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Leather Whips and Rapier Wit:

Observations on Sadomasochists and The World They Have Created.

By Samantha Ann Roberg

What kind of world is the kink and fetish community? Is it a deep, dark, devilish abyss splattered with bodily fluids, coursing with gyrating bodies stomping out its heartbeat? Polite society seemingly thinks so. Bondage, and even worse, sadomasochism are portrayed by today's television and media as satanic and evil, not what love between a man and woman should be. In today's day and age, love is no longer limited to just one man or one woman, but still seems only appropriately hidden away behind closed doors, hidden from parents or children, a dirty act until marriage. What happens when you take a look into that abyss and find yourself swallowed whole by it? What happens when you shrug away the guilt and dogma of all your years and walk into this world you could never understand alone? I did such a thing; I cast away the restrictions of faith, ignored the nagging ghost of my mother's voice on my conscious, and found myself my perfect guide on my first solo expedition into the unknown.

Everyone called him WildCard, to respect his anonymity I shall do the same and not disclose his birth name. He was a pale, young man who stood at 5'10" with a rather thin, underfed look to him and a mop of light brown hair. He had little education, a high school drop out with a full-time job working overnights at the local Walmart. His piercing blue eyes had a hunger and spark to them I have rarely seen before, almost devilish if you will. Although, dressed in all black, with a skull belt buckle affectionately named 'Jack' this young man before me did not seem to be the creature of evil that was fed to me by the media. WildCard, laughingly, addressed the fetish community in a way that it seemed like a Grimm fairytale, a cautionary tale. I was more intrigued than turned off by the notion. He described my love life as 'vanilla' before meeting him and the culture he was introducing me to, and said my life would never be the same. I later asked him to define 'vanilla' for me, he told me it was the idea that roughness during sexual intercourse was going faster or the idea of kink was a complete turn off.

He peered into my soul with those eyes. The club's flashing lights reflecting off of them and his pale, shirtless torso. Then he smiled in a way that could turn blood to glacial streams, almost that of

a jester in the Devil's court. This individual is a self-proclaimed 'rock star' in the fetish community and it was noted that nearly all the people in the fetish club that he found me, standing quietly in the corner at, knew or recognized him. He seems to be a rather significant figure in this culture, but he seems to have made himself into that role as other lifted him up into it, as opposed to being employed by the club to do the same role. Was I ready to dive into this darkness, trusting this creature with my well-being? Yes. Let him show me everything.

I found WildCard at a night club called Club Hell, famous among college students and Providence underground for its Wednesday night Fetish Night. The club is located on Richmond street in downtown Providence, near Johnson & Wales University's downtown campus. It is on the first floor below Jerky's Bar and Bambu Tattoo. The only identifying feature of the club's entrance is a single neon sign that only says "hell," above a black door guarded by two doormen who check identification and collect entrance fees. The club itself plays a mix of techno, rock, metal, and industrial musics which is suited to the taste of their audience.

In terms of night clubs, Club Hell is on the smaller side. Directly upon entering there is a coat check and the dance floor. The center of the club is the thirty by sixty foot dance floor flanked on each side by full bars. Near the dance floor and the DJ's booth is a twenty by twenty foot area with leather sofas and a cement table. Next to this area is a small staircase that leads outside to a twenty by twenty foot area that is designated as the smoking area. Back inside, in front of the dance floor there is a ten by twenty foot stage that is considered the club's main attraction. Inside the dance floor are two four by four foot platforms surrounded with a railing with stairs leading up to them.

An outsider to Club Hell would most likely be disorientated within the club at first, or would at least have difficulty seeing. It seems that the normative reaction to the unusual lighting would be to ignore its garish nature. The dance floor is constantly plagued with moving and flashing lights, as well as the soft, pulsating purple lights that light the entire club. Glow sticks and other small light-up objects are common on the dance floor and are swung around or held while dancing. The only other

light inside is a band of red light emitting diodes that runs behind the largest couch sectional and the bars. Club Hell, at first, seemed a tad bit ominous due to the fact that when I arrived, it was nearly empty. The choice of lighting and décor, without a doubt, was done with the intention to create a feeling of unrest for someone who would perceive the club as a negative or foreign environment. This is to create a feeling of belonging and citizenship for the club's guests. The club became very crowded and loud as the night grew later and into the early hours of the morning.

The main audience of the club consists of Providence's Gothic and fetish communities. This is mainly young adults ranging from eighteen to early thirties. The dress requirements to enter is simply to wear all black, with the exception of theme nights where variations are permitted. Inside the crowds have a varied sense of dress, this can consist of everything from cross-dressing, rave costumes, wearing only lingerie and other forms of half dressed nature, Gothic Lolita, PVC, leather, and chains. The majority of the people present sport several kinds of body modifications, including but not limited to, piercings and tattoos. Many of the young women chose to ignore dressing their upper bodies completely and choosing to cover their nipples with a bit of electrical tape, as a way to avoid lawsuit and liability, I later found that the women were required to do this if they showed their breasts.

In addition to often sporting a costume, many of the people found here do not use their real names. Some of the individuals this researcher encountered referred to themselves as Crisis, Smokey, Miss Kitty Litter, Angel Model 2.5, and Trouble. This seemed quite common place as the nature of this dark, loud enclave would not be something most would want to soil their good name with. The language of the place was difficult to truly experience. Speaking to one another was not a common behavior.

Within the club itself, communication was performed through dance, body language, simple gestures, or primal screams in accolade. These non-verbal and non-linguistic forms of communication were found to mainly signal for a dance partner to join, displeasure amongst members of one of the small groups with an individual or other group, to signal for more alcohol, to celebrate certain figures

of the club scene, or to signal going outside either to be able to communicate linguistically or, to simply, smoke a cigarette. Most verbal communication had to take place outside in the smoking area due to the decibels of rock blasting out of the walls. Outside, it became obvious that it was a very tight knit community that spoke in the vernacular of the normal American young adult, peppering each sentence with text speak or common slang. These individuals also use speak that was common in the fetish community and body modification community when discussing professions or day-to-day matters.

I wondered what the main purpose these individuals had for gathering at this place. Was it to hunt for a kindred spirit? Through lengthy observation it became obvious. The most common reason was to meet other people within their lifestyle, often with sexual conquest in mind, to explore further into the fetish and bondage/sadomasochistic lifestyles, or to simply just dress up and go dancing with familiar faces to a different style of music.

The normative order of Club Hell also became apparent after some careful observation. At first the culture and order seemed extremely similar to the common behavior of the age group in any environment, but I wanted to take as many precautions to not offend these surrounding individuals or their culture. The social order of the other people in the club seem to regard newcomers as something to haze, but still welcomed them. Often the people broke into their small groups, the most common division being the style of dress and age. Socially normative behavior included sadomasochism, casual sex, sexual deviancy, drug and alcohol use, preference to rock and metal-style music, cross-dressing, alternative sexual preferences, and body modifications. These behaviors were often not apparent but some were easy to distinguish through dress and the manner the individual spoke or carried themselves.

The most important parts of the club, as a social setting, would be the stage and the smoking area. Despite the dance floor being the largest part of the environment, very little social interaction took place there, and this researcher found it to be more of a space for a modern-day courtship dance where individuals would attempt to show off for prospective sexual partners. The stage served as the

pedestal to lift the key figures above the mass for all to see and hear. The stage is also the main drawing point for the club due to the “dungeon” and the lack of Gothic night clubs in the Providence and New England areas. The smoking area became apparently clear as the main social spot, as it was the only location without music to interrupt conversation. Several key figures served as ring leaders and order keepers of the masses of youth. Some of these figures, such as Trouble, Miss Kitty Litter, and Angel Model 2.5, were employed by the club to fulfill specific roles such as running the “dungeon”, acting as the Master of Ceremonies, or as a DJ, respectively.

It seemed almost a trip into another world as the culture could, at times, be very different from normative behavior found in mainstream society. Mainstream society would, most likely, considered the individuals encountered in this environment to be moral degenerates or deviants. Despite the alternative preferences of the people encountered here, it was found that, while appearing to be less polite than mainstream society, they were very open and welcoming. The main influences of their culture seem to be the alternative styles of music, sadomasochism, body modification, drug and alcohol use, and the feeling of being different from mainstream culture. The feeling of alienation from mainstream culture was the most interesting.

Despite appearing to be darker or more sinister than someone from mainstream society, the individuals here laughed easier and seemed to have a higher quality of life as well as a less stressful lifestyle. Many these individuals took professions that involved modeling, artistic skill, or manual labor. Considering that notion, it was also found that many of the individuals present were college educated and held, or were working on, multiple degrees. One of the key figures turned out to be a successful lawyer when he was not in a dress and wig at Club Hell. To an outsider, I found that the individuals observed were be judged and labeled by the media and television in a negative light far too quickly.

A “dungeon” in a fetish night club is a location where individuals volunteer to be whipped, or degraded, on stage. My first few, short visits to Club Hell, I avoided the stage area only brave enough

to near it the fatal night I met WildCard on the dance floor in attempt to blend in. Now with WildCard as my guardian in this odd world, this would be my first foray into their world, stepping out of my comfort zone and into theirs. I was instructed to remove my shirt, choosing to keep my bra and declining the nipple tape I was offered as a form of modesty.

Her name was Trigger. On the stage, she may have seemed more intimidating, but in front of me, she stood maybe 5'2" with an average build. She would be my dominatrix, a professional dominatrix employed by the club and a professional model, as well. I hoped I wasn't too nervous, how much harm could this girl do? She was obviously younger than me, later I found out she was a 19 year old, with a GED. Her brightly colored hair distracted me and so did her tattoos. There was so much I wanted to ask her but instead I was told to turn and face a way, putting my hand up would tell I had had enough. Was I ready? God, I hoped so.

Trigger started slow with a soft *Trigger Flogging in Club Hell* flogger that seemed to be made of silk, and tickled more than anything. She, repeatedly, would stop to ask me how I was holding up and then she started to pull out the "real" floggers. I was able to handle her repertoire of floggers that were made of everything from nylon cord, to silk, to leather. She seemed to be surprised that this was my first flogging and that my pain tolerance was so high. She, WildCard, and I agreed that my multiple piercings and three tattoos had something to do with it. But the flogging would only be the first of my trials that WildCard had in mind for me. Later I was to be "introduced to Angel Model 2.5"; I did not know where to be excited or afraid of the notion.

I, fortunately, had a chance to interview Trigger privately. She has been the fetish community

for about four years at this point and found it through self-discovery. She is a Rhode Island native, hailing from Woonsocket, where she lives with her two young children. I asked her favorite fetishes and she gladly named off a few; force play, biting, flogging, and blood play. I was curious how she kept things safe in private, since we had used verbal communication and hand gestures on stage and she explained safety words to me. Safety words are a code system that the participants would agree on so words like 'stop' or 'no' could be used in play. Knowing this new tidbit I ask WildCard if he also employed this system; his safety word is 'macaroni and cheese' simply because nobody says they want macaroni and cheese during sex. When Trigger was asked of her opinion on my study, she thought it be an excellent way to show the 'vanilla' world that just because other people didn't experiment in ways that they did they shouldn't be frowned upon and that her sexual preference did not make her a bad mother or affect the way she raised her children.

Angel Model 2.5 was the next member of this club I was introduced to, he was very tall male of Hispanic descent, about 6'4" with a muscular build like a tree trunk, and a fondness for dressing in woman's clothing. His role at the club was both go-go dancer and part-time DJ. Communication was limited due to the music and Angel Model 2.5's needed presence on the stage and was limited to a few compliments, hugging, and repeated touching and gesturing at this researcher's choice of clothing and physical attributes. Upon further investigation and questioning, it was found that Angel was indeed a homosexual male with his own Gothic fashion company, but did not choose to dress in this sort of manner when not at the club or conducting business sale.

Angel Model 2.5, who interestingly enough, as a transvestite and a homosexual male was very comfortable with touching others in a pseudo-sexual or feminine manner. The diatribes between Angel Model 2.5 and Wildcard often broke down into satirical and verbal cat fights mocking the stereotypical homosexual male, often coupled with jokingly crude gestures or touching. This was something I found interesting, due the dark nature of the people around me. I thought this would conclude my introduction to Angel Model 2.5, I was not only wrong but I quickly learned of a club tradition referred

as “feeding them to Angel” and I was what was on the menu for the night.

Without any form of permission or consent, Wildcard elected to “feed me to Angel Model 2.5.” This was not communicated in any obvious or verbal form, but despite that, I found myself to be picked up and lifted onto the stage and jacket removed. Stripped from the protective outer layer, I found myself with the option to act as a go-go dancer with Angel Model 2.5 or prove to the crowd of people around that she was an outsider. Opting to dance, which involved many crude gestures on Angel Model 2.5's part in the pantomime of sexual acts, and were subsequently imitated by myself and many in the crowd, I was shortly helped down from the stage by WildCard, laughing so hard his sides might split, and, with a jester's smile, informed of my acceptance into the club, and into his world.

These individuals would be the first of many interesting new lives to enter my own. A young man named Felipe was thrown into my world next. Felipe proved to be very interesting throughout the night due to his inebriated nature. Felipe was a large male, in both height and width, sporting a decorated leather jacket and jeans, leather boots, no shirt, and a rather impressive mohawk, black with red tips. I was later made aware that Felipe was not this man's real name, that still remains unknown.

This individual, regardless of name or alias, seemed to fancy himself a comedian and enjoyed placing himself at the center of ridicule.

Felipe Presenting a Dollar

His ability to laugh at himself was bit enlightening, someone who was insecure in themselves would never put themselves in his position. Over a cigarette, he expressed a desire to buy a pizza but without adequate funds could not do so. He was later encouraged by Wildcard, who fancies himself to be the most quick

witted and comedic of the group, to go around asking for a dollar here and there to gather the money needed. Felipe later returned to present Wildcard with his first dollar of the evening by marching up to him with the dollar bill hanging from his mouth, and continued to repeat this behavior with each acquisition. I was a little taken aback by Felipe's willingness to go along with what was suggested, but it further showed the weight that Wildcard's carried among the people he was involved with.

Whether it was for comedic affect or simply due to the drunken nature, I could not decide. It was later made known that even sober, Felipe's nature remains similar and is quoted as “goofy” disregarding the notion that goths or people in the fetish community are dark or brooding individuals. A few months after initially meeting Felipe I found out how unusual his mannerism could become. A late night close to last call at Club Hell, we began discussing getting a quick meal after the club closed for the night. Felipe chose to describe his desire in a sexual nature and went as far to entertain the notion of having sexual intercourse with a cheeseburger and a chocolate milkshake; of course hilarity ensued as WildCard encouraged him further.

As time proceeds I find myself deeper and deeper in the folds of this community. I saw myself more inclined to dance or volunteer to enter the dungeon more freely now. I started to question what I saw as dark or wrong about the people I met or saw weekly. I was one of them now and I felt a new sense of community with these people. I began to see their world through their eyes, notice new faces in the crowds, dance in new strange ways; their world was becoming mine. Each week new faces would peek out of the darkly dressed masses, pale with nervousness that wafted of them like a sour cologne, meek and timid, pacing around the club and looking lost like I once was. Their nature almost almost seem larval and it would be time before they either disappeared or metamorphosed into 'one of us.'

A young man named Danny was one larva that caught my interest. His older brother, a follower of WildCard, had brought him here and abandoned him so he would find his way into this world that

his brother called home. Danny was small and perhaps only 18 years of age, at 5'6" and dressed in ill-fitting black jeans and an old band t-shirt. His eyes were dark and round as coins with fear, spineless and shivering. We met him outside in the smoking area where he was abruptly left at our feet by his brother. He quickly took a liking to WildCard and followed him as if his life depended on it.

I would often leave to observe the abandon on the hetero-normative way of life in the club and turn to find him lurking near by. I was pleased to see that homosexual couples were free from judgment here. I often noticed that the larva, as we came to call the masses of new faces, were often put off guard by the numerous homosexual couples or transsexuals in the club. These tells in facial expression and body language would seem to melt away week after week of watching these young people acclimate, as I had, to the new world they chose to enter.

I have also noticed that even among what they claim to be their own people, there is still a desire to rebel against the subculture. Despite the attire being all black and fetish attire, it was noted that several guests inside the club were dressed in stereotypical 80's clothing in bright colors and equally loud choices in hair. Even more interestingly I spotted some people choosing to wear all white, perhaps a rebellion against the sea of all black that normally swallows the dance floor like a tempest. The irony of a rebellion to the rebellion itself.

I find that it may be time to learn more about the people I have come to call friends. Late one night after the club closed I invited WildCard, Trigger, and another one of the stage workers, a large, older man named Papa Bear, into my home for a coffee and a chance to pick their brains. I had come to accept that sex and fetishes were normal conversation and figured that this would stay among those topics. I was very much mistaken. I was educated on different views of death as a beautiful thing and its place in the life cycle, Trigger's life threatening C-sections, their views on leaving lives in vegetative states and it's immorality, later the conversation turned more positive and began to focus on body modifications and their meanings, fine art, custom jewelery, and, bladed weapons. I was so intrigued that minds that had not been affected by institutions of higher education could possess so much

creativity and drive I rarely saw in the modern world. Their thirst to live, breathe, and create, art forms was absolutely inspiring.

Soon WildCard and I found out a new fetish club would be opening in downtown Providence, this was truly the opportunity to watch the birth and growth of one of these rare enclaves of culture. Our last night at Club Hell was their yearly Vampire Masquerade, a yearly gala of cloaks and false fangs. This became our last night as WildCard expressed his desire to turn his back on this place due to the music degrading into poorly mixed noise, the regulars had all crowded into the smoking area to escape the noise, and many of them, us included, left very early into the night. But there was hope! A new club, a new place to call our own in this counter-culture. This club was named Remi's, owned by a skinny, middle-aged man named Alan. Alan had been involved with fetish nights at many night clubs and had his own dungeon crew named Hathor's Garden. Later I would find out he was an old and dear friend of WildCard, despite a 15 year age gap.

Remi's was a much larger club, painted a deep and romantic shade of crimson with scatter leather couches. The walls were occasionally punctuated by paintings of angels and old vermouth ads. This place was so similar but so different. Immediately I noticed that the people that stood before were of an older generation, and presented themselves with an elegance that the younger generation had replaced with rebellion. An older couple danced while simultaneously playing with long nylon cords, ladies in their early 30's graced the bar in floor length Victorian gowns. The clothing all around me was much higher end, nothing was dirty, ripped, or even the slightest bit frayed. These people were nothing like I have ever seen; this was the fetish community fully grown and I was easily the youngest among them. The music was still similar to what I was accustomed to but lacking in the harsh techno and dubstep of the age, opting more for symphony-laced power metal and rock. The sound system was much different though, speakers were positioned so music was always heard but at the bar or on a sofa you could hold a conversation quietly, and without shouting above the decibels. The air even felt different here, it was casual, a place of comradeship and brotherhood, completely lacking the overtly

sexual nature of Club Hell.

The most interesting trait that seemed apparent in the people I observed was a calm, calculated nature. Every individual, in quiet conversation with another or public presenting themselves with the smokers, seemed in perfect control of the environment and not-at-all prone to acts of posturing or exhibition of a dominating nature. This seemed to be more of a meeting of the minds than a sexually themed night for the club, many of these people were highly stimulating and engaged in intricate and deep debates. Each individual I spoke to was open and honest, with out any sense of hesitation or doubt. I found this sort of nature fascinating. I had noticed a bit of it in WildCard, veiled in his humor, a natural inclination to draw attention and respect.

I shortly visited Remi's again, this time on their Goth-themed night, expecting the world of Club Hell to spill over and flood the place with what I had become so accustomed to. I also chose to do this to judge the reaction of this new place to the fact it would be my twenty-first birthday. At Club Hell, hearing that news would drive the floor mad and alcohol would flow like milk from a mother's breast. I preferred to avoid that sort of environment. Initially reacting to the news, the staff who remembered me after the first few visits, jokingly offered to make it like any college student's twenty-first birthday, but when declined they gracefully accepted and did not push the issue.

WildCard and I both found this unusual but welcoming in this new casual environment where friends were easily made and sex was never the driving ambition. I was quickly becoming integrated into this new club, including offers to tend the bar and work in their kitchen, opportunities to further observe could not be refused. I found myself frequently asked to befriend these new faces on social networking sites, but they often referred to one I have never heard of before; this site is called FetLife. WildCard, in less than polite terms, described it as a Facebook for sexual intercourse. My next step into my immersion in this culture would be to join this site and see their world over the world wide web.

My next step into their world was into the darkest corners of cyberspace. There are several sites

for the fetish community, like many of our mainstream forums, social networking, and dating sites. Fetlife was my introduction to a more systematic side of the community and it showed a deeper understanding of their social levels. The main labels that people identified on this network are Dom, or dominant individual, Sub, submissive individual, Switch, an individual who enjoys alternating between being a dominant partner or being dominated by others, and, Vanilla, an individual who does not identify as “kinky” and is often just curious about the community. As I spoke to more people, the world around, many confessed to not always admitting their true nature for their cyber communities to see, and often were looking for friends and an understanding more than they were searching for sexual partners. This culture was far less promiscuous with their partners than the media paints.

Another interesting part of this cyber community was the ability to label their partners and relationships with others. Many of the pages I viewed contained the label Owned or Owner of, or even more interestingly, Owned and collared by. A collar, explained to me by WildCard, is the fetish community's version of a wedding band minus the legal bounds. A collar is a handcrafted gift from the Dom to their submissive and is usually noted by a symbol or by the style. I also realized that at the beginning of this experiment I was, unknowingly, collared by WildCard as a form of protection. This collar was a simple painted poker chip, with what he called his symbol, on a dog-tag chain that matched one he wore. By wearing this pendant, I was viewed as his partner or property by others in the community and shielded me from any unwelcome attention. Many times, it seems this subculture was far more loyal to their partners and friends than many of the young adults I have seen daily walking the streets.

In this cyber community, life was not limited to sexual intercourse or bedroom practices. Often the many faces of this secret world would start up discussions that would include everything from sports, movies, and current events, to social gathering called munches. Often this social network was used by individuals who could not openly live their lifestyles due to a professional career that could be 'damaged' by the distorted view the community has in today's media and stated that they needed this

site for their sense of community. Many of the people I found myself talking with were educated individuals of all ages, short of young teenagers and minors. A common topic of discussion when I noted my reasons for my interest in their lifestyles, was legality.

A slap in the face is considered assault on another person, but often in the fetish community and BDSM (Bondage, Discipline, Sadism, Masochism) this is considered light play. The question of legality and consensual play arises. Many of the people I spoke with often listed knife play and other forms of play with dangerous objects, such as whips, floggers, and riding crops. These items and their use on another human being in many places is considered dangerous and illegal, often assault with a deadly weapon or domestic assault. The question of consent never arises when looked at from a legal side. Another difficulty with the legality of consent arose when I asked a few women about their interests in false, or play, rape. An outsider hearing begging or pleading would assume non-consent, when in fact these women openly admitted the act was a sexual turn on. One phone call and these young ladies would find themselves attempting to explain their sexual preferences to an arresting officer or court of law.

My concern was safety. Safe words was the answer. WildCard explained to me that each person or set of partners, due to their limitations of comfort or pain tolerance, would use a series of codes or a coded 'stop' word in the bedroom, his being "macaroni and cheese." The words "no" and "stop" are often used by a submissive to edge on the dominant partner as a sort of taunt or to increase the sexual tension, so an agreed upon safe word is vital for safety and consent. This practice seemed simple enough, but I doubted it would hold in court if a jilted lover claimed assault or rape, product of a fetish love turned sour. From my understanding of this community, there are unspoken rules and guidelines that are followed outside the conventional legal system.

Ten commandments of the Fetish community:

1. Always have a safe word.

2. Know the levels of consent before partaking in pseudo non-consensual acts.
3. Understand your partner's preferences and limitations
4. Honor the safe word.
5. Use protection and clean toys.
6. Ask permission before inviting new partners or voyeurs.
7. Respect wedding bands and collared relationships, as well as conventional relationships.
8. Respect the Dom's word as law, but understand the Sub always has the right to stop.
9. The Sub is always in control of their environment.
10. Everyone has the right to stop, or use a safe word, if not fully comfortable.

These ten guidelines seem simple enough and can for the most part unspoken. This community is formed on consensual non-consent, respect, and order. The sexual structure of these people seemed simple enough for me to understand. Do as you like as long as anyone getting hurt has consented. It turned out these guidelines often sneak outside the bedroom into many of their followers personal and private lives. I found myself regaled with stories of corsets, anal plugs, and elaborate rope binds hidden under clothing while a submissive went along their daily errands. They explained their Doms had instructed them to do this as an elaborate day long version of foreplay and as a show of control. None of these individuals would deny their enjoyment in having their secrets and in their obedience. Structure, loyalty, and, obedience seem to be the backbones of this subculture.

Suddenly this world seems far less obscene when broken down to its bare basics. Honor, respect, and dominance were the strongest motivators, not sex or sexuality. The search was for control. Perhaps from a lack of control in their lives these individuals turned to the easiest thing for them to control, their bodies, their minds, and often a willing sexual partner seeking the same control and structure. The need for control is a basic human need seen daily. The best example being young women and a struggle to fit the physical definition by the media of what is beautiful, resulting in anorexia and other physical disorders. I had thought this was the answer and turned to psychology to

validate my findings. Still I mused over the importance of pain and its use as a vehicle for control.

Sociologically speaking, sadomasochism is considered a deviant nature, more so a secondary deviance, or one that becomes a lifestyle. This combined with the stigma associated with the name is perhaps what piques the curiosities of young adults looking for a thrill. Deviant nature comes from an individual's desire to break away from accepted social norms and practices. Many members of the Fetish community regard the nature of their sexual practices and the consequential deviation from socially acceptable behavior a necessary evil. Without what may seem an unusual practice or ritual for mainstream society becomes vital for sexual gratification, arousal, or, satisfaction; to some this may seem to be a bit of a sexual ineptitude or as a defect.

Culturally, orgasm denial and control are common practices within the Fetish Community. These are used as tools in order to increase control for the Dom and to increase pleasure through increased tension and anticipation in a Sub. This anticipation is akin to a cigarette smoker's desire to satisfy their addiction; the longer they need to wait to fulfill their need, the more satisfying it becomes. An average cigarette suddenly becomes the best cigarette of their life within the proper context and after ample anticipation. Control is the highest valued catalyst of self-worth in the mind of anyone within fetish culture. To have ultimate control gives the person a sense of power and value within the culture. To be in control, the Dom simply needs to feel they are in control. They are filled with high levels of pride and self-satisfaction. In regards to bedroom practices, control truly belongs to the Sub, who has the ability to stop in the event they are pushed beyond their limit or have become discomforted. The stronger the Dom's perceived control is a product of role playing and the Sub placing them upon a pedestal of perception. This new insight becomes the reality as roles are accepted and fulfilled. The better the roles are actualized higher the partners regard their self-worth and fortify their role.

With high levels of self-regard, much of the Fetish community also is well equipped with high levels of education and profound cognitive abilities. These strong willed and strong minded people, in

order to achieve the higher positions they desired, procured valuable educations in every field imaginable. Through their social network I found myself discussing my findings with teachers, doctors, psychologists, and lawyers, as well as many more individuals involved in a plethora of life paths. With their desire to attain respect, they had pushed themselves far above the average man or woman might find themselves. These are highly intelligent people who chose to secretly walk a different path than the rest of society within the comfort of their homes and small groups of like-minded individuals.

Their personalities are more well-adjusted, and lack the faults that would present them as emotionally weaker. These people are, perhaps, much better of than the majority of the modern world that is constantly bombarded with messages of inferiority or a sense of a lack of belonging. Suddenly, the negative message of the mainstream media, portraying deviants and monstrous acts seemed more like an act of a school yard bully, based in insecurities and fear. I considered WildCard. He presents himself with total control of both himself and his environment, walks with a pronounced sense of purpose and swagger. He does not doubt himself and is in constant command of any audience he comes across. His sexuality and preference towards sadomasochism is a product of his strong sense of value, self-worth, self-respect, and the ideology that others should respect him and hold in as high regards as he holds himself. He is indeed a powerful and commanding figure as he is seemingly always in his natural environment, despite place or situation. He is at terms with the nature, of what could be perceived as, his cruelty to his sexual partners. His respect for them, or lack there of, drives his passions and causes him to present his nature and command submissive behavior. He expects them to respect him and his desires, to honor them as the word of his law, as discussed as commandment number eight in my *Ten Commandments of the Fetish Community*. Without their complete submission, he tends towards the use of acts of humiliation to put an insubordinate partner back into the role of Submissive, this again, aligns with Maslow's observations on an authoritative individual. Following his studies on the design of an authoritative system this is to validate WildCard's and his partner's statuses,

here his as the Dom and his partner's status as the Sub.

I have come a great distance from people watching in night clubs and dabbling on x-rated social networking web sites. I had looked into the darkest corners of their world, swept the cobwebs away from ancient psychology texts...but what did it all mean? I have uncovered the in deeper, inner workings of a group of people demonized and ostracized by media and mainstream society. These individuals have been revealed to be, potentially, the greater minds of our age and, psychologically, better off than the ones labeling them as wrong or immoral.

They have formed a quiet community with its own ways of operating and nearly palpable respect for one's self and others. These are people to learn from, perhaps not for their sexual preferences, but for the minds and brilliance behind it all. These individuals are perhaps one of the most misunderstood people of our society. I believed that the reasoning behind the misinformation by movies and media and the demonizing by society is link to a generalized fear of the unknown and a misunderstanding of the deeper reasons to their practices. An open mind has given me tomes of information and understanding that I can only wish has been openly expressed to you, and perhaps now you can open your mind to a world previously disregarded.

Dedicated to WildCard.

A true gentleman in an age with few, and an illuminating intellectual.

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