

Entering and Exiting – On Your Own Terms

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How does one exit the sex industry after a decade as a Mistress? Rather easily, actually, as I went from Pro-Dom to Pro-Fessor in less than a month. But I need to digress for a moment.

Before emerging as Mistress J on 27 February 1998, I was a lecturer at the University of Waikato in New Zealand. My Ph. D. is in adult education and I convinced the head of the Department that studying the sex industry from that perspective would be a great research focus. Eventually my study narrowed to 'How women learn to work safely in the industry', looking specifically at peer education, mentoring and apprenticeships. The perk about my research was that it got me off campus. And, believe me, hanging out with the hookers is a hell of a lot more fun than going to the faculty club.

During this time at the university, I met literally hundreds of sex workers in various categories of the industry – massage parlours, brothels, private workers, strippers and dominatrices. As well as New Zealand I also did field research in Thailand, Vietnam, Fiji and the Philippines.

The turning point was when I interviewed Mistress Margaret, a Dominatrix in Auckland. She invited me to help with a session in her dungeon: it was as though I'd come home. That I'd found my vocation. And it is a story that turned into a book – *Private Theatre: Personal observations and revelations of a dominatrix*. So, at 45, I resigned from the university, did a dungeon apprenticeship and spent the next ten years declaring that it was the best career choice I'd ever made.

The dungeon was my ticket. It gave me the freedom, the income and the interesting people that I craved. There is nothing like a collection of nubile young slaves drooling at your feet – and paying for it – to help you avoid a mid-life crisis.

Ten years on, as is my nature, I decided that it was time to start another chapter in the book of life. So on 15 November 2008 I announced, 'I'm moving to Casablanca in six weeks.' It was a *fait accompli* declaration. Why Morocco? I'd never been there, didn't know anyone and didn't speak the language. It would be a challenge.

Some people thought I was 'brave.' Not really. There is a thin line between that and sheer stupidity and I waffle back and forth across it with regularity. A few friends noticed I was restless of late and weren't surprised. And then there were those who shook their heads and quietly wondered if I had taken leave of the few senses I may have had.

About the time I decided to leave, signs of the economic recession had started to appear. My knowledge of finances can best be described as 'overwhelming ignorance'. Quite a few of my clients were merchant bankers, stock brokers and financial advisors so I started quizzing them about it. And, let's face it, when a guy is strung up on a St. Andrew's Cross with weights dangling from his testicles and his nipples being twisted, the last thing he is going to do is lie to you. Anyway, when I realised that *they* really didn't know much more about the recession than *I* did, I became concerned. Very concerned.

Even though I have the financial acumen of a three year old, it didn't take much to figure out that inner-city living with high overheads and an income that is based on discretionary spending isn't the best financial position to be in.

When I started working, Mistress Margaret and I often used to discuss our 'best-before' dates. I never knew exactly what the age was going to be, but it was going to be exiting on a high and on my own term. One only has to look at the politicians who hang around for too long to be inspired to leave at the appropriate time. Besides, I'm a control freak and 'decision by indecision' has never been a problem for me. And a 'Decade of Domination' has a nice ring to it.

How could I turn the recession situation around to my advantage? So many of my pretty boy middle-management clients were being made redundant. And they had expensive wives, kids in private schools, a mortgage and a couple of vehicles to support. It made me glad I forgot to get married, have children or save any money.

In preparation for my move, I gave my art work to friends, sold my materials possession – and let's face it, I didn't have much of an emotional attachment to my filing cabinets – shipped 20 kg to Canada and send my research materials to the archives at Flinger's University. A friend in Brisbane bought my dungeon as a complete package so I know it has gone to a good home where it will be well used.

I bought a one-way ticket to Casablanca and left Sydney with two suitcases, a carry on and a computer bag.

During my academic research one of the problems sex workers identified was exiting the industry. How do you account for your time? What qualifications do you have? Who are your referees? It was time to put my theories to the test, to live my politics.

Shortly after landing in Casablanca I got a local SIM card for my phone, hooked up to the internet, had business cards printed and found a place to live. Moroccans are exceedingly generous so I had a lot of help in that regard. In downsizing and simplifying, all I wanted was a studio apartment with a small kitchen and an attached bathroom. And that is exactly what I have. Compact, sunny and low maintenance. It is on the third floor and I can stand at the window and look down on the soap opera of Moroccan life that plays out every day on the street below me. A perfect perch for a voyeur.

Once settled, I started looking for work. Before leaving Sydney, I organised my referees, in case anyone wanted to check on my work history. That was covered with a supreme court judge (a legitimate editing contract), a senior academic (who knows about Mistress J) and a psychologist (who tells his clients that the more ethical person he knows works in the sex industry).

As I evolved as a Dominatrix, I also became the Headmistress of the Domina Reform School and set up Domina Books. And I also did non-industry work such as editing, supervising students and translating bureaucratic jargon into understandable English. To emphasise that side of my life www.j-hanson.com was set up. Written in a flippancy tone, it served my 'public' purpose very well. And, in Morocco, having my own web site practically makes me a rock star.

The transition from Pro-Dom to Pro-Fessor was seamless. As I used to tell my clients who wanted to be caned, but not have any marks, 'Have a cover story ready and nobody will ever ask you.' Within a month I started working at an international school that targets the corporate market. Curiously the clients I see as a Pro-Fessor are of the same social strata as the ones I saw as a Pro-Dom. Technically I'm a sub-contractor to the institution so I intend on seeing private English students and teaching effective writing for Business English. The web site, the cards and the casual references to work I've done made it all so terribly easy. Oh yes, and my two quotations books that came out last year also help. Mind you, so does being 55 and wearing corporate type clothes.

My ad-Vice? Cover your bases. You can always say you are a student. Great – but take a few classes to back it up. Work an afternoon a week in a boutique and you can claim 'retail experience'. Clients can be wonderful referees – so long as you give them something to work with. Yes, Melissa, did some short term event organising for me' sounds better than 'Yeah I used to see her once a fortnight.'

One of the problems of the sex industry is that workers often enter it when they are young. Hey, we all go through that phase of 'youth', of being invincible.

The problem arises when you aren't so young anymore and want to exit the industry. All of a sudden there is a desperate clutching of straws. But that doesn't have to be the case if you plan ahead:

1. Cover your tracks. Have a part-time something else work that you can talk about with non-industry people.
2. Get some sort of qualification. You can be a student for a long time, but get a piece of paper at the end of it.
3. Sort out the people who will act as your referees when you're applying for non-industry jobs. And give them the information they need to do it properly. Decide on the cover story and have it ready in case anyone asks. I long ago decided that if I was snapped I would simply say had gone underground to write a book about being a Dominatrix. A touch far fetched perhaps, but it was still viable enough to be believable.

Having made a seamless transition, it is affirming to get phone calls and emails from former clients who miss me. In Casablanca I have a flock of adoring young men who help me with all sorts of things. What amuses me is that they don't understand the principles of Domination/submission, but they are living them. Furthermore, they would be horrified if I told them that they had Bitch Goddess fantasies. Ah yes, once a Mistress always a Mistress.

Recently I started working on *Studio Casa*, a supposedly fictional account that is really a thinly disguised autobiography. And what will my next chapter be? Frankly, I haven't a clue. But I'm looking forward to it. And I'm sure it will be interesting -- the rest of them have been.