

City Press

Lifestyle

Whipped by a dominatrix

[Natasha Joseph @City_Press](#) 9 February 2014 10:00



City Press news editor Natasha Joseph gets up close and personal with Mistress Paige in her suburban dungeon. Picture: Elizabeth Sejake/City Press

50 Shades of Grey brought spanking out of the shadows and made 'bondage' a buzz word. Natasha Joseph meets a dominatrix who thanks author EL James every day for the marketing boost.

Mistress Paige is telling us a love story. It involves a couple who walked past her stand at Sexpo, then walked past again, then walked past one more time.

Eventually, they walked into the area Paige and her colleagues had adorned with whips, chains, canes, leather cuffs, paddles and a variety of other toys designed to bring bondage into your bedroom.

When they finally plucked up the courage to approach her, they said their marriage was on the rocks and they were headed for divorce court. But then they got talking as they wove past Different Strokes' stand and realised they had something important in common: he wanted to be caned like a naughty schoolboy and she wanted to cane him. Two months later, they emailed Paige and thanked her for saving their marriage.

It's a bit edgy for a pre-Valentine's Day tale, but Mistress Paige, a dominatrix, is not most people.

She's telling the story in a dungeon whose contents are worth R2 million. They include a "bondage table" (complete with a hole through which a male client can "put his jingly-janglies" so Paige can access them with her extremely long nails).

There are also contraptions bolted to the ceiling that she can use for suspension – tying up and hanging a client – and a range of leather masks, paddles, canes and hairbrushes.

Her "dungeon" is the topmost room in a neat, overdecorated home in a facebrick complex in Sandton.

Paige describes herself as "40 and f***ing fabulous". Her shiny black shoes rest atop heels so high, I'm getting vertigo just looking at them. A leather corset and tight black skirt complete the outfit.

Paige's hair is actually a wig ("I'm bald under this. All my hair fell out 12 years ago.") Predictably perhaps, her wig is sleek and black. Her eyes are a piercing blue. She's of average height without the heels, but has such a large presence she may as well be two metres tall.

And presence is crucial. You can't be a professional dominatrix if you slouch or hunch.

You also can't just get into the business for money, no matter how good it is. When Paige was still taking on new clients, she worked up to 14 hours a day, six days a week and charged R1 500 an hour.

It's not easy money

At the end of a 14-hour day, much of it spent doing serious physical activity, she was emotionally and physically exhausted.

The money attracts many young women who think they have what it takes to be pro doms, particularly "former hookers and girls who've worked in massage parlours". They don't last.

Paige's presence got her well-shod foot in the door eight years ago when she approached the dungeon (and house's) owner, Mistress Di, after leaving a "stressful and draining" corporate marketing job.

Education is also crucial.

"My clients are captains of industry. CEOs, bankers, politicians, men who work for the UN. You have to be able to talk to these men on a world level, and be smart enough to get into someone's head fast."

Paige is not a prostitute. She does not have sex with her clients. They are not allowed to touch her "unless they're worshipping my feet".

"A dominatrix is a facilitator for others' fantasies," she says.

Clients want to be punished

They want to be whipped, caned, chained up, stood on, kicked, slapped with an open hand, dressed up in women's clothing, ordered to stand in the corner or told to make Mistress Paige a cup of tea and prepare her a sandwich.

They want to be healed, too. She is, in some ways, a psychologist – although armed with a whip rather than a pen and notepad. Many clients come to her after they've tried therapy and psychiatric drugs. One client's therapist ordered him to continue seeing Paige regularly because she's good for him.

Men cry in her dungeon. Their stress melts away. One man yells so loudly when he's being tortured – she describes a scenario involving her spike heel that isn't fit for a family newspaper – that his screams can be heard downstairs, echoing through bright rooms filled with overstuffed pillows.

This is dangerous stuff, and it happens in a strange, grey area.

Mistress Paige is semiretired now and concentrates on Different Strokes, but when she was still taking on new clients, prospective clients would fill in a nine-page form before she'd even consider taking them on. There, they outlined their fantasies, their experiences, their limits – and their medical conditions.

That done, an appointment is scheduled at her convenience, never theirs. The game begins before they even walk through the dungeon's door.

She has learnt to spot the chancers, the weirdos and the downright creepy. She also knows exactly how to keep an eye on the wellbeing of her clients.

Clients use a prearranged safe word (like "Mercy") and Paige keeps an eye on their breathing, the pulse trembling in their neck, and checks that their skin isn't worryingly clammy.

From terrifying to soothing

If they struggle, she calls a time out and they talk through what's wrong. She says she can switch easily between caring and soothing – and downright terrifying if the occasional glint in her eye and slightly arched eyebrow is anything to go by.

Of course, that's part of what her clients are paying for: "They want you to be the bitch."

Bitch she can be.

Photographer Elizabeth Sejake wants to take pictures of her in action. I'm the model.

"You can tie me up," I say, my sneakers hitting the floor with a squeak, "but please don't hit me."

Within two minutes, I'm wearing leather glove-cuffs and am hooked up to a metal pole. Mistress Paige is holding a flogger: "What you might call a cat-o'-nine-tails." She mock-flogs me for a minute, then decides to prove that she has "a wicked right arm".

She does indeed.

Before we leave, she runs a piece of sandpaper down my arm to illustrate a point about how household items can be incorporated into your bedroom bondage play.

She refers to EL James' hit trilogy as "50 Shades of kak". But the books have made her work – particularly the training she does as part of Different Strokes, for couples keen to try something new – a lot easier.