

Becoming a Slave

The Theory & Practice of Voluntary Servitude

By Jack Rinella

with Reflections by His Slave Patrick

Copies of

Becoming a slave

may be ordered at

<http://www.leatherviews.com>

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To my devoted slaves

Patrick & Matthew

And

In memory of our good friend John Feuer

And another true slave

rodney Jordan-ross

Also by Jack Rinella:

The Master's Manual

The Compleat Slave

Partners In Power

The Toy Bag Guide to Clips and Clamps

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Introduction

*It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan.*²⁶

I found my first introduction to Master/slave (M/s)²⁷ relationships in the pages of *Mr. Benson*, a novel by John Preston published in 1983. Like *The Story of O* (1954), *Tarnsman of Gor* (1967), and *The Claiming of Sleeping Beauty* (also 1983), fiction has long provided the erotic gist that feeds the imagination of would-be dominants and submissives alike.

But I am neither a New York millionaire like Mr. Benson, a prince in an ancient country, a French maiden, nor a man transported across the solar system. So, like the rest of us, I have found ways to translate fiction into some kind of satisfactory reality -- one not crafted by writers or actors but by real men and women living in the here and now. I have had to find the master within, while searching for that special person who believes that he or she was not only born to serve, but born to serve me.

This has been a twenty year journey, during which I have met hundreds of people either in cyberspace or real time: masters and their slaves, serious seekers and flakes, the curious and the experienced. I have attempted to enthrall more than a hundred of them and have been successful, in the short term, with more than several. My more than nine years with my slave Patrick has proven the viability of my desires, as have the relationships of the masters, mistresses, and their slaves whom I have been privileged to know during these years.

Experience shows that M/s relationships are first and foremost human relationships. No amount of domination or submission will change the fact that both masters and slaves are human. Intellect, emotion, physical attributes, finances, mores, and morals are part and parcel of our relationships. For that reason, I find that I am too pragmatic for the dogmatists who seek easy, pre-packaged solutions for becoming a master or finding a slave. Let me be clear here:

Creating a master/slave relationship is a very personal, **completely human activity** that will always reflect the **unique ideas, preferences, and agreements** of the people in the relationship. There is **no cookie-cutter recipe** for becoming a slave except that you follow the desires of heart.

An Amazon.com book reviewer once wrote that my work, *The Master's Manual*, might have been written by any marriage counselor

²⁶ Eleanor Roosevelt, cited in *Whatever It Takes* by Bob Moawad, Compendium Publishing, Lynwood, WA, 2003.

²⁷ As you read on, you will find that I use M/s and D/s somewhat interchangeably. In fact, both are dominant/submissive relationships. M/s more specifically indicates a master/slave relationship whereas D/s by in itself refers to any dominant/submissive relationship.

and that it was full of common sense suggestions that gave few specific ideas to someone who wanted to be in a dominant/submissive (D/s) relationship. As a friend once said, "Duh." We are humans and relationships between humans will always reflect our humanity.

What is just as true is that even the kinky²⁸ aspects of our relationships are seldom consistent and hardly ever universal. I cannot, therefore, give you ready-made presentations as to how you ought to fashion your slave future or, if you are dominant, your future slave. I can paint pictures of broad generalities and give examples of actual practices but the hard truth is that successful M/s relationships are tailored to the two (or more) people in them. Just as clothes come in many sizes, so too are there wide variations in the M/s continuum. From sadistic tyrant to elegant lady, from chattel farm hand to sissy maid, there is no one style that fits all and no one can easily catalogue all of them either.

I recently read an on-line post from a writer seeking information about slave protocols, that is the "rules" by which slaves are to treat their masters and others. She wanted to interview master/slave couples about the correct protocols found in the lifestyle. The interviews that helped shape this book prove that there is no consistent way for M/s relationships to be expressed. Is she looking for protocols between Gay leathermen, between professional Dominatrices and their clients, between elegant mistresses and their attendants, or between sadistic masters and their raunch slaves? Master/slave relationships, after all, come in all sizes, colors, and temperaments.

Even if we examine only one of these modalities we find wide variations in the specifics. Are slaves supposed to walk in front of their masters, to their right or left, or behind? I can find examples of each practice among those who rightfully identify as master and slave. To label one way better than another is to venture into dangerous territory to be sure. What I can do is to lay down the general principles that appear in M/s relationships, while presenting examples that illustrate, rather than directives that limit.

For instance, my friend Master Vince has a style of domination quite different from mine. He once met a slave applicant on line and then in person. It seemed to both of them that there was no future between them as master and slave. At the same time, Vince suspected that my style would fit the applicant well and arranged for us to correspond via email. Within the week the applicant was in my home and eventually was collared and under contract. One style does not fit all.

As a master I have peculiar ways of doing things and of how

²⁸ For our purposes, kink and kinky refer to any sexual relationship that includes BDSM, that is bondage, discipline (whipping, spanking, and other impact fetishes), dominance, submission, sadism, and masochism.

I want them done. For better or for worse, you can't create as I have, since you are not me. Imitation may indeed be a compliment but healthy relationships are built on faithfulness to oneself, not to some idealized fantasy of how one thinks things should be.

My approach in these pages is to clarify and explain, especially by clearly defining and giving actual examples. My aim is to demythologize in order to make attainable a fulfilling master/slave relationship. After all, if you can't live it, it has little more purpose than to feed one's libido. That's the stuff of porn, not reality. My purpose is to guide you on your very personal path in finding a master, though I trust that masters will also find something of value in this book as well.

A Quick Note about My Writing Style

Contrary to more popular usage I prefer to use standard American spelling and rules of grammar and punctuation, avoiding (I hope) the more usual misuses of our language. Therefore you will notice that slaves' names begin, as I think they should, with capital letters and that slaves are hes or shes, not its. My reasoning for this is simple: those who are committed to obey and serve us masters have accepted a high calling, one that I find most honorable and I honor them for doing so. Though many disagree with me (and they have every right to do so) I find the use of the lower case and of impersonal pronouns demeaning. I certainly does nothing to acknowledge the high value I place on what slaves are and what they do. Additionally, using non-standard usage makes a book more difficult to read.

The only places I have been willing to deviate from standard usage is when the person has asked me to do so in reference to them. Therefore you will, on occasion, find titles and names in a grammatically incorrect style, but it is after all, their name not mine.

Several of the readers who proofed the manuscript form of this book pointed out the confusion of similar terms that point to realities that have much in common yet remain vaguely apart. I admit to using terms interchangeably when, in fact, they refer to distinct but closely related groups. The interchange of D/s and M/s, of Leather, Lifestyle, and Subculture, and of groups, community, and communities are all just such examples. I do this intentionally as that allows me to add variety to my writing. Otherwise if I consistently used the same terms over and over again, I'd be damned for being too repetitious.

In truth, these terms have more in common than separate them, though one can find clear lines of separation, as between Gay Leather men and Pansexual munch attendees.²⁹ I will try to define

²⁹ A munch is a public meeting of kinky folks, usually held at a restaurant as a safe way for on-line people to meet. The munches are a place to find play partners, learn about groups, and become part of a real-time and place community. Pansexual means open to all

terms that seem to need definition, though I admit that is a value call on my part.

Words as simple as master and slave confuse the discussion. After all, slavery, at least the pre-Civil War kind, is illegal nearly across the planet. What, then, is a slave? The words are found in our literature, our seminars, our classifieds, our films, and our emails *ad nauseam*.

Experience has shown that few are slaves, even fewer masters, if we but look at the words as found in a dictionary.³⁰ Rather than lump all dominants into a nice neat pile of masters and all submissives as slaves (and many are not) we had best see the terms modified by adjectives such as wannabe, trainee, applicant, apprenticed, or actual.

The reason I modify the word slave is simple. Used alone, it defines a person who is in a relationship. Just as husband and wife are terms used for those who are actually married so too does slave reflect a living relationship that is being lived in the current time. Wannabe husbands and wannabe wives are called fiancés and fiancées; they may be engaged but they are not yet wed. Even on the day of their marriage, we name them bride and groom. Only after the official pronouncement is made are they husband and wife. Likewise divorced or widowed spouses are no longer called husband or wife.

I know that many of my readers will protest my limited qualification of who is a slave. They really believe they are slaves even though they haven't found a master to serve. Still I stand my ground on this issue. Be a slave applicant or a slave trainee or say you want to be a slave. The title slave will be much more meaningful and real if you wait and use it when it's truly appropriate.

Let me take each combination of words individually.

Wannabes

Though the word wannabe has certain unfavorable connotations,³¹ we can simply say that a person with no connection to a master but who is considering slavery as a life option is a wannabe slave. For them slavery is an unrealized idea that reflects a potential. We all begin as wannabes, since wanting to be is the beginning of the process. It is first desire that leads us to explore slavery, eventually leading us to become trainees, apprentices, applicants, and, hopefully, slaves.

genders and orientations. Gay Leathermen, on the other hand, generally meet in bars, at club functions or on line.

30 I use the dictionary in order to give some understanding to our use and misuse of terms. If, as is often the case, we each use the same word when it means different things to each person in the conversation, we have a serious communication problem.

31 I would prefer to use a different term, since wannabe has a somewhat negative connotation, but I can't for the life of me come up with a better one. In fact the word is only a variation of "wants to be," and there is nothing wrong with that.

Trainees

So I choose to call those studying or working with a mentor or potential partner a slave trainee. Trainees are those learning from a mentor, a person who is simply a casual teacher, or one who is preparing the other to enter into a relationship with them. Apprentices are similar, of course, but I would say that an apprentice is learning from one in order to be in a relationship with someone else. Thus one master may agree to take on another who wants to be apprenticed as a slave. In this regard, anyone with experience can train or mentor another. In fact, there is great historical precedence for slaves mentoring or training other slaves.

Applicants

When two people agree to the possibility of their becoming partners, I consider them both applicants. Therefore the master is applying to become the other's master and the slave is applying to become the dominant's property, which will be explained more clearly in later chapters. Until the collar is locked or the contract signed, or however they want to establish the beginning of their relationship, they are applying for a position not yet achieved. Lord knows there's many a slip between the cup and the lip.

Slaves

Lastly, we need to understand the term "slave." In fact it is only a short hand for one who surrenders, obeys, and gives service to one who has the ability and consent to control them. For that reason it is not altogether correct to use the term slave. As indicated in the subtitle of this book, the actual relationship is better called one of voluntary servitude. Nevertheless our D/s community continues to call one in just such a relationship "a slave."³² Perhaps some day published dictionaries will get on the band wagon with us and add our definition as well.

The word slave describes an individual who is in that relationship. Getting there is a process of self-knowledge and mutual testing until the partners arrive at an agreed-upon dominant/submissive relationship. Just as non-kinky partners court, so too do we, each trying to woo the other. It is a matter of getting to know one another, of testing to see if a relationship could actually work, of understanding each other's aspirations, and the viability of there being a long term relationship.

³² Throughout this book I will use the term "slave" as a convenient shorthand for the title given a person who is in a relationship of voluntary servitude.

The Approach I Take

This book is a blue print for enthrallment. I am giving first a broad and general definition of the slave, followed by suggestions for finding a master, and concluding with reflections on a slave's life. It is first and foremost factual technique, the alchemy of changing one's current way of life into something still yet only imagined, one path among many to becoming a slavishly devoted servant. Because our M/s relationships are fully personalized by our own desires and circumstances, you will find that the lessons found herein are full of suggestions and alternatives for designing, creating, and living your personal D/s relationship, rather than an exact plan for accomplishing your M/s goals. In the end I can only point you in a direction. You and your partner or partner-to-be will have to create your relationship for yourselves.

Let me separate fact from fiction. Like most of those experienced in M/s relationships, I find that I spend a lot of time debunking the myths and prejudices that are deeply and by nature intertwined within the fantasies of those just entering this lifestyle. Herein are no instructions on reliving the glory that was Rome or Greece, the shame of pre-Civil War slavery, or some fantasy of kidnapping and captivity. Instead this book is meant to be a guide to voluntary servitude, which is a much more appropriate term for that in which we Leather³³ dominants and submissives are so deeply engaged.

This type of relationship holds no escape from life. In fact, like all relationships, it will tend to magnify the areas in your life which need to change. This is no free ride, either for master or slave, as the cost of living is the same: insurance, medical bills, rent, utilities, clothing, education, room and board, vacations, retirement, and all the necessities of reality remain. It's not all sex either. It is most likely that more time will be spent outside of the relationship at work than in any other place. Then sleep will consume another third of your week and most of the rest of the time will be needed for laundry, house cleaning, cooking, shopping, and a host of other assorted chores.

Just deciding to become a slave isn't enough as you will find the search for your dominant partner will be long and arduous, filled with a great many dead ends, broken promises, and dreamers who will waste your time. Think about it for a minute. One doesn't decide to become a doctor and begin practicing medicine the next day. We don't decide we want a husband or wife and immediately walk down the aisle with the first person we date. Creating a new life, whatever it might be, takes time, learning, practice, reflection, and (usually) a

33 Here I use the term "Leather" as a euphemism for any and all kinds of kinky relationships, including BDSM, D/s, and alternate lifestyles.

great deal of preparation. But for those who persevere, a delightful and fulfilling relationship awaits.

The rule here is that the practical and the pragmatic will take precedent over the frivolous and the imaginary. If it doesn't work we won't use it. If it ain't broke we won't fix it. We are talking about real lives lived in a real world. Unlike Mr. Benson, we'll have to go to work (though to be fair he did disappear from his penthouse on a daily basis). Unlike Beauty, no prince will awaken us with a kiss and take us to his realm of sexual enthrallment. The relationship described herein is meant to be real, lived daily by real men and women, in real places around the world.

There are two aspects to the journey of becoming a slave: the first is nature, the second is nurture.

By nature I mean that being submissive has much to do with one's personality and disposition, hence we talk about being "born to serve." Nature implies a certain innate talent, abilities that are part and parcel of who we are.

But nature alone is not enough. Hence there is a need for nurturing, as in "to educate, to train; to help grow or develop; cultivate."³⁴ To train, "To coach in or accustom to a mode of behavior or performance; to make proficient with specialized instruction and practice", then, is the purpose of this book. I use that word purposefully, since real slavery and true service are manifest in behavioral outcomes. Not only are a master and slave who they are but more importantly they are known as who they are by how they live and what they do.

For that reason this book isn't about daddies, tops, bottoms, or submissives, *per se*, though I surely trust those who identify as such will find much of value in these pages. I admit to being verbally rigorous here. I have a rather intense, deeply committed, and serious relationship in mind when I write about mastery and slavery. It's not that those who want to play at it can't, nor that the merely curious won't find much of value in my writing. I only state this warning now so that my purpose is clear:

This book is a guide to becoming a slave in devotion and service to a master.

I have also written the book on the premise that my reader has more than a passing familiarity with our kinky community. The merely curious will find a great deal herein that describes our lifestyle, but I am presuming that my reader is already familiar with the more general customs, mores, and practices found in kinky communities.

³⁴ All references to definitions are from *American Heritage Dictionary*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA, 1982, unless otherwise noted.

In other words, there are basic techniques, modes of communication, and a unique vocabulary that probably ought to be learned before one decides to enter into a long term master/slave relationship.

Your understanding of masters and slaves needs to be rooted in a familiarity with the general culture of Leather as learned by your full participation within that community. If you haven't yet met "us" in the real world, I suggest you read a primer³⁵ or two and find a Leather bar or club, a munch or monthly play party and become an active participant in our lifestyle before you seek a master. Mastery and slavery are no places for a lone ranger, if only because you're going to have to meet a lot of people before you meet the one who was meant for you.

Ideally one trains through a wide variety of activities. I will be the first to admit that just reading this book isn't going to make you a slave. One needs the experience of sharing with those who have relevant experience, perhaps even being mentored by them, of practicing the specific activities and behaviors associated with service so that they become naturally occurring in one's daily life, and of deciding how you most want to express and arrange your life and its relationships in real ways so that you **are** a slave. Nuances of method and execution, of speech, and of thought must be understood. There are psychological and emotional changes that one undergoes as well, on the road to attaining full maturity in one's chosen lifestyle.

Both mastery and service will be naturally structured by the two (or more) people in the relationship. Your very personal histories, personalities, localities, orientations, among a host of other characteristics, determine who you are and what you want to be. You can't submerge who you are or from whence you come in the living of a relationship. For that reason there is no one way to be a master and neither is there one way to be a slave. When lived to its fullest it will be your (and this word is plural) creation. What I can give you in these pages are guidelines, suggestions, and real-life examples upon which you can model your own beliefs, desires, and behaviors.

Although the greater part of this book is derived from my 20 plus years of mastery, including five years as a slave, this book includes the information taken from interviews with men and women who have experience in a master/slave relationship. I have tried to be as encompassing as possible, including both men and women of all orientations and lifestyles. Each has lived in a committed master/slave relationship for at least one year. That, and the willingness to be interviewed, are the only criteria for inclusion.

I have also interviewed several others who have attempted to create this kind of relationship without success, thereby giving some

35 I suggest my *Partners In Power*, Greenery Press, Oakland, CA, 2003. Appendix D list others.

examples and fostering an understanding of what might be avoided.

About Patrick's Reflections

At the end of each chapter you'll find reflections from Patrick, my 24/7 slave of nine years. They are his heart-felt and experienced-based thoughts on life in voluntary servitude. Like me, you will find him a happy, intelligent, and contented individual. His strength has strengthened me. Here his thoughts strengthen my words.

For those who are curious, Patrick is nine years younger than I, has a Master's degree in Community Development, and presently works full-time outside our home as business development manager for a video and book distribution company. We own our home jointly and in it he cares for me daily as cook, shopper, janitor, butler, laundry guy, and fabulous sex partner. He is also active in one of our local Leather clubs and spends much of his free time reading Star Trek novels.

In discussing the writing of his reflections, we had to arrive at what he should call me in print. We settled on "Sir" since that is his usual form of address to and about me. Though I am somewhat wary of titles such as "My Sir," I accept the title Sir from him as a shorthand that acknowledges my mastery of him and his surrender to me. I trust you will see that word in the same light and therefore appropriate for his use. You, on the other hand, are certainly free to call me "Jack."

Acknowledgements

Few books are one person endeavors. Therefore I wish the acknowledge the hundreds of men and women who have taught me the way of mastery and service, especially Master Lynn and slave Patrick. The masters and slaves who graciously allowed me to interview them for source information and the examples you find in this book also deserve my thanks: Master Jim & slave Marsha (International Master & slave 2001, a Gay and Lesbian couple), Steve Sampson & slave Kirk (International Master & slave 2000), Master Vince DiFruscio (a long-time friend in Chicago), Master Scott & Slavette (International Master & slave 2002 and husband and wife), Goddess Lakshimi (Professional Dominatrix with a 24/7 slave and Ms World Leather 2004), and Master Lawrence & slave Ernest (a Gay couple).

I would also like to acknowledge and thank those who were kind enough to read this manuscript in its early form and offer suggestions and corrections: TammyJo Eckhart, Joanne Gaddy, Phil Ross, and slaves Patrick, Marsha, and Slavette.

As I end this introduction, I strongly urge you to do the "After Reading Activities." This book is meant to help you on your journey -- if you are only talking and not walking, you'll never arrive there. The

plan of the activities is to help you to reflect on the readings so that you have a better understanding of what you want.

When you do the exercises you will be actually creating a journal with three purposes: first it will have samples of letters, questions, and answers that you will want to have handy for your prospective master. Doing so will be a good way to both show your seriousness and give a springboard to discussion. Secondly you will have done your homework, having created a personal ad and a petition. Thirdly you will have a personalized guide with questions and answers for your interviews.

Finding a master is a journey. Good luck and as we sang in my childhood, "Happy trails to you."

Patrick Reflects: First Thoughts

Being a slave has a lot to do with feeling. It *feels* good to serve. There is general contentment in being where you belong and a satisfaction at being bold enough to allow yourself to achieve it. Physical contact with the one you serve is joyous and the attention you are shown causes you to beam with further joy. An intimate little world develops and you can explore each other in ways you never imagined and in ways others can't conceive.

Those feelings are not fleeting, as they are when you are caught up in the fantasy of slavery, when certainty lasts only until orgasm. The feelings I refer to remain and build upon each other, growing stronger and more secure with the passage of time. When a Master/slave relationship is successful these feelings are ongoing and a bond is created with your Master that transcends the chain that might be around your neck or the contract that you might have signed.

That's what it feels like to be a slave, and you can't feel that way wishing for it or fantasizing about it. And I'm sorry, folks, you can't experience it online. You have to *become* a slave to experience such feelings and that's what this book is about, a guide to finding your way to fulfillment through voluntary servitude.

The first thing you will have to do is overcome your fear. Even if you've wanted it all of your life, when the moment of truth is at hand, part of you resists. Fear grabs hold of your logic and manufactures reasons and excuses for why you can't follow your desires just quite yet. Shame can enter into it as well. We're talking about erotic submission and both of those words are counter to what we are taught is appropriate. This resistance to our desires occurs time and time again, sometimes for years. And when you do begin to make positive steps to pursue your desire the resistance can even get stronger. This exchange between desire and fear continue until the desire and longing to be who you really are can no longer be held back, and you conquer your fear and

take those first real steps.

This first real step I refer to is different for everyone but you know it has happened by the way your determination moves you in a purposeful way. It may not be the step that transforms your life instantly, but a first step can always be followed by more steps.

That first real step *feels* wonderful. There is a certainty in knowing you are headed to where you belong. Others won't understand it but they can't be expected to, they aren't on such a path. It feels right even in the midst of not knowing precisely what's ahead.

But the journey to becoming a slave, no matter how "right" and "natural" it feels, isn't easy or instantaneous. Like the young wolf that Jack London wrote of in "White Fang" there will be resistance even in the midst of growing certainty that this is what is right for you.

It came hard, going as it did, counter to much that was strong and dominant in his own nature; and, while he disliked it in the learning of it, unknown to himself he was learning to like it. It was a placing of his destiny in another's hands, a shifting of the responsibilities of existence. This in itself was compensation, for it is always easier to lean upon another than to stand alone....But it did not all happen in a day, this giving over of himself, body and soul, to the man-animals.³⁶

A true slave never loses their strength or dominance. Erotic slavery isn't about being beaten into submission. Quite the contrary, you retain those good parts of yourself and turn them to helping you serve your Master, and that's when the journey becomes exciting and fulfilling. Your strength and dominance become tools that help you serve better.

Commitment to this path is a weighty thing, however. When fear takes hold and causes panic at the thought of continuing, the easy way out is to run and deny yourself. If slavery is indeed your destiny such fears will subside and eventually your thoughts will return to what you really want and you will continue your journey.

There is another feeling that is important to talk about at this point in our discussion: loneliness. In our society you can be in the midst of a crowd and still be overwhelmed by loneliness. You can be surrounded by a loving family and friends and still feel alone because you don't believe they really understand who you are. Loneliness can come about as a result of feeling overwhelmed by responsibilities or dissatisfaction with life or by forcing yourself to live up to someone

³⁶ London, Jack, *The Call of the Wild, White Fang, & To Build a Fire*, Random House, New York, 1998, p. 148

else's expectations. I think many people want to become a slave simply because they want someone to love them, to cherish them for who they are.

Whatever the form of loneliness, becoming a slave is not the ultimate solution, an illusion...giving up all control and responsibility and hiding from the outside world, being taken down to your raw self and remade into whatever will make you be valued, this isn't slavery. You first need to face whatever it is that is causing your loneliness and conquer it, coming out of the experience a more confident person and better able to discern if slavery is to be a part of your future.

Books on slavery are often written by Masters and while they certainly have a clear understanding about what slavery involves, that understanding is based on an opposing perspective... that of dominance, i.e., that of having a slave and of being served. Slaves qualified to write about on the subject are busy serving their Masters and would rather do so than spend writing about HOW they serve. So the task is usually left to the Masters and so many important nuances are left out.

When my master Jack Rinella (who did live five years as a slave to Master Lynn) decided to write a book on becoming a slave he encouraged me to consider making some contributions to it in the form of reflections for each chapter. Sometimes these are based on the general topic of the chapter, sometimes on a specific idea in a chapter, and sometimes my comments were only prompted by memories of how that topic has played out in my own relationship. But all of them are insights I offer out of my own experience and observations. I hope you will respect them as such and use them on your journey if they are helpful.

Becoming a Slave: The Theory and Practice of Voluntary Servitude, will be a good companion to your journey. Use it to help you understand the many feelings this journey will bring.

After Reading Activities

Get yourself a loose-leaf notebook or start a word processing document in which you will keep a journal. Use the notebook to write about your first contact with the idea of slavery. Was it in a book? A movie? A friend? How did you feel about it then? How do you feel about it now? Why do you find it attractive? Why are you reading this book? Why do you want to be a slave? These questions can lead to greater understanding of yourself and give you some answers for those master applicants wise enough to ask them of you

What myths and assumptions about slavery do you think you have that might not be based on reality? Can you describe your greatest

obstacle to finding a dominant partner? What assets do you think you bring to such a relationship?

If you meet regularly with like-minded friends, you might want to bring this book to a meeting and share a paragraph or two from this chapter. How do others react to the questions above?

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1.

A Complementary Relationship

In trying to speak in generalities, I know I am going to run headlong into the exceptions, with the inevitable result of someone pointing out an example that doesn't fit. As I've noted before, human beings are far too variable to be classified into watertight compartments.²⁶

When it comes to M/s relationships, appearances can be most deceiving, probably because most people view this relationship through eyes (and with a mind) tainted by the myths of fiction. To the unknowing our lifestyle appears unequal, unfair, and unlivable. In fact, successful M/s relationships are based upon mutual support and the benefits that each partner receives from being in the relationship. Without mutual gratification, this relationship, as any other, will quickly sour and end, at least as a satisfying relationship, if not in reality.

We can also look at this by thinking of our “bottom line.”²⁷ What must you have in a relationship in order to be fulfilled? This question also addresses limits and will be discussed in greater depth as the book develops.

Mutuality isn't the same as equality, so the partners' support of one another may be expressed differently but mutually. The differences between the partners' roles are complementary so that each gives to the other in such a way that each is empowered by and satisfied in those roles. It is important to point out that the word “mutual” means “Having the same relationship each to the other; Directed and received in equal amount.” Therefore in the context of this discussion there can be no such thing as a master/slave relationship in which one partner gives or takes “more” than the other. One can only give as much as the other is willing to receive. One cannot be more of a master, for instance, unless the partner is willing to become more of a slave.

Your search for a partner is actually the search for your complement, that special person whose temperament and vision for their future fits with yours. The characteristic of “fitness” is what allows the relationship to work. It is also the reason that finding one's partner is so difficult. You both must fit, and fitting involves a wide spectrum of characteristics, be they physical, intellectual, social, economic or

26 Townsend, Larry, *The Leatherman's Handbook*, The Traveller's Companion, Inc., New York, 1972.

27 Thanks to Slavette for this addition.

fantastic, meaning that your fantasies are complementary as well.

I hope it's obvious that fantasy plays an important part in one's desire to become a slave. For that reason I called one of the characteristics listed above "fantastic." Fantasy by itself is very often ultimately unattainable. Nevertheless when viewed as part of our imagination, it feeds our creativity, providing gist for a vision toward which we can work and by doing so eventually arrive at a transformation of some part of that fantasy into reality.

In fact, the purpose of this book is to facilitate transformation, that is "an act or instant of transforming." To transform is "to change markedly the form or appearance of; to change the nature, function, or condition of." In short, this is a book about change.

Change is probably the most necessary condition one must embrace in order to create a master/slave relationship. Change, too, is always with us, the natural state of human existence. Every minute of our lives we age, and therefore we change. More specifically we must start with the question of "How do I have to change to be what I want to become?" How will you be different when you are a slave? What actions and decisions will in fact transform you from who you are now to what you seek to become?

Over the more than twenty years that I have been seeking slaves I have seen innumerable instances where resistance to change has been the strongest obstacle to realizing the applicant's goal. This resistance is most often manifest not in speech but in action, or perhaps it might be better said that it is manifest in inaction.

How many readers, I wonder, skipped over the "After Reading Activities" at the end of the introduction? Reading about becoming a slave will not train you to be a slave. You must embrace the transformational process by action. Let me state again that "real slavery and true service are manifest in behavioral outcomes." If you are willing to be trained as a slave, you must be willing to change your actions so that they reflect slavery. You must divest yourself of those things which keep you from your stated goal and acquire those skills and artifacts that will allow you to act as a slave.

In most cases, this is not as serious a step as your fear and doubt would have you believe. We are talking about small, reasonable steps at every step of the journey. Much of this book, in fact, is about those steps. The task is to make yourself ready, prepared for the future about which you now dream.

An important step in creating a successful M/s relationship is to find that part of your fantasy which can be created and to acknowledge that which will never become real, shedding it in some measure from your vision, if not your dream life. For that reason one's search, though

it is sired and fed by fantasy, must be rooted in the possible. What's possible, of course, is incredibly varied. It is possible to find a partner with the wherewithal to fulfill a fantasy for long-term confinement, for instance. Whether or not that is *probable* is another story, but probability must also be taken into account. So possibility must be weighed with probability and the true seeker for a master will do all he or she can to improve the probability of success.

Refine your fantasy into a practical vision about yourself, your partner-to-be, and your future life together. By looking at your M/s relationship in terms of reciprocal characteristics, you can evaluate your fitness for each characteristic and thereby gain an understanding of your future partner's characteristics as well.

There are a large number of attributes we can consider and I am certain that there's no way I can list and explain all of them. In fact, such a list could be self-defeating as none of us has a crystal ball foretelling what the future will hold when it comes to partnerships. The first caveat, then, is to keep your vision flexible and your options open. History is a strong indicator that the person whom you least expect, when you least expect it, will present him or herself as an almost perfect fit. No one is perfect, but "almost" is certainly better than no one.

In all of this, I have to emphasize the necessity of what I call "clicking," an especially important attribute. It is that elusive quality of knowing that the other is just right. The knowing is part intellectual, part emotional, part physical, and generally indescribable. Without reason, though there may be lots of reasons, the other is the one with whom you click -- and you know that all fantasy, reason, and pragmatism will give way for you to accommodate him or her into your life.

What each of my partners have shared is that for various reasons each of them had qualities that made them just right, even if they didn't have the qualities that I was seeking. For that matter, when I met most of them, I wasn't even seeking a relationship. That is certainly the case with Master Lynn, whom I met for a simple scene and ended serving for five years. When we met, I instinctively knew he would make a wonderful partner -- and he did. It was a matter of the right chemistry at the right time.

Authority and Obedience

The primary characteristics in the M/s relationship are the complementary attributes of authority and obedience. Unlike more common relationships where these two factors are relegated under other characteristics such as love, finances, or friendship, the master and slave are wont to structure their lives within these two attributes; the master recognizing, acknowledging, and exercising authority over

his slave who grants him or her that position; likewise the slave pledges, desires, and practices obedience as that which is due to his or her master.

Herein the complementary nature of the relationship is most clearly seen. The master can have no more authority than the slave is willing to grant by the act of his act of submission and the manifestation of his or her obedience. Without obedience, authority is meaningless. Without authority there is no one to obey.

In the final analysis it is the degree to which authority is exercised and obedience given that determines the quality and the depth of the M/s relationship. It's not that other relationships don't have aspects of authority and obedience, as they most certainly do. What is unique about this relationship is the primacy of these two attributes. It's here, of course, that the greatest amount of misinformation abounds. Few, for instance, understand the degree to which authority may be demanded, expected, and expressed, especially when obedience is sought outside of the context of sexual gratification.

Many, on the other hand, think that obedience is only meant as a role-playing game, that authority comes without responsibility, or that the exercise of authority is without restraint. As we'll see in later chapters, all characteristics of human relationships have limits. Such is the case here as well.

There are many other complementary characteristics: domination and service, sadism and masochism, receiving and giving pleasure, control and surrender, and adoration and devotion to name but a few. The importance and energy each couple places on each of these characteristics all play a part in creating and determining the kind of relationship you have.

As we shall see, control and surrender are expressions of authority and obedience. Sadomasochism may or may not be part of the M/s relationship. Both master and slave will have to give and receive, though in different ways.

In considering M/s relationships, start with my tried and true generalization: "Every relationship is defined by the two (or more) people in the relationship." I know that we would all like to have ready-made, one size fits all rules for being master and slave but life just isn't that way. It is the right of every kinky person to decide how they want to live their lives. Everyone, with their partner, creates their unique relationship.

The way some people pontificate you'd think that wasn't the case. Dogmatism has no place in our lifestyle. While we certainly all should heed the words safe, sane, and consensual, even they give us a wide berth for playing and determining what those words mean for

us as individuals.

I purposefully used the word “people” because both tops and bottoms can be dogmatic. Many call themselves master when they control no one, sometimes not even themselves. Even in a scene, they have no authority to move their bottoms to action for any length of time. Fetish play, being a mutually enjoyable activity (we hope!) hardly involves control. In fact it is often the bottom with his infamous safe word who is in control. The top in reality “serves” the bottom’s needs by participating in the fetish.

Like the word slave, the word master refers not to a sexual position or inclination but to one who is in a relationship with a slave. Anyone can be a top. It takes two to make a master.

Dominance and Submission

My dictionary gives me a rather clear place to start when it comes to the word dominance: “The condition or fact of being dominant.” Well, OK, maybe it’s not that clear so let me look down the page for the word dominant: “Exercising the most influence or control; governing; most prominent in position or prevalence.”

This is the essence of the M in M/s. Notice that there is no mention of power or pain. Those aspects will have to be negotiated when you mutually determine how broad the influence is and how much control is exercised. It is really about granting your master or mistress first place, though not necessarily having that relationship with the rest of the folks in the dungeon.

Looking elsewhere in the dictionary we see that submission is “The act of submitting to the power of another; the state of having submitted.” Refining the definition further by looking at the word submit, we find that it means “To yield or surrender (oneself) to the will or authority of another.” Those words are more to my liking and closer to the point of what we expect in M/s.

I think it’s noteworthy to see that while M/s does involve the exchange of power, the exchange is more precisely begun by the submissive, not the dominant. Note that in the definition of the word dominance, the word “most” is a qualifier. The submissive exercises influence and control in the relationship as well. The operative word in the definition of the word submit is surrender. In my experience it is the act of surrender and the degree to which it takes place that creates the D/s relationship. For me, that means that the dominant is not the aggressor so much as he or she is the recipient. Dom(mes) don’t take power. They receive it. This understanding puts the relationship on a very sound basis, one that is entirely consensual.

This line of thinking then brings me to another word I used

a great deal in *Partners In Power, continuum*, that is “A continuous extent, succession, or whole no part of which can be distinguished from neighboring parts except by arbitrary division.” Yes, we would like to have clear-cut distinctions between Masters, Doms, Tops, and Daddies (of any and all genders and orientations) but such is not to be. The continuum stretches from the most demanding dictator to the most permissive top. Your D/s relationship can be strict or easy-going, intense or care-free, temporary or long term, all-the-time (often called 24/7) or only when scheduled. You see, I’m going to retreat to my previous statement: It is up to the two (or more) of you to determine what works for you.

For example, there is a well-know master/slave couple who cause many of us to shake our heads. The slave is loud, aggressive, and appears to the casual observer to be the one in control. Who are we to judge? If they enjoy their relationship (and they certainly do) that is what matters.

In order to clarify the nature of D/s it’s helpful to remember that top and bottom are positions and do NOT necessarily determine dominance or submission. We can too easily fall into a category-trap, labeling what we do with simplistic words that indicate an act without analyzing the act’s intent. Topping, after all, can be a very submissive act and bottoms can be very much in control. That’s one of the reasons that M/s can be so confusing. What you see may not be what is happening.

If we refine our dictionary search further we can turn to the pages where we find master: “A person having control over the action of another or others,” and slave: “One bound in servitude to a person or household as an instrument of labor.” Going a bit further in today’s vocabulary lesson, we find that servitude is “Submission to a master.” As a more intense form of D/s, the master/slave relationship, then, is defined by greater control. Note that it is not simply control but “control over the action of another or others.” The M/s relationship can be best evaluated by the extent to which control is expressed in action. Giving a few orders, which may or may not be actually done, over the Internet is certainly a different degree of control than one has over a slave who lives in one’s home and performs his or her required actions throughout the day, week, month, and year.

I admit to being a writer but for me my D/s has got to involve more than words. Actions speak louder than words in every case and bring greater satisfaction.

In any case, “voluntary servitude” rather than slavery is a more appropriate name to describe our Master/slave relationship, since it is both consensual and service-oriented. Words, though, change only

slowly and I'm not about to introduce my slave as my volunteer servant. It just doesn't have the same erotic ring to it.

What, then, are the characteristics of a healthy M/s relationship? Which attributes do the master and slave share and which are more appropriately the slave's? Responsibility is certainly a shared attribute, as are trustworthiness, security, satisfaction, and empowerment. Let me take one of these at a time.

Responsibility

I once took a two weeks' trip to my ancestral homes in Sicily, so my slave Patrick was going to be on his own. Knowing that, a friend casually asked if I had appointed a guardian master over him for the duration. Later I joked to Patrick about my absence and told him about the question. He then noted that he had made an adult decision to be my slave and was adult enough to take care of himself when I was gone. "Well said," I thought, when he gave me that response.

Because so much information about the master/slave lifestyle deals with kink and sex and has fiction as its source, there is this myth that we live irresponsible lives. In fact, for folks really involved in our lifestyle (as contrasted to those who only dream) nothing could be further from the truth.

Responsibility is the ability to respond. As adults we know how to appropriately respond to various situations, keeping our priorities correctly aligned, and our responses correct (we hope). In that light, there isn't, nor can there be, any abnegation of duty or safety. Sure we're in this for fun, but we recognize that there is a time and place for everything and we keep everything in its place.

David Stein, one of the authors of the Gay Male SM Activists²⁸ preamble that gave rise to Safe, Sane and Consensual (SSC) notes that the expression was "intended to draw lines between SM behavior we wanted to encourage and other behavior we wanted to distance ourselves from."²⁹ To distinguish our behavior from that which is irresponsible and abusive is a burden that lies upon us all; to foster positive, healthy, and enjoyable sexual activity and to discourage the opposite is up to us. (You'll find more on abuse in chapter nine.)

In this regard there are many distinctions that may and should be made. Slaves, for instance, are not children when it comes to their ability to decide correctly. As regards the law, one can never renounce their freedom to choose, nor their obligation to decide rightly. "Because my master told me to" is never an excuse for misbehavior, carelessness,

28 A New York based educational group.

29 Stein, David, "Safe Sane Consensual: The Evolution of a Shibboleth," which can be found on the Internet at "<http://www.lthredge.com/ds/history.htm>."

injury, or the like.

Though fiction feeds our libido and in some ways instructs our imagination, we are still subject to life on this planet, including its legal, moral, social, and physical rules. I am far from being a conformist but that gives me no right to be dangerous, illegal, or immoral. The truest forms of our lifestyles are honest and trustworthy, neither deceitful nor dangerous.

Sure we take risks and play on the edge, but we do so with information and appropriate safeguards. We are risk-aware **and** take steps to minimize injury, disease, and contention. We insure that we are consensual and in control of ourselves and our play, even when we knowingly give that control to another.

Looking at a slave's life, for instance, will most often show a hard-working, conscientious, and caring person, living a life that in

many respects is much like anyone else's. The myth of captivity in the basement or of continuous bondage is just that, with little substance or basis in reality. Slaves generally work outside the home and have substantial responsibilities domestically as well. Patrick, for instance, as per our agreement maintains our home, decides our weekly menu, and makes many daily choices that affect how we both live. He works full-time and is also a partner in an on-line commercial endeavor.

Masters have the responsibilities of chores, employment, and life in general. Just because our stories often take place in the dungeon doesn't mean that the rest of the week doesn't look like anyone else's week. There are appointments to be kept, bills to be paid, and the usual array of necessary chores that are part of most everyone's life. The vast majority of us have to work for a living and have the same problems, concerns, and challenges as any other human on this planet.

I once met an attractive young man at the Eagle, a Leather men's bar in Chicago. During our conversation he told me he was new to Leather and in fact this was the first time he had ventured out in his new kinky attire. Like each and every one of us when we were newbies, he was still feeling his way around our subculture, exploring and experimenting, trying to find out what we were really all about.

In that conversation he indicated that he didn't want his involvement in Leather to interfere with the rest of his life, especially his employment. There was this unstated reluctance to throw away everything he was and did in order to be kinky, as if being kinky meant that he would wear chaps and a harness to work. In due time, of course, he will learn that each and every one of us maintains appropriate priorities and decorum, knowing when, where, and how to act according to truthful, honest, and mutually acceptable norms.

The fact of the matter is that we are human in every situation and living an alternate lifestyle does not diminish our humanity. We are doctors, lawyers, teachers, parents and spouses. We are students, unemployed, laborers, clerks and salespeople. We are young and old, ethnically, religiously, culturally, and racially diverse. When you leave out the kinky aspects of our lives, we fall on the bell curve of humanity in the same way as any group of humans. We spend the largest part of the 168 hour week in the same way as any other people do: we sleep, eat, wash, work, and attend to a myriad of domestic, social, and employment obligations.

The daily drudgery of life has no place in hot fiction and steamy porn. Hence much of our master/slave literature misrepresents our reality. That's not to knock it. Literature is meant to distract, amuse, delight, and give pleasure. In the same way, we look for dungeons, play spaces, and bedrooms to be places for relaxation, pleasure, and renewal. Our goal is, after all, to have fun. We don't want to have the burdens of laundry, dusting, and dishes interfere with a good scene and passionate sex. Happily they need not.

Every once in a while, though, it's good to remind ourselves that our lives are lived on a real planet in a real world and to assure all who seek us out that we are safe, sane, and consensual, that we are part and parcel of humanity's totality.

It's helpful, too, to remind ourselves of our humanity, lest we blame our faults and foibles on the fact of our kinkiness. The pest at our munch is probably a pest at home and at work as well. Those among us who are socially awkward, to put it nicely, in the dungeon are most likely to be the same everywhere else, though they may be more comfortable there than we are having them there. Sure our sexual expressions vary from the norm, whatever that means, but for the most part we are no different than our neighbors, co-workers, and the families that raised us.

Life as an adult brings responsibilities and being in a D/s relationship will not remove them, in spite of what one may wish in their fantasy life.

Trustworthiness

Important as trust is in all relationships between humankind, it takes on a greater importance in our kinky relationships. After all who's going to let themselves be tied up by someone they don't trust?

Trust is "confidence in the ability, reliability, and veracity of a person." In that regard it is easy to see that there are various levels of trust, just as there are degrees of confidence, such as "I think," "Maybe," "Possibly," "I know," "I'm sure," and "I'm certain." The greater the degree

of confidence, that is the more you trust me, the more you will allow me to do something or the more you will believe what I say. Complementing trust is surrender. The more you feel you can trust me, the more deeply you will surrender to me and to the scene or relationship in general.

Trust says as much about ourselves as it does about the person we are trusting. A novice to the scene, whom I'll call Chuck, and I once spent three hours talking about his confusion. Seems he couldn't make up his mind about SM. It was a long time fantasy that he had never fulfilled. He just couldn't decide what to do. Unfortunately, this was not a minor problem. In fact, he couldn't make up his mind in many areas of his life. Should he move to a better neighborhood? Go back to school? Find a better job? And if he finds an answer, how will he know it's the right answer?

So I began talking about trusting yourself. "Isn't it a matter of trusting others, not yourself?" he asked. "Not entirely," I replied. Trusting someone else first depends upon trusting one's own perceptions and conclusions. Confusion sets in not only because we don't trust others, but because we don't trust our own ability to decide who is trustworthy. To find someone to trust, we've first got to have faith in our being able to do so. The part of trust that matters is in oneself, since correctly knowing when and whom to trust is important.

Notice that there is nothing vague about trust. With the use of that trait we are noting our partner's ability, reliability, and veracity. The first, ability, speaks to one's technical proficiency; the second to their commitment; the third to their truthfulness. Each of these qualities, of course, are related. Some folks, for instance, who are relatively unskilled will exaggerate their abilities. Exaggeration implies a lack of truthfulness. We can, for instance, make some kind of a promise, break that promise and endanger whether someone trusts us.

It's not just bottoms who have to trust nor only tops who have to be trustworthy. This quality applies to both equally. Bottoms, after all, can rip off a top --- I once had a slave applicant talk me into buying him an expensive airplane ticket to Chicago. In the final analysis he really wanted a ticket to travel to IML, not to my dungeon. In less expensive scenarios, tops have to trust that their bottoms will give good feedback about a scene, both during and after it. I have to trust that my slave applicant is really serious in his negotiations with me. He, too, has to know that I am telling the truth.

Becoming trustworthy, like most of life, is a process. Trusting is the same. In both cases, trust must be earned. I know some masters demand it before it's deserved, but it's my humble (OK, not so humble) opinion that these folks are the last ones we should trust. They are using bravado when trustworthiness is necessary. It is trust that proves

itself that increases trust and builds confidence in the other.

There is a risk in all of this. I can only note that if one doesn't take calculated risks then there can never be any progress. It is as simple as nothing ventured, nothing gained. On the other hand, by moving slowly, risk can be limited and the potential for failure significantly reduced. Please note, though, that moving slowly is very different than not moving. Taking a calculated risk is different than taking no risk at all.

How do we decide that we can trust someone? Experience is certainly the best teacher. By living, risking, trying, trusting, and failing, we learn to trust, both ourselves and our applicants. Successful trust, of course, builds more trust. On the other hand it is often the case that even the smallest experiences of untrustworthiness can imperil the trust that took weeks, months, or years to build.

Having experience with a person's trustworthiness builds more trust. It is as simple as that. For that reason I give small, noncommittal tasks to applicants, testing them to see if they can do what I ask. If they agree and don't fulfill, that's a sure sign of their un-trustworthiness. It may not end the conversation, but I will certainly challenge their ability to follow directions and gain my trust.

So I ask a slave applicant to send me a picture. When I get the picture I know that there is the beginning of a relationship. Later I may ask him to find out the fare and schedule for an airplane ticket to visit me. When he responds with an answer promptly, my trust in him increases.

Experience, happily, isn't the only way that trust can be earned. Many of us are trusted simply on our reputations -- an excellent reason to take care that our reputations never become tarnished. Even association can make or break trust. Patrick, for instance, almost ignored my ad searching for a slave, since he held the magazine in which he read it in such low esteem. Fortunately my other writings spoke more loudly in my favor.

References, too, can help you to both gain someone's trust and to demonstrate their trustworthiness. It is a shame that we don't use references, and check them, as much as we once did. To many people, getting references seems nearly impossible but that is most likely because they have an exaggerated idea of what it means or haven't made the effort to have experiences with those who can later serve as references. A reference is simply one who can vouch for stated facts about you, perhaps someone who has seen you flog another or who has flogged you. We are only looking for one or two individuals who can affirm that you are who you say you are and that you are a safe individual. It need not even be someone in the scene, though a

fellow player is probably to be preferred. Anyone who knows you and will comment on your character will do. That is at least a start and if they know your character from experience in the scene, that's all the better.

Observation is another way to determine someone's trustworthiness. By observation we can note their abilities. We can see whether or not they keep their promises. Are they, for instance, prompt in doing what they say they will do? Can you rely on them in the small things as well as the large? Have you noted their truthfulness, their open-ness, and their manners? How free are they with information about themselves, their experiences, and their past relationships? People who have something to hide are usually not to be trusted, even if they reveal their secrets to you. After all, if they are cheating on their wives, they'll probably not hesitate to cheat on you. If they can rationalize away a white lie, they'll find reasons to excuse their black ones too. Even those who may have integrity in one part of the life can be dishonest in other areas, such as the accountant who keeps books honestly but cheats on his wife.

I would add that the use of a "screen name" is not inappropriate as it provides a method of protecting one's privacy. Once a real dialogue is begun, though, it is probably best if real names be revealed, with the clear understanding that they not be misused.

That's not to say that a trustworthy person tells all. Privacy and discretion are valuable. There is a difference between privacy and secretiveness. Trusting, after all, implies mutual trust. The guideline here is that each partner should look for and give the amount of trust that is appropriate to the relationship and its longevity and seriousness. A one-scene partner needs much less information than one whom I am asking to move in with me. As I wrote earlier, there are levels of trust and we need only look for that level which is appropriate to the stage or intensity in which our relationship finds itself.

Sometimes, of course, we have to extend a little trust with the hope that it we will not be taken advantage of because we have done so. We also have to take ability into account here, as a person may be trustworthy yet over-estimate their own abilities to perform that which we trust them to do. Others ought not to push their trust in us past our abilities either.

Trust grows and it is the task of both participants to nourish it. It continues to grow, even after a relationship is mature. Likewise trust demands life-long care, lest the time come when our trust is diminished by the small darts of daily living.

Security

Like trust, the ability to inspire security is a necessary quality in M/s relationships. It is only by feeling secure that we can reach the levels of intimacy that are so necessary to a happy life. Rate, therefore, how secure your applicant (whether they be seeking slavery or mastery) makes you feel and make real efforts to increase their sense of security with you.

Though this sense of security is probably more obviously a bottom's requirement, it is not one-sided. Both partners need to make the other feel secure in what is happening, be it in a scene or in a relationship. For that reason threats, even when made in jest, are dangerous because they can reduce one's feeling of security. Look for ways to make your applicant or your partner feel more secure, not less. It is only then that you will help him or her relax and enjoy what you are sharing.

Security, of course, is another word for safety. Does your applicant make you feel safe by his or her actions or do they give you a sense of apprehension or misgiving? If your correspondence with a person doesn't make you feel safe, then you need to seriously consider ending the dialogue. Likewise you need to be sure that your actions make your applicant feel safe and secure as well.

Again this advice is sometimes not practiced. There is this myth that masters ought to keep their applicants guessing, that insecurity on the slave's part increases their ability to control. That couldn't be further from reality. Dominants who hide, deceive, or threaten in order to get what they want are probably not capable of entering into successful, satisfying M/s relationships.

Satisfaction

We probably don't give satisfaction the consideration it deserves. No one enters or stays in a relationship unless it satisfies. OK, many people seem to stay in apparently unsatisfactory relationships for many reasons but that is no reason to ignore the need for mutually beneficial relationships. Applicants on both sides of the dynamic need to find ways and have the willingness to satisfy their partners and enjoy doing so. Of course how each is satisfied may be entirely different but that each one knows and enjoys the benefits of the relationship remains important.

Some might comment that it is the slave who must satisfy the master, as is certainly the case. Doing so, on the other hand, in no way diminishes the fact that the slave must experience satisfaction in the relationship as well. An unsatisfied slave will quickly find ways to end the relationship, even if ending it is a subconscious motive.

Since satisfaction is an internal feeling, only you can define what

satisfies you. As you seek a partner, review your feelings about time spent with them, even if it's in a chat room or via email. Does interacting with them make you feel good when it's over? Are you glad to have spent time sharing with them? Once you meet in real time, is that time well spent, enjoyable, and fulfilling? Remember you're doing this for your mutual satisfaction so be sure you get what you are seeking.

Empowerment

As is true of all healthy relationships, masters and their slaves help each to attain their goals, be they personal, career, financial, etc. It is certainly the duty of the master to lead his or her slave into the fullness of their potential. What is less known, but just as important, is that it falls to the slave to empower their master to greatness as well.

For example, if you believe that I contribute anything to the BDSM community at large by my writing or my public speaking, let me remind you that I am empowered to do so by the service provided me, day in and day out, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, twelve months a year, by my faithful slave Patrick.

His care for my health, home, and happiness leaves me free to write, to travel, and to speak. I live, after all, as much off his income as mine. My health insurance is provided by his employer, not mine. I would be loathe to be away from home as much as I am, in service to kinky folks across the continent, if there weren't someone at home keeping the fires burning, so to speak, until I return. Because of his attention to cooking, cleaning, laundering, and the like, I am free to spend time writing, traveling and speaking. I have no cares when it comes to a welcoming meal upon my return. When I leave I know that the dirty clothes from the last trip will be clean and ready for my next one.

I have similar responsibilities. I must know my slave and know wherein lies his potential and help him achieve it. Over the years, for instance, I have challenged him to find a more satisfactory job. I have encouraged him to learn (and taught him some of it) web design. I have supported and applauded his desire to become active in one of our local leather clubs. For my part, he is free of the concerns of bill-paying.

There is, of course, more to the master/slave relationship than I have written of here. You will find that there is caring, listening, loving, and sharing, just as in any other healthy relationship. Don't get so caught up in the kink of the relationship that you ignore the very important human sides that each of you share.

Complementary Qualities

Having discussed some of the qualities that masters and slaves

share, I can now turn (albeit briefly) to those that are complementary, such as control and surrender, sadism and masochism, and initiative and response. These will also be covered more fully in later chapters.

Much like authority and obedience, the characteristics of control and surrender lend a practical dimension to the M/s relationship. In fact, the extent of control and the depth of surrender go far to express the quality of the relationship. Masters must be able to control themselves and exercise their control over their slave freely, though the means and extent of the actual control is a highly individualistic choice. Surrender, meanwhile, demonstrates the slave's trust and commitment to his or her master. Not unexpectedly, the degree of surrender determines a great deal in the M/s relationship. The fuller the surrender the more intimate, exciting, and meaningful the relationship can be. Though surrender is the slave's gift, it behooves every master to encourage it, especially by being trustworthy.

We encourage surrender by letting it be known that we seek it, by noting it with gratitude, and by rewarding it. We also encourage it by our positive, caring, and accepting attitude of it and especially by never abusing it.

Many people assume that M/s relationships are sadomasochistic. That assumption is exactly the kind that one ought not to make, as SM need not be part of the M/s dynamic at all. Statistically (where's Mr. Gallup when you need him?) it is likely that SM does play a role between many, if not most, masters and their slaves. I'm just noting that it need not be so. If it is present it is often an expression of control and surrender. It also may very simply be a fun way for the M/s couple to play.

We most likely think of initiative as being part of the master's role and that response belongs to the slave. In general that is true, though we have to keep in mind that initiative on the part of the slave, when it is in tune with the master's desires, may be perfectly acceptable. Likewise the master had better be responsive to the slave's needs, or the slave will look elsewhere to have those needs met. These topics will be further covered in the chapters to come.

Patrick Reflects: A Yin-Yang Sort of Thing

I've always admired the concept of harmony and balance represented in the circular symbol of the yin and the yang. At their best master/slave relationships develop an interconnectedness that transcend the physical or emotional. They're about redefining your life because another exists. You breathe because they do. This doesn't happen overnight and you only recognize that it has become so after it has become a routine part of who you are. It's very much like the

Chinese philosophy of interacting opposites, yin-yang, each of which has the seed of the other, each exists because the other does, each makes the other possible.

This comes about when what has driven you both to this relationship stems from the same expectations. We develop those long before we find a master but often don't consider what they are until after the relationship has begun. While a relationship can overcome different expectations doing so is not easy, and a healthy relationship can't exist if any of those involved feel cheated out of what they really wanted.

It is far better to explore your expectations before hand so that you are more familiar with what they are. Then they can act as a guide in your search. Because of the uniqueness of each relationship, expectations will vary and will change in importance as the relationship develops but they have to be acknowledged before they can change.

I've seen it occur many times. A slave finds that things are not how they expected them to be. The way you are dominated makes it difficult to breathe. The authority is too strict or too lenient. Responsibility isn't taken or given. Trust seems to have unequal values. A sense of security is not there. You thought there'd be more bondage or you expected more of a social life than you have. A master/slave relationship won't be an egalitarian relationship but it can be a fulfilling one if expectations are satisfied. Having a clear sense of your expectations will allow you to communicate them and have them addressed in positive and satisfying ways.

When I applied to be Sir's slave it was only after I had a clear sense of what I wanted out of the relationship. There were many things I didn't consider: I hadn't considered the possibility of other slaves being in the relationship or for that matter that my master would have a lover or a master of his own. I hadn't considered how public the relationship would be or how often visitors would come and go. All of these were things I faced early on. But I had considered what would be important to me, and when faced with these and other situations I was easily able to adapt because the things I had held as important were also part of the experience.

We clicked right off, but this was, in part, that I had spent a lot of time preparing myself for this change in my life and also because Sir was somewhat of a known quantity to me. I'd read his book, *The Master's Manual*, and the columns he wrote for *Drummer* and *International Leatherman*. Having done so gave me clues to his style of dominance. His reputation in the leather community ensured a certain trustworthiness and responsibility.

Beyond the initial chemistry we clearly enjoyed the fact that we

were able to effectively communicate what we felt we wanted and this allowed us to quickly strip away the unimportant and work on those things about which we needed to reach agreement. Does it work this way for everyone? No, generally not, but the approach is sound and if you can keep from getting lost in the fantasy of slavery you can focus on the things that will lay the foundation for a similar confidence.

Our lifestyle is a puzzle to the outsider. They don't understand what it is that makes it interesting and satisfying for us and it isn't necessary that they do. Ultimately the people we can count on will move beyond the puzzle and tag it in a way with which they can deal. In any case their acceptance is far more important than their understanding. This acceptance will come once they see the magic of your dance and the sense of fulfillment it brings to both of you.

After Reading Activities

Using your journal, write a 1,000 (or more) word essay describing your future life as a slave. What do you do? Where do you live? What do you say? What is required of you? How does it feel? Let your imagination go wild. Make sure you save what you have written for later.

Write your reflections on the questions found at the beginning of this chapter: How do I have to change to be what I want to become? How will you be different when you are a slave? What actions and decisions will in fact transform you from who you are now to what you seek to become?

Use your journal to write the names, email addresses, and phone numbers of possible references. Contact them for permission to use them as such. Assure them of your discretion.

If you don't have any references, what can you do to create (find) them? Ask people at your next munch, club meeting, or party what they do about referencing. Use their answers to develop a list as to how you will develop references for yourself.

Pretend that you have received an email from an applicant who says that he has felt betrayed by people he has met on-line and would like some assurances that you are a trustworthy person. Write a letter in your journal that you think will allay his fears by proving that you are trustworthy. Show it to a friend and ask for comments.

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