

BDSM: FACTS FOR FICTION

Hywel & Joceline Phillips



WHO ARE WE?

- Joceline
 - Actress and Model
- Hywel
 - Particle Physicist turned photographer / cinematographer
- We run a romantic bondage website called RestrainedElegance.com
 - Which is how we met
 - Became friends
 - Fell in love
 - Got married



OUTLINE

- Axes (Hywel will lead)
 - What do we mean by Bondage? Dominance? S&M?
- Arcs (Joceline will lead)
 - What are the “stages of life and romance” for kinky people?
- Characters
 - The Broken Dom and other cliches
- Q & A

THE AXES OF BDSM

- Terminology developed on Usenet in 1990's
- BDSM
 - B: Bondage
 - D: Discipline, Dominance
 - S: Spanking, Sadism, Submission
 - DS: Dominance and Submission, Discipline and Spanking
 - SM: Sadism, Masochism

AXES??

- Like x- and y-axes on a graph, these interests measure **different things**
 - Someone can like being tied up but not like being spanked
 - They are independent
 - Interest in one area may correlate with an interest in another
 - but not necessarily!

BONDAGE

- Bondage is being restrained or tied up
 - Someone who likes tying people up is a “rope top”
 - Someone who likes being tied is a “rope bottom”
 - Someone who likes both is a “rope **switch**”
- There are metal bondage fans, tape bondage enthusiasts, rubber restraint fetishists, rope bunnies and the (slightly po-faced) shibari Japanese-rope-bondage inspired crowd



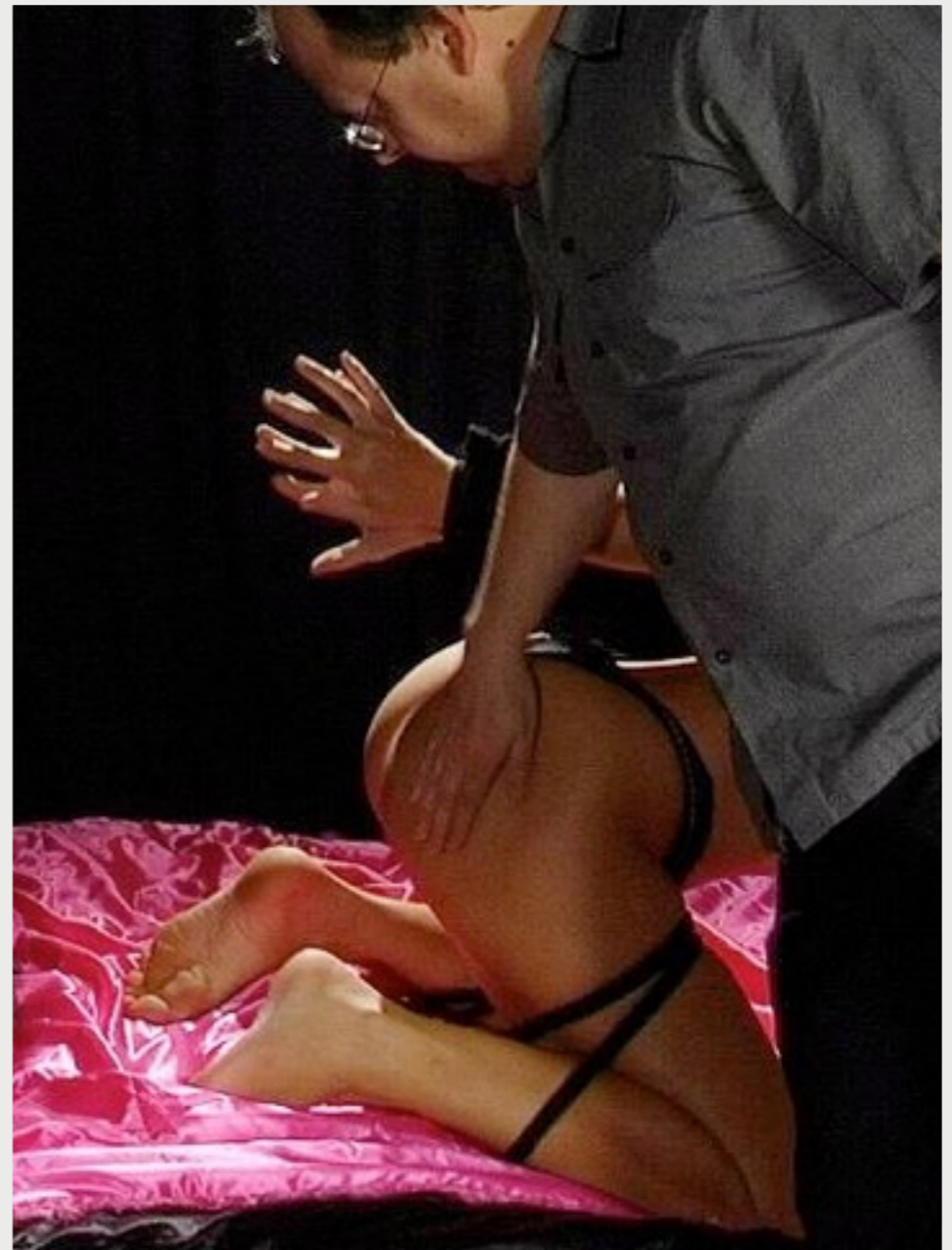


SWITCHES

- As we work in the industry we know quite a few kinky people, either personally or online
 - When we did a quick count on our fingers we realised that switches might be in the [majority](#)
 - They enjoy some BDSM activities from the traditional “dom” side and some from the traditional “sub” side
 - Possibly not the same activity, or with the same partner
 - This is not something we remember seeing much in fiction

SPANKING AND DISCIPLINE

- A fetish for having your behaviour corrected, being told off for doing things wrong
 - And punished to modify your behaviour
 - Again, we have spanking tops, bottoms and switches



DOMINANCE AND SUBMISSION

- Dominants like to be in charge of things
- Submissives prefer to have their partner take charge



SADISM AND MASOCHISM

- Sadism is enjoying inflicting pain
- Masochism is enjoying receiving pain
 - It correlates with the spanking top / bottom idea but isn't quite the same
 - People can hate the pain element of spanking but love the correction and discipline elements

BDSM IN THE POPULATION

- Surveys vary, but most say 5%-10% of people incorporate BDSM elements into their romantic and love life
 - It is **THE** most common fetish
- Clearly this means that an interest in BDSM doesn't make you a serial killer or a danger to society
 - We're a little tired of stories where the detective finds bondage magazines in the suspect's house and realises he **MUST** be the killer

OTHER AXES

- These axes define some of your romantic and sexual identity but not all of them
 - For example, the heterosexual-bisexual-gay-pansexual aspect
 - Monogamous-polyamorous
 - And doubtless many more
- You can totally be a monogamous gay rope top dom / sub switch who doesn't like pain play

HYWEL

- So to give ourselves a fuller introduction:
 - Hywel is a heterosexual, monogamous, **dominant sadist**. Enjoys spanking but comes at it more from the sadism angle than the discipline angle. So he's more a sadist than a spanking top, and more of a dominant than a pure rope top.
 - I'll hand over to Joss but first...
 - Speaking of rope...

JOCELINE

Hello!

- Joceline is a heterosexual, monogamous, **submissive masochist**. She enjoys being spanked (a spanking bottom) and being tied up (rope bottom).
- Neither of us switch
 - Which may even be a little unusual
- It has taken us to middle age to really figure this out about ourselves

ARCS: THE SEVEN STAGES

- 1: Pre-sexual
- 2: Sexual Awakening
- 3: Angst
- 4: Discovery
- 5: Early Disasters
- 6: Maturity
- 7: Burnout and Evolution

PRE-SEXUAL

- Many people who end up into BDSM start fantasising early
 - Of course these early fantasies **aren't sexual**
 - Liking particular stories or movies is common
 - As is creating art-work reflecting their fascination with people being tied up, punished or captured

PRE-SEXUAL

- Organising games so that someone would get tied up
- Disappointment at happy endings in books
 - Why can't Beast stay a beast and keep Beauty locked up forever?
- Happy endings didn't seem satisfying or happy

SEXUAL AWAKENING

- For most of us, BDSM fantasies only become sexual when **WE** become sexual
 - I'd never experienced any physical sensation that went along with my BDSM stories
 - But when I reached puberty I realised with significant surprise that my sexuality was bound up in what had up until then been just as aesthetic vision
 - From then on, many of us start wanting to experiment
 - Another large group however jump straight to...

ANGST

- With the realisation that they are dominant, sadistic or submissive, many people experience guilt and confusion
 - Why do I find scenarios that other people find repellent, exciting instead?
- Some people assume they are completely alone in the world
 - Others realise there will be others with the same interest, but that they will be scary, deviant, dangerous or damaged

ANGST

- Some people turn to self-harm as a way to express their feelings
 - Not all submissives self-harm
 - We do know people who went through that phase, for sure
 - Others suppress the whole thing and decide to be “normal”
 - I did...
- And some decide to research, which leads to...

DISCOVERY

- The internet has made it possible for this stage to happen much earlier in life than used to be the case pre-2000
 - Discovering that they are not alone is hugely significant
 - Most kinky people find this out at some stage in early adulthood

DISCOVERY

- From here many people will seek out connections, either online or in person
 - Go to fetish clubs
 - Make fetish friends
 - Join BDSM websites, watch BDSM erotica
- Try out BDSM relationships, which leads to...

EARLY DISASTERS

- Turning fantasy into reality is fraught with problems
 - Young new subs can get snatched up by predatory (sometimes older) doms
 - They won't know any better if those doms treat them badly, engage in dangerous activity, or fail to provide for their needs
 - Young male subs especially can find that no-one really seems to want them
 - Everyone is competing for the attention of female dommes, who can take their pick and ignore the rest

ASIDE: MALE SUBS

- If there's one sociological thing we have noticed about the sex ratio in BDSM, it is that there's an excess of male subs compared with the number of female dommes
 - No-one really knows why this is
 - "Professional dominatrix" is a **big** thing but "professional male dominant" not so much
 - Male doms and female subs seem to pair up reasonably happily (and often not participate in "the scene")

EARLY DISASTERS

- Immature BDSM relationships can burn through the partners
 - Trying to realise the “24/7” lifestyle
 - Not having any frame of reference for how to have a fully functioning relationship as equal adults whilst incorporating BDSM
 - It's not the sort of thing you can necessarily ask your Mum about

EARLY DISASTERS: SUPPRESSION

- After the disasters, people sometimes fall in love with someone who's not kinky and go back to trying to suppress their instincts and forget about BDSM
- *Aside: one of the very best things about running our website is meeting people who have used our work as a starting point to discuss their kinky interests with their partners*

MATURITY

- People who, despite early angst and disappointments, persevere with kinkiness often end up in one or more of the following situations
 - Weekenders
 - 24/7
 - Only in the bedroom
 - Living as equals
 - Polyamory

WEEKENDERS

- With or without a partner, dress up and go to fetish clubs on Saturday nights
 - “Play” with friends and strangers
 - Enjoy socialising with people they can be honest with
 - Maybe taking some pleasure in exhibitionism
 - Or just liking the social aspects of a rope class or a club night

24/7

- Very hot in theory
 - In reality, quite a drain on both parties
 - Serving mistress early morning tea in bed is very sexy for a few days, but starts to just be boring and tiring after a few months
 - Being “The Master” and making all the decisions starts to feel a bit lonely and stressful when life is busy

24/7

- Some of these relationships go down in flames
- Just as often, they renegotiate the relationship and start living as equals again
- We know very few people who've managed to sustain it in long term

ONLY IN THE BEDROOM

- Quite a lot of these people switch
 - Tend to be more into the sensations of rope, spanking or whatever rather than into being a “dom” or a “sub”
 - Or they’ll have established roles but leave these roles behind as soon as they’ve both had orgasms
 - So perhaps for these people BDSM is more about sex than romance
 - They are happy for it to be divorced from any longer term dynamic

LIVING AS EQUALS

- Living as equals but with a few negotiated areas where they incorporate aspects of master / slave behaviour
 - That's probably where we are
 - We sometimes have periods of behaving in a vanilla way
 - And sometimes have periods of doing a whole lot of kinky stuff.
 - We change the "rules" of our relationship wherever we think of something interesting to try

REAL LIFE INTRUDES

- We find that periods of ill health, work stress or family commitments can get in the way of our sex life...
- But BDSM dynamics have an integral part to play in our **romantic** life
 - We never leave them entirely behind, even if we're both having to be the grown-up and sort out the mortgage, or we're finally on a much-needed holiday away from it all
 - That's because BDSM provides us with comfort, entertainment, drama, passion, playfulness and intimacy

POLYAMORY

- Members of a polyamorous relationship incorporate different behaviours with each partner
 - Sometime dominant, sometimes submissive, sometimes a shifting mixture
 - Or they may adopt vanilla behaviour with their primary partner and then have a separate dominant or submissive one outside the primary relationship
 - This is often the eventual status quo that many switches adopt, for simplicity and satisfaction

BURNOUT AND EVOLUTION

- In later life some people abandon BDSM altogether
 - Maybe they're played out every fantasy they ever had
- Many subs discover pleasure in switching
 - Some doms take pleasure in letting go of control and being submissive instead

ROMANCE IN OLD AGE

- Some people adapt their kink to a different lifestyle
 - Maybe trying out roles and activities that are outside the parameters of BDSM
- But some people grow old together
 - Adapting their physical activities as their bodies require
 - But with a dynamic that never dies
 - Seasoning their romance right into old age



CHARACTERS

- I hope we've stimulated some ideas for characters for you already
 - Maybe you didn't know that there is such a thing as a dominant masochist
 - (There really is, we know some)
 - BDSM is multi-faceted, and as with any interest involving such a large group of people, everyone into it is different
 - So why do we keep meeting...

PSYCHOPATH SADIST KILLER

- Sane sexual sadists do **not** go around kidnapping and killing
 - Capable of switching on and off their sadism as appropriate
 - You don't talk to your kids the way you talk to your boss, or dress the same for bed as you do for a funeral
- Serial killer profile is *quite* different and distinctive



THE DAMAGED DOM

- The writer needs to “explain” the dom
 - So of course he was abused as a child, his mother abandoned him, his emotional growth was stunted
- As far as we know this has **no** correlation with reality



THE DAMAGED DOM

- Laying out a tragic past is terribly useful to give characters complexity and back story
 - Often done in mainstream fiction for male doms
- But it has been done to death already
- We've never actually met a "Damaged Dom" in real life

THE DAMAGED DOM

- Hywel had a very happy, liberal, loving upbringing as a University kid in a University town
 - I was a dominant sadist from as long as I can remember
 - Properly- some of my earliest memories are BDSM related
- We do know a small number of doms who suffered bad stuff in their childhoods
 - Seems uncorrelated with their interest in BDSM
 - Just reflects the percentages in the general population



MYERS-BRIGGS: INTJ

- We wondered. Is there such a thing as “the sort of person into BDSM”?
 - Friends did a straw poll using Myers-Briggs personality types
- The subs came out all over the chart
- The doms did not
 - An unreasonably high fraction came out as **INTJ** (including Hywel)
 - Worth a quick Google...?



SELF-HARM SUB

- Actually this is very unfair of me
 - Maggie Gyllenhaal's character and portrayal in Secretary is top-notch
 - Just a bit of a cliché
 - Very well-regarded in the BDSM community
 - She's not the only sub in the world



PERFECT VICTIM SUB

- The self-harming sub's older sister
- She has failed marriages, a succession of unsuitable drug-dealer boyfriends, gets slapped around and pretty much ANY man can order her around
 - While some subs fear this is what they are going to have to endure in order to get BDSM in the lives, it's generally only in the Angst stage
 - Thankfully, most of us come to realise that abuse is not BDSM, and BDSM for fun is not abuse

NOT A DOORMAT

- Subs in fiction aren't usually accused of serial murder
 - But they do get handed a bucket of dysfunction
 - In reality the subs we meet are often very touchy about being treated with disrespect in real life
 - They don't let their bosses walk all over them and are quite capable of standing up for themselves and others
 - Including to their partners, outside of BDSM activity
 - Often people assume Joceline is the dom because she's taller and talks more!

THE ABSENT CHARACTERS

- Female dominants with any sort of back-story?
 - Fictional dommes are usually so bland and two-dimensional (although stylish!) that we never get to find out anything about them at all
- Male submissives, especially outside gay literature?
- Switches, generally?
- Nuanced BDSM: dominant masochists etc.?

THE END!

- We hope you enjoyed our talk
 - We introduced the different aspects, or axes of BDSM to show that it is much more nuanced and varied than it is usually written
 - We showed the arc that most of our kinky friends have been through
 - We've spotted a few cliché characters
- And now it is over to you!