

More from the Master

By Jack Rinella

With an Introduction by Chuck Renslow

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Dedicated to You

My Reader

Who has empowered me to be myself.

May you experience the same blessing.

Other Titles by Jack Rinella

The Master's Manual

The Compleat slave

Partners in Power

The Toy Bag Guide to Clips and Clamps

Becoming a Slave

Philosophy in the Dungeon

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Introduction by Chuck Renslow

Text to come later.

Introductions

Taking a Risk Is What It Takes

February, 2004¹

A reader once asked about Novice Night, a monthly get together I hosted in the early 90's, and ended the conversation with the idea that he didn't know if he would attend because "I don't know anyone there."

Well, meeting people is one of the reasons that activities like Novice Night are held. It seems pretty reasonable to me that if you want to meet people you go to places where you can meet people. Not to do so becomes a circular argument and a self-fulfilling prophecy: "I don't know anyone so I don't go places where I will meet someone and therefore I never meet anyone and hence I don't know anyone."

There's nothing wrong with being alone, but if you're lonely, you probably have no one but yourself to blame. This column may sound more like Ann Landers than leather, but as I've written before, everything in the leather scene involves human beings and thus those same interpersonal skills so necessary at work, at school, at home, etc. apply just as importantly in a dungeon or a leather bar.

In fact, the only way to get involved in leather is to become friends with leather folk, play with them, learn from them, be with them, and become one of them. Of course, to do any of this you have to meet at least one of them. That naturally leads to the number one question, "How do I meet people into leather?"

In non-leather situations, the same question is just as popular. "How do I meet someone?" The answer is simple. You've got to take a risk.

Fear holds us back from risk-taking. For some of us that may mean just a bit of hesitancy, a pause before we plunge. Others, though, are caught in a paralysis of inactivity, a few to the sad point where they are rendered helpless. The rest of us fall into some spot on the wide spectrum between doubt and action.

My friends always think I'm joking when I say I'm a shy person who pretends to be an extrovert. Few of them know me well enough to understand that I too have my doubt, my confusion, and my fear. But I also have the desire to move on, to get over fear and doubt, to resolve whatever issues or dilemma confronts me. If I don't like where I'm at, I do my best to change. My best may not be an immediate remedy, but I know that eventually I'll get to where I want to be.

It's not always as easy as I'd like. After all, everything has a degree of risk associated with it. Risk is pandemic to life on this planet.

Certain forces would have us believe that risk can be eradicated, or that to take risks is unwise, or that the worst always happens so we must not disturb the comfortable status quo. The nay-sayers have their point: inactivity is always easier. Inertia is on the side of doing nothing. The known, unpleasant as it may be, is always little less frightening than its alternative.

But, shy as I am (grin), I'm still a risk taker. I'm not sure why that is so, but I am. Perhaps it's genetics (male, Caucasian, Southern Italian), upbringing (son of immigrant offspring, entrepreneurial parents), environment (America in the second half of the twentieth century), or the stars (OK, I'm a Sagittarian)! I do take risks. Sometimes they may seem crazy but in a closer analysis, at least as I analyze them, they don't seem all that risky.

I got to the point of being able to take risk by not doing so. After years of "living by the book," at least in most ways (grin, again), I found myself nearing bankruptcy, at odds with my children, totally and continually depressed, fighting with my lover, and broke. Being broke, of course, may be the strongest motivator. If you don't have two cents to rub together, believe me you'll find a solution to change the situation really quick.

In those days, I found myself crying myself to sleep, wondering what misfortune would happen next. I felt -- and to be honest it was really only feelings, not "reality" --- that life was the pits, that I was a real fuck-up, and that I had nothing to lose. And so I decided to take a risk.

¹ The dates reflect the original composition of the essays, though they have been edited occasionally for clarity and correction.

Well, as most of you know, everything came out right. As bad as things might have been, that's how good they are now. It proves to me that taking risks is what it takes. So here I am writing about risk-taking because I see that as the only way to get from here to there, to find the friend, the job, the experience, the money, the love, the situation that you seek.

The hard, cold truth is that nothing is without risk. No matter what course of action you take, even the course of no action, you run the risk of making things worse, missing your mark, or just living in that same old rut.

But the truth of the matter is that we most often over-estimate the consequences of our actions. The reality is that nothing is ever as important as we think, that the worse never happens, and that in the grand scheme of things we can only see darkly, as if through a lens (rose colored sometimes, but too often it's really a charcoal, foggy, gray.)

So take that risk with the following guidelines:

✓ The worse never happens. Think of what the worse might be and chances are that your fears are not only ungrounded, but that the result will fall far short of the disaster you expect. After all, you won't become a laughing stock, you won't really lose everything, and most people won't even notice.

✓ Nothing ventured, nothing gained. OK, I admit that I've bought into many (but not all) of my mother's clichés. Clichés are clichés because of their veracity. If you don't venture you won't achieve your goal. If your lifestyle maintains the status quo, guess what you'll get. Put differently, if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten.

✓ By all means, hedge your bets. The reason I can take as many chances as I do is that I always leave myself a way out. I don't go whole hog, just hog enough to see what happens. For instance, I think I'm going to win the lottery --- now there's risk taking for you --- but do I buy a thousand dollars' worth of tickets, sell my car to place a bet, or take money meant for rent to the lottery man? No, I involve myself instead in a few dollars a week that I can afford and remember that I may not win the lottery this week so I better live like I won't win it this week, but play like I will.

✓ Take the risks in easy steps. Joe, for instance, is thinking about moving to another city to become someone's slave. That is a big risk, but since he is unemployed, not as big as if he had to quit a job to do so. The idea overwhelms him, though being someone's slave is all he ever thinks about. How shall he handle it? Take your risks in easy doses, Joe. Don't move to the other city forever, just commit yourself to one week. Take a smaller risk first and see what happens.

Likewise that reader who didn't know anyone at Novice Night (not true because he had met me!) doesn't need to go to Novice Night as if he was the facilitator or the nation's most knowledgeable leather person. Rather all he has to do is show up and stand by the door.

If we all have blood on our jackets, machetes in our hands, and there are nooses ready to string him up, he can run home quickly without even taking his jacket off. After all that is the worse that can happen, isn't it?

Well maybe his mother will be there too, but I doubt it. The truth of the matter is that by showing up, he only risks the price of a round trip taxi cab and a few hours' boredom.

So weigh the risk. I'm not sure what the cab will cost each way, but the boredom will be bearable, at least as bearable as being home alone for the twentieth night in a row. Simply put, if the gains out-weigh the risk's cost, go for the gain and ignore the cost. You have nothing to lose but the status quo.

Enough talk. Here's to it and to it, and to it again. And if you don't do it when you first get to it, you may never get to it to do it again. Take a chance on having a great week.

Take It Slow and Easy

June 20, 1999

Three questions all get the same answer, printed in the title of this column. One was from a guy who wanted to know:

"My fiancé is turned on by bondage and has introduced me to this new topic. He asked me to read your web page on introductory bondage. (I found this to be very well written and very informative for a person who already knows that they are turned on by bondage.) I am from a rural area in the Midwest and have had no exposure to bondage prior to meeting my fiancé. Do you have any helpful hints to introduce bondage to a very non-experienced person? This is new to us, new for him because his previous girlfriend was the one who had experience and new to me completely because believe it or not, bondage has not reached the whole USA yet. I appreciate your taking the time to read this. If you have any helpful ideas I would (and I know my fiancé would too) appreciate hearing them."

And another one writes:

"What about ball gags? My wife is experimental but has not done anything like this before. I want to gag her for the sexy look. I am a fireman and am very good with my knots and she enjoys the process of me tying her up because I stop periodically to ask her how she is, then we have sex. I bought a ball gag but it is too big. She has a gag reflex (except during a blowjob). What else can I use? Please help."

The third question came from a guy who lives "400 miles from Los Angeles" and wants to go to L.A. to meet a Master to be the guy's slave. Seems they've never met. It also turns out that the guy has never had sex with a man before and is fearful, to say the least. Some 24 or so years after my first experience of SM, it's easy to forget that I was once in the same situation. I get the idea that many of my readers never figure out that once upon a time, even if it was a long time ago, I was new to all this Leather stuff.

Mom says "There's a first time for everything." Even if now I smile and say "Been there, done that," there was a time when I hadn't done anything like that at all. The simple fact is that we get from entry-level, no experience at all status to being a jaded know-it-all only one step at a time. It's best that all of those steps be small steps. In many cases we have no choice but to do it that way.

Oh, I've met a number of guys who have taken to Leather "whole hog" but even then it was because they happened to have met the right people at the right time. Often, too, those who plunge in quickly find it necessary to back away for a time to figure things out. Kink can be overwhelming. In order not to be overwhelmed one must take it slowly and, as Patrick adds, "Take lots of deep breaths."

So to answer my friends, I'll start out by saying to simply buy a shank of rope, either cotton or nylon, and cut it into lengths of three to six feet. If it's nylon, you can use the flame of a candle to carefully melt the ends so they don't unravel. I use rubber cement to do the same with cotton rope, soaking the ends and letting them dry on a piece of wax paper. As to a gag, you might just want to go back to the store and buy a smaller one, but really there are lots of other things that work: lingerie, jock straps, socks, rope, and leather thongs come to mind immediately.

You could also get a dowel about an inch in diameter and six inches long. Make sure it is clean and smooth. Attach a length of leather to each end and it makes a nice bridle-like gag. You could take it one step further and add two lengths of leather at each end, one short to tie around the back of the head, the other long enough to use as reins.

With this gizmo you can play horsy... riding your bottom or fucking him or her while you pull on the reins. You see, none of this is really very complicated. As the second reader noted, "I stop periodically to ask her how she is, then we have sex." Taking it slowly and checking to make sure that everything is OK is really the essence of being safe. What do you look for? Check to make sure that hands and feet are warm and that there is no sign that they are "falling asleep" or becoming numb.

And for my third reader, I would advise him to get a little experience before he tries to get a lot of experience. Have a little bit of sex before you have lots of sex. Explore closer to home

where you know your way around, where you have friends to help you through the experience and to process the feedback later.

OK, so you're in "no sex land." I will protest that it makes no difference at all. After all, I got my experiences in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. That's not exactly known as the Gay Leather Capital of the Universe.

How to do this? Cruise locally. Go to nearby bars. Use chat rooms filled with people from your city. Answer ads in local newspapers. Even if you are in Podunk, you can plan an excursion for a night or two to a nearby larger city. Get a copy of a Gay travel guide. Even if you're straight, a bartender in a Gay bar can tell you where to information about heterosexual groups.

Afraid of a Gay bar? Try magazines, especially the Leather Journal (<http://www.theleatherjournal.com>) to find the names and addresses of local clubs and groups. Believe me when I say the club scene is a great way to learn. And I assure you it's very discreet. You may have to wait some for a club to answer your letter or phone call. After all, they're volunteers. They'll ask a few questions and will want to meet you before you get an invite to a meeting, but you'll find them helpful and welcoming.

This whole process has three steps, really: Get to know someone. Once you know them, you'll be able to trust them. Once you trust them, you'll be able to make some kind of commitment. You can't do any of that without the "getting to know you," or in the case of Leather, the getting to know it, stage. Learn by easy, slow, and relaxed steps. There's no need to hurry. Leather is a wide wonderful world and it's waiting for you, even if you take your own sweet time getting there.

To order your copy of this book, visit www.L LeatherViews.com