

I inflict pain for a living

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Mistress Paige is strict about conduct in the dungeon she shares with another dominatrix in Joburg's northern suburbs.
Pictures: Jennifer Bruce

She has a degree in marketing, lives with a kind man and loves reading and her dogs. But Paige goes to work in a 'dungeon'. She tells Noor-Jehan Yoro Badat how she became a dominatrix.

Wearing thigh-high boots and a long black coat, Paige* greets us warmly as we arrive in the courtyard of a home in a gated neighbourhood in Joburg's northern suburbs.

A striking woman, she leads us through the cosy, femininely furnished house and then up the stairs into a room lit only by a few spotlights.

When our eyes adjust to the gloom, we see rows of canes, paddles, flogging tools and a multitude of restraints lining the walls. Studded leather masks are displayed on mannequin heads on shelves. Chains, hooks and hoisting tools hang from the ceiling. A corner has benches and chairs intended for sexual torture.

It's filled with every imaginable tool for BDSM (Bondage and Discipline, Sadism and Masochism) and fetish scenes. "This is the dungeon," says ["Mistress Paige", 38, removing her coat to reveal a titillating pleather outfit.



Paige says that she has learnt to compartmentalise her life. She leaves the dominatrix persona at work. At home, she looks after her five dogs, reads, paints and sews. Picture: Jennifer Bruce

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It is here that she whips, humiliates and sexually tortures men, some of whom are CEOs, MDs, general managers and top professionals. Her clients, she says, are “not plumbers or mechanics”.

“What we do is a bit of a grey area. It’s not prostitution, but it is in the sex industry. And we keep it private and discreet,” she says.

Before she became a dominatrix in 2005, Paige consulted in fields such as event management and marketing. She has a Bachelor Degree in Strategic Marketing and Business Administration from the Institute of Marketing Management and also holds qualifications in public relations, event management and graphic design.

But she began to find the seven-days-a week work stressful – and unexciting, and wanted to do something fun.

By chance, through family friends, she met a dominatrix called Mistress Di, who was to become her mentor. She decided to take a risk and ask Di for a job.

Seven years later, she’s still relishing her role. “It’s addictive,” she says. “You get a rush of endorphins.”

Her first year in training as a dominatrix was daunting, but her clients were keen to guide her. She learnt to leave her emotions outside the dungeon. Her clients told her they didn’t want her pity or concern; they wanted her to cane them harder. They showed her the ropes in bondage, chastisement and fetish play.

No sex or oral sex ever occurred. The only touching allowed was when clients with a foot fetish were permitted to lick or suck her boots, or when she placed them in restraints or torture devices.

Some clients had odd requests that hardly seem sexual. One liked only to watch her chain-smoking for an hour. One Indian client wanted to be verbally berated with racial slurs. A few wanted to be paraded in women’s clothing.

The more she learnt of her clients’ secret desires, the better Paige became at her job. She now has a regular clientele – aged 20 to 60 – whom she sees weekly or fortnightly. Most are white. A few are international clients who fly in to see her.

Women have also come to see her for sessions in “bondage, nipple and genital torture, anal torture and corporal punishment”, says Paige.

“Very few came on their own, so in 90 percent of the sessions their other half sat in on the sessions as a voyeur.”

A few wives have sent their husbands to Paige, because they can’t or won’t “hurt the one I love”.

“So they send them to me because they know there’s no sex involved, and no emotional attachment.”

On a busy day, Paige can have 10 appointments. She charges R700 to R1 500 an hour, depending on the clients. Regulars get better rates. Overseas clients are charged from R1 500 to R2 000 a session.

“When they walk out of that door, they must leave having had a good time, relaxed and stress-free,” she says.

Her fees may seem easy money to the uninitiated, but Paige says it takes a special breed to be a mistress, and to intuit and meet the fantasies of others. “The secrecy, the anticipation and having a session with somebody who understands them is exciting.”

Occasionally, she will run into a client at a restaurant or a shopping mall. “If they’re alone, they come up for a chat. But if they’re with wives or colleagues, we ignore each other,” she says.

Paige was married when she first became a dominatrix, but the job took a toll. She found it difficult to keep her work and personal life separate.

Her husband would bear the brunt of a bad day at work. “It got so bad that sex with him became an issue for me. I’d played with penises all day and didn’t want to come home to play with another.”

They also grew apart intellectually, says Paige.

Then she broke a cardinal rule of a dominatrix – she became involved with one of her regulars, Craig*, and divorced her husband of 19 years to live with him.

Craig wasn’t her usual type – he’s short, soft around the middle and “gentlemanly”, not tall, dark and dangerous.

He has a fetish for stockings and suspenders, vintage corsetry and girdles, high heels and beautiful lingerie.

He thinks it may have been triggered when, while writing end-of-year exams at the age of 14, a teacher took off her shoes so she wouldn't make a noise with her heels. As she passed him, he looked down to see her feet encased in nylon.

"I knew at the time she was wearing pantyhose and not stockings, but those red painted toe nails peeping through the nylon drove me mad," reveals Craig.

"From then on, I spent my pocket money buying packets of pantyhose at the local café down the road."

Craig says he hadn't had much success with previous doms, who seemed more interested in taking his money than trying to fathom his needs.

"As I wasn't quite sure myself what I wanted, they didn't seem that interested in helping me find that 'thing' that would get me going," he says. He came across Mistress Di's website and plucked up the courage to make an appointment. He saw Paige, and was enthralled by her. She put him at ease. Every session was exciting and different. She was very reassuring when he wanted to try something different. For two years, she helped to broaden his horizons, never judging him. He felt safe in her hands.

"I was falling hook, line and sinker for this woman," says Craig.

The feeling was becoming mutual. "I told him that if he lost weight I'd shag him," says Paige with a cheeky grin.

Craig began to work out and lost weight. He asked her what she would give him for good effort. She replied: "Dinner and a movie." It was the best date, and day, of his life, he says.

They've been together now for seven years. Her job doesn't faze him at all.

"I find it quite intriguing to find out what others are interested in and what their kinks are," he says, "but we discuss her work on the most superficial level. She prefers to leave it at the dungeon."

Paige says Craig is different from other men. "He's not obsessed with his genitals," which she finds refreshing.

She likes that they both enjoy solitude. She also likes their differences. She likes to read, he doesn't. She has a "mother earth" type personality, he has a more scientific bent. He cooks, she hates the kitchen.

And Craig finds Paige's eccentricities endearing. He likes that she stays in her pyjamas all day, gardens in fluffy slippers, plays hide-and-seek with her dogs, and dances naked under the moon. He enjoys her free spirit and flower child quality. He likes that she listens to music at full tilt in the car or at home, and that she fills their house with artwork, and that it's a warm and loving place.

"Paige is loyal to a fault, exceptionally loving, passionate and the very best partner a man can have," says Craig.

And Craig gets his fetish met at home, says Paige with a smile. He also buys all her high heels, stockings and lingerie.

"I can literally read a book and leave him to play with my feet which I love. And if we're feeling really frisky, it can lead to great sex," says Paige. For them, it's a match made in heaven.

At the end of the year, Paige intends to go into semi-retirement. She'll keep her regulars, but newcomers will have to pay an exorbitant fee.

* Real names not used.

Comment Guidelines

Misress Justine Cross - Los Angeles Dominatrix, wrote

08:00pm on 22 November 2011

Fascinating article. I'm happy to a non-sensationalized article about the valid work a dominatrix does and also that she has a "normal" life at home. Thanks! I've been to South Africa, but only to Capetown, perhaps next I will visit Joburg.

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