

Mixing Business with Leather

Across from me in a booth at Sizzle Pie is my friend, the paradox. Ginger Millay is a gorgeous young woman living in New York City. She is a fantastic writer, a loyal friend and a fabulous femme bisexual. She is also a professional dominatrix.

"Forgive me for my ignorance of this, but how does that work?" I ask her between bites of pizza.

Ginger explains: She, like many pro-dommes (as those within the industry prefer to call themselves), works for a private dungeon and has for quite some time. The dominatrixes in the employ of the dungeon have regular schedules, work spaces, even bodyguards. Some join unions in larger cities, in order to get sick days and health insurance.

"So it's fundamentally like any other job? Like the way hairdressers have stations at a salon?"

"Exactly," she replies, smiling demurely. "Except that our stations have whips."

"What do you do for your clients? Do you have sex with them?"

"No sex at all. Ever." Ginger is surprisingly emphatic, uncrossing her legs and setting both leather boots down on the cement floor. "A pro-domme is not a prostitute. I have sex because I enjoy sex. I do *not* have sex for money, and I do *not* have sex with my clients."

"Okay... but what do you do, then?"



remember to breathe

BY NICK MATTOS

"The dungeon's a fascinating laboratory for learning about the human mind, really."

"It depends. The exchange always starts out pretty straightforward: The client and I meet up, chat for a while about what it is that he wants to explore. For some guys, that's really all they want, just to talk—intellectual intercourse. In New York, a dominatrix is cheaper than a therapist!" she laughs.

"However, after we establish boundaries, I'm in charge." Her eyes meet mine intently. "I may be cheaper than a therapist, but we're very much alike in that we deal in psychology. A client comes to me because he wants me to control him, through pain and fear and coy tricks, but most of all through his own psychological makeup. The dungeon's a fascinating laboratory for learning about the human mind, really."

The Normal comes on the speakers. "Warm Leatherette," I think, *quite apropos*. I lean forward, intrigued. "What are some of the tools of your trade?"

"Well, many are the things that people think

of when they think of dominatrixes: whips, restraints, crazy-tall high heels. Other things are more obscure, like the medical equipment we use for doctor scenes—which are surprisingly popular—or the Wartenberg Wheel..."

"What the hell is that?" I ask. The corners of Ginger's red lips curl upward as she reaches down for her purse, pulls out a black velvet jewelry case, hands it to me. I snap the box open and gasp: a stainless silver wheel with evenly spaced needles sticking out like flower petals, attached to an elegantly long handle.

"Give me your wrist," Ginger states firmly. I look down to see my palm up on the table, my wrist exposed.

"Damn, you're good at that," I comment amusedly.

"I'm no amateur-domme," she laughs. I close my eyes as she brings the wheel to my wrist, feel a line of needle pricks going up the length of my arm slowly. The sensation is somewhere between an acupuncture needle and a rush of cold air against my skin, and a shiver runs the length of my spine in response.

"Well, I did not expect to experience an S&M sex toy when I walked into Sizzle Pie with you this evening!" I laugh, opening my

eyes. "So do you carry around the wheel in the case people ask you about your work?"

"Well, not exactly—but that's a great idea!" Ginger laughs.

"I'm interested: What *do* people say about it when you tell them about your work?"

"At a party once a man asked me what I did, and when I replied that I'm a dominatrix his eyes got wide, and he sputtered, 'You actually tell people that?'" she laughs.

"His response unsettled me. I started thinking: What if he's right? What if this is something I should be ashamed of?" She sets down her beer. "What I realized later, though, is that I am *very* proud of being a dominatrix. I mean, I make money doing something that doesn't leave me feeling demeaned or disempowered—and it's always an interesting day at work. I learn a huge amount firsthand about what makes people tick." Ginger is radiant, aglow with joy and personal power, the brightest thing in the dark pizza place on this Saturday night. "I give people the chance to find out where the line between pain and pleasure disappears—and pay my rent, too. What the fuck is there not to be proud of?"

I smile widely at Ginger. "Hell, yes!" I say, proud for my friend in her empowerment, and take another slice of pizza. "So, what else you have in that purse of yours?"

NICK MATTOS loves his friend but won't be buying a Wartenberg Wheel anytime soon. Reach him at nickmattos@justout.com. Read Ginger Millay's adventures at GingerMillay.com.



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