hope has been in the BDSM lifestyle for 10 years. She has participated in lifestyle groups in California, Arizona, Colorado, Oregon, and Washington. She was recently collared and married to her Master this past New Year's Eve. She does presentations within the BDSM community on relationships and BDSM. When she has free time she likes to write, talk walks, and spend time with the love of her life - Jeff.

Comments and feedback may be sent to hope in care of the Editor at msolympusleather2003@cox.net

The Pitfalls of Excellence by slave a

Since I am an ambitious slave, I have worked myself into a frenzy from certain concepts and have discovered a couple of pitfalls to "excellence". My next ambition, by the way, is to reduce my attachment to ambition, but like most Zen koans, I find myself simply entertained by the conundrum.

The first pitfall I have discovered is that of excellence breeding complacency in the Master. There have been several actions I have taken which have created a dearth of commands. One is that I have asked a lot of questions and now I am very sorry that I have. By knowing SO much about him, he no longer needs to tell me how to do things. This situation reduces the opportunities for his use of the command form on me. We have several standing commands and while that makes for good service, it does sometimes interfere with the active and thrilling power exchange between us.

I only asked those questions because I didn't want to "do it wrong". Had I been more humble and willing to "do it wrong" when we started this adventure, we might have a more active dynamic today. So now, I get to do everything right and he doesn't have to tell me to do squat or correct me. He barely notices I am there sometimes. Isn't this good? We all ask...

Well, it depends on what we're after in our relationships, I suppose, but I bet a lot of us like contact, powerful contact. Excellence can get in the way of that.

So, aside from wanting to be "right" all the time, what else have I done over the years to contribute to a stale exchange between us? I have sought to be a circus performer. I endeavor to make it all look easy. Well, this has thwarted his sadist. His sadist thrives on my struggles. When I mask them I hide from him an opportunity to relate to me in his own unique and exciting way. After twenty years he has still not seen me clean a toilet. Why? Am I avoiding humiliation? Oh, probably. And why would I want to do that? I thought that was "hot"....

And how about being miss-know-it-all? I know how to navigate to every location he desires. I know what he wants to wear. I know who he wants to see. I know who and what are valuable for what and who. I provide these services invisibly and very seductively control the entire environment. Isn't that special? Sometimes I see just how subtle my tricks for maintaining control are. I am really NOT a servant. I am a consenting participant in a power exchange relationship. By placing so much focus on being a good servant I have perfected my ability to undermine the power exchange.

Is seamless service and anticipatory action and being a resource for all things an effective way to lighten the weight of both sadomasochism and power exchange? Oh yes, and that is exactly why I was trained in them, so I had a place to hide when it all got too much for me without interrupting the dynamic. So without interrupting it I have all but erased it.

The way back could be excruciatingly painful. That might be a good thing.

Which leads to the next pitfall, being need-free. In my efforts, which have been heroic, toward being submissive I have sought to sublimate my needs. This is a wonderful exercise. I have learned how few "needs" I have. I am no longer an insecure, blithering idiot who demands all kinds of service from Master in order for me to feel valuable, worthy, powerful and on like that.

No, I don't need to feel valuable and worthy and powerful. I don't need pats on the head. I no longer serve to please him so I can guarantee job security by insuring his happiness and making myself invaluable. I don't need to exercise my power to make him jump on the cue "I am not satisfied, fix it". Nope, nope, not a!

This has been a rewarding and centering spiritual exercise. My ego has gone through several trials by fire and deaths by drowning and I am very grateful to have had the instruction and the environment I needed to do this. However, there has been a price.

Well, another aspect of my slave training was teaching me how to present my desires. It was explained to me that by HAVING desires I was feeding the power exchange. By wanting something I affirm Master's position as wish granter. He has the power to give me what I want... or not. Well, when I sublimate my needs, wants and desires I no longer give him that power. Pay no attention to that slave behind the curtain! Or even better, "never mind me, I'll just sit here in the dark." Without someone to offer him executive power Master is left just running his own wants and needs.

But, but, isn't that the way it should be? I am finding out the answer to that is a resounding NO!

He didn't latch onto me and drag me to his cave by the hair because he wanted to be alone! He wants me to mirror his power. He wants to have effect. By being need free he is the only one with needs. I have created a reverse dependency than the one usually fallen into in Ms. I have the opportunity to see my effect on him all the time. I serve. When I see him relax, all his needs met I get to be POWERFUL. But, when I have no needs? I don't provide him with that same joy.

I am seeking again, to uncover my needs, wants and desires and although it feels like a step back in some areas, I am seeing that I missed a few steps in my ego reduction program and can very easily use my submission, my service and my excellence to feed that same ego.

The journey continues. Thank goodness.

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.

A Life without Rules by Tante Jen

When I was much younger, I was given a priceless gift: I was allowed to live a life that most people think they would love – a chance to actually be trained and molded into what one Master considered to be The Perfect Slave. I was in undergrad school at the time, so it was easier than one would think: I was already in learn mode and discipline and order came more easily to me than it would later in life. I worked, I served, I read, I took classes and felt myself become what He wanted most: smart, quick witted, well read and amiable to a variety of tasks and services. My days were filled with order and my nights with intensity and stricture. It was frustrating, angering, joy filled and I loved it when I didn't hate it and him. I hated him often. I've often thought those days a cross between boot camp and the convent. Hierarchy was plain and order was tantamount. I knew when, where, what and how to accomplish what I needed to accomplish. No orthodox Jew could've had as many rules for as many circumstances as I had. It was comforting, happy, secure and in some strange way, simple and easy.

That was a long time ago.

I have changed so much since those days. I am no longer a slightly naïve 18 year old from small-town Texas. I've traveled, I've seen, I've done and I'll do more. I doubt my essential submission so much that I'm sure it never existed; how could I run other people like a two-bit marathon if I was all that submissive?

And yet, inside me, there is the absolute drive to serve someone to the very best of my ability, in all ways. Trying to fill that need has unfortunately caused me to make some very nice men very very unhappy. They could not live up to my perceived vision of perfection; if he could not be perfect, then how could I be?

So I blew off M/s and the whole dynamic excepting S/m. I made a lovely friend, fell in love and entered into the first real "egalitarian" relationship I've ever had.

Egalitarian - a person with a belief in human equality especially with respect to social, political, and economic rights and privileges. Yes, I think he would agree to that. I know that he has no time for "rules" or "rituals" or the trappings of what is called 'bdsm'. He is fair, kind, affectionate and loving. He is my friend, my lover and companion. Sounds nice, don't it? Want to know how many people ask me how I stand it and why doesn't it make me crazy?

Service isn't from without, it's from within. The structure is either within me or it is not at all; it is a façade. I don't do floors with toothbrush and q-tip any longer, but they get done. Tasks, onerous or otherwise, are shared. Time is enjoyable and well spent.

What's my point? I do have one.

I no longer have those rules to rely on. I no longer have those rules to use as a weapon against my dominant partner when he fails to react consistently to each and every incident that might crop up. I can no longer be injured if he cleans the kitchen while I'm sleeping, thinking that I have "failed" in my duties. I do not have these little protections of my ostensible "perfection in service".

My shield has been forcibly removed. The bulwark of constant conformity is gone and with that goes the assurance that I can always rely on some arcane rule.

A Buddhist is told to "take refuge in the Jewels" as a reinforcement of the commitment to live a certain way. How often do we take refuge in our version of the "jewels" to allow us that comfort? How often is that refuge perverted to allow us to constrict

and control the situation at hand to our best interests and beliefs? How often do we stand up and say "But I'm trying! Why don't you lead better?"

I live my days without rules, I live my days without rituals meant to make my Path easier, codified, structured. I live my days with a man who is free to do as he wishes, at any time he wishes, whether that freedom means he prepares dinner, pours coffee or wine, or even fetches me aspirin for my headache; or that freedom means that I am given tasks to complete as he desires.

We speak of allowing the Master the freedoms he wants, to live as he wants, as we anticipate and complete his needs and desires. Do we? Is he? Or is he also trapped in a web? I don't know; I'm examining for the first time many of these concepts. Many of these thoughts have come about by discussions with the Partner, who questions how free a man can be if he must codify, monitor, rule. I espoused to him the thought that perhaps the Master enjoyed such action, that coming up with the rules, the rituals, etc, allowed HIM to feel free-er, happier, at ease. Then I started thinking: even if you are a total ritual fanatic, what do you do on those days when you simply don't WANT to do it right then? Katy bar the door if you DON'T do it...you'll be accused of not dominating her and then what's she supposed to do? You can't submit to a VACUUM.

And we're back to: Service isn't from without, it's from within.

I come back to this article after a breakdown of major proportions a few days ago. It has been an eye-opening experience; although definitely not one I would wish anyone else to experience. I have, phoenix-like, risen from the ashes of my own psyche to find myself, well, perhaps not whole yet, but definitely infinitely improved. The main thing I discovered, and the thing I would like to share with you now, is this: if you cannot do within, you cannot do without. The exterior is not what is important, the interior is.

I know this has been written about more times than I care to guess, mostly because I'm sure I've read them all. Doesn't matter; I'm not a famous minister or historical figure or Zen Buddhist master. I'm just Jen.

We read on various websites and forum boards until the words make no sense: protect the property. We talk and talk and talk and try to see beneath the surface to find the answers to what/where/how it should be done. It's the obligation of the slave and would-be slave to make sure that s/he is the best person one may be, as one is owned, or wishes to be owned, and shoddy property cannot perform to its optimum efficiency.

It's not rocket science, guys, really. Screw this "sublimate the ego" and "find your inner slave" crap. If you MUST turn this into some spiritQuest, then admit to yourself that it's your spirit and your quest and stop making it sound like nothing is valid if you don't do it from the inner child. I'm not advocating not examining what you're doing and why. I hear that a lot: I don't know why I want/think I am/have to be a slave, I just know that I AM one.

I'll try to keep my sarcasm to a finite amount, I promise.

How many times have you shirked doing for yourself because of your owner or your children? Do you exercise regularly? Do you eat properly and make sure you get enough rest?

I can hear the voices now: that's Master's job, to make sure I do all those things. Oh, really? Wow, that's a hellu thing you're putting on him. There are those out there who absolutely love keeping up with this sort of thing, but you know, I'd bet that, on an on-going basis, this is not quite the case. I'm an excellent example of raving control freak and even I don't want to keep up with someone that much.

A Life without Rules by Tante Jen

(Continued from page 12)

Being slave is many things. It's a kink, it's a drive, for some it's a need, for others it's a lark. But it's always a choice, and in a lot of ways, it's a job. Does your employer let you get away with a half-ass job? I sincerely doubt it. Focus, reflect, and above all, know that you're being your best and doing your best simply because YOU deserve nothing less than your best. We say it's all about the owner, but we all know that's not true; it's all about us BEING all about him. There is the pride that "goeth before a fall", the pride of feeling superior for no good reason. Then there is the pride that is worthy and worthwhile, the pride of knowing that you're the best whatever you can possibly be. That's a reason to hold your head up.

Be an adult; be a mensch. Make sure you're always the best you can be in all walks of your life. You want to make his life easier? Be an adult and say that you can and you will succeed. Anything less is a disservice to everyone in your life.

I will you all well.

Jen Campbell

Jen Campbell has been involved in service and the lifestyle for almost thirty years. Currently living in Nashville, Tennessee, she has been active in various cities in Texas, North Carolina and California during that time.

During that thirty years, she realizes that her best advice for any good servant is: Don't Panic. Jen has studied cooking and formal table service techniques in schools in Dallas, Texas and Charlotte, North Carolina. She estimates that she has polished over 5,000 pieces of silver during her lifetime, most of them some hideously ornate pattern like Francis I and Burgundy.

She misses the days when slaves got together to compare ironing techniques and how to clean efficiently rather than whose M hits hardest and where the next party will be.

Ask Tante Jen

As our resident Mistress of the Manners type, and household wizard, and all around talented wench, Jen will be answering questions related to creating and keeping standards in the house and for those of you that love the finer things, on a slimmer budget, helping with creative ideas.

Please send your questions to msolym-pusleather2003@cox.net and watch for answers and advice in future issues.

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Thank you again for all of your support and encouragement. Please do consider writing and sharing your lives and experiences with all of us.

Much love and respect,

BootPig