

Cracking THE Whip

with Wickie Stamps

SM AND DEATH wishes. Is there any connection? I think so. For some players, myself included, the desire to die— or kill our partners— emerges in our games.

One of my fantasies is a scene from *The Deer Hunter*, a movie about the Vietnam War. One of the main characters, along with his friends, is captured by the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese would drag each prisoner into a small hut, put a loaded gun to his head— and pull the trigger. Sometimes the barrel was empty, sometimes not. Although in my mind the other prisoners were forced to watch, in the movie fellow captives were left sitting in tiger cages partially submerged in the nearby river.

Our hero who went through this torture got an empty barrel. Shortly thereafter he escaped, disappearing into the teeming bowels of a Vietnamese city. There he became an underground figure, obsessed with playing Russian roulette in settings reminiscent of cock fight arenas. People paid big bucks to witness his game.

Before I became an SM player I used to spend hours with my boyfriend sitting in a bar. We would challenge each other to kill either ourselves or one another. It was quite insane, but extremely hot. Now I fantasize about playing Russian roulette. And forcing my bottom to watch.

Certainly as a sadistic top I have experienced the desire to completely destroy my partner. I have imagined holding a loaded gun to my partner's head and pulling the trigger. As a bottom I have experienced a strong desire to push a top hard enough to kill me. I am not alone in these desires. Some bottoms I know have agreements with their tops that if they are nearing death they will signal their partner. I am not talking about a bottom accidentally dying, but bottoms who acknowledge to themselves and their partners this death wish. Both have agreed not to act out their death wish in a scene.

A top friend of mine and I have talked about using loaded guns in scenes. She and I agree that as tops our fear is that we might actually use it. So we then went on to discuss ways of unloading the gun outside of the bottom's sight. Because unless you can figure out a way to simulate reality the scene can be stupid. For you and your partner both know the gun chamber is empty. And as my dear partner says, playing with unloaded guns in a scene is a bore.

So my top friend and I have discussed doing the real thing— killing yourself and your partner in play. But there are some drawbacks. It can be physically and legally messy. It's a rather permanent game. And you can't do it again. (At least not with the same partner!)

But we are talking about the *desire* and *fantasy* to kill or be killed— not reality. Aren't we?

Near-death sensation which does not conflate into a desire to die is certainly a component of some play. It is a highly sought experience. The corny movie *Altered States*, in which young students become obsessed with inducing near-death experiences and then coming back is not that far out. Suffocation via strangulation and mummification, even being buried alive, simulate sensations approaching death. People play these games. There is a real challenge in this form of play. How far can we take our experience— and return?

High risk players who have a thing for near-death sensations also sometimes have wills covering the possibility of their inadvertent death. In the case of fatal accidents during play, the will prevents their tops from being held liable. Unlike players who consciously choose to play with their desire to die or kill, these near death sensation seekers track sensations, not the desire to die.

Partners are not always necessary to simulate near death sensations. Solo players create their chosen sensations by themselves. Using a wide range of toys,

such as blood pressure cuffs modified to fit around the neck, they flirt with death. Sometimes they die. There is a book out whose subject matter is "sexual misadventures." In it are cases of people who died engaging in solo play. When their bodies were found the evidence— porn magazines, self suffocation/strangulation devices or handcuffs— pointed to attempts at SM play that went awry.

Did these people have a death wish? Not necessarily. But I bet if you contacted them via a Ouija board many would admit they had a thing for near-death sensations. And if you peeked at their video collection you'd unearth *Altered States*.

The desire to die or destroy your partner can be a part of SM play. Sex, especially SM sex, is a way out of the experience of our lives, an experience that most of us want to escape. Sex is a form of escape. Death— at least in some minds— represents the ultimate doorway out.

Certainly sex and the fear of death during sex have been bedfellows for years. In *Sergeant Benjamin*, comic Goldie Hawn plays with this paranoia of dying during sex in a scene where her new husband croaks during their honeymoon fuck. Also Yukio Mishima, well known writer and connoisseur of sado- masochistic fantasies, actually had himself ritually beheaded. And all of Japan was forced to witness his ultimate game.

Some SM players fantasize about death scenes. Others choose to play with this desire. What's your fantasy? ▼

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