



Vetting (v1.2)

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Presented for Dark Odyssey: Winter Fire
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Slide Deck Link Slide



SCAN ME

Corporate disclaimer slide

I am speaking here in my capacity as a private citizen. The content of this slide deck and my delivered presentation does not represent the views of my former or current employers, their employees, customers or shareholders.

Personal disclaimer slide

The point of this class is not a group discussion to arrive at a consensus, nor is it to litigate, assign blame or responsibility on individual circumstances.

Who is this yahoo?

- Alex McGeorge
 - Co-Organizer of D101, BDSM practitioner/presenter, general pervert
 - Involved in BDSM since the mid-90s
 - Professionally I think a lot about risk
 - [Fetlife: TexArcana](#)

What is this all about?

- Vetting is the process of obtaining and analyzing information about an individual in order to inform a decision that involves risk
- We will explore this process as it relates to sex, BDSM and kink

Problem scope

- Consider two risk profiles:
 - An individual for whom anonymous unprotected sex is within their risk profile
 - An individual for whom it takes multiple meetings and references for them to feel comfortable with someone touching their person
- How do you create meaningful advice for both parties?

Things we will not cover

- Situations where you cannot meet a person before a scene
- Vetting for high-risk pick up play
 - CNC, heavy D/s, breath play, rope suspensions, any play that intersects with your trauma, emotional sadism
- Specific personal scenarios or any case study of your experience
- Some examples used in this class may seem familiar; it is not my intention to put any individual(s) or their experiences on blast

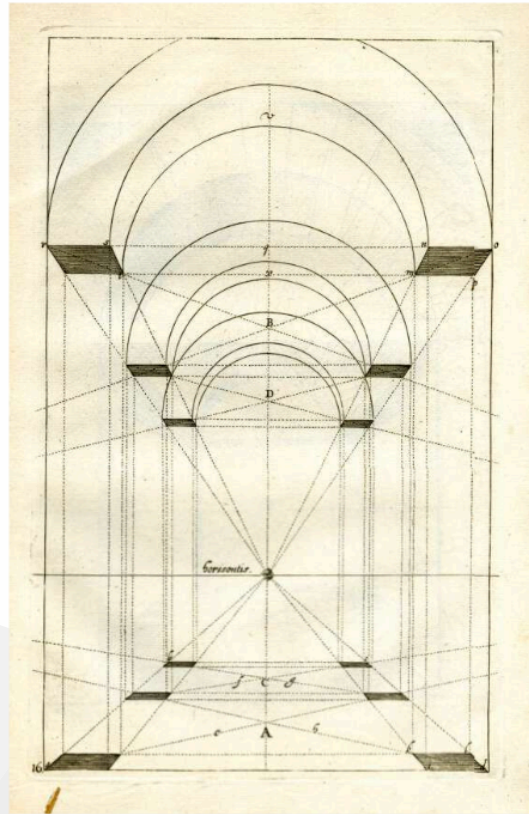
Content and trigger warnings

This class will use examples and include discussion of:

- Sexual assault (including rape)
- Physical assault
- Consent violations
- Suicide
- Examples of many negative "-isms"

Class goals

- When you leave you will be able to:
 - Put BDSM activities you enjoy into different vetting buckets
 - Understand how to obtain and analyze information for vetting
 - Come up with your own set of questions/practices for each bucket



Axioms

BDSM is an optional
activity





It is impossible to do BDSM
without risk

We make a choice of who
to do BDSM with





We bear responsibility for our
choices

We can influence the behavior
of others, but cannot control it





No one can guarantee you will
enjoy a scene

Time unveils the truth
about people





Anyone involved in a scene has the ability to give and receive harm

There is no complete
universal set of vetting
questions applicable to
everyone and every
situation



A Conclusion

Doing BDSM safely requires you to be comfortable with:

- Your own agency
- Self advocacy (sometimes in challenging circumstances)
- Ability to handle the unexpected
 - Scenes rarely unfold *exactly* to plan, but should always stay within negotiated parameters



Useful Buckets

Bucketize activities

- What goes into each bucket is a personal choice
- Your top/bottom buckets may be different!

Pickup Play	Some Vetting	Med Vetting	Max Vetting
Foot Rubs	Spanking	Rope suspension	CNC
Sensation Play	Canes	Knives	M/s
	Flogging	Needles	Heavy D/s

The no bucket

If you find yourself considering doing something in your no bucket it's an excellent opportunity to ask yourself why

Nope
Age Play
Roman Showers
Browntown, USA

Activity risk modifiers

When we add a component does that move an activity into a different bucket? What fits in here for you?

May Add Risk	May Reduce Risk
Level of undress	A scene minder
Sexual Components	Barrier Use
Fluid Exchange	Testing, exchange results
Restraints	Public Play w/ DM

A number experiences
with a partner in a lower
bucket does not mean
you can safely forego
vetting for a higher
bucket





Personal Questions

Questions for everyone

- Are you able to be honest with yourself?
 - Have you gotten feedback to the contrary?
 - When you reflect on sub-optimal experiences, do you take ownership of any component?
 - What does your therapist say?
 - If your answer is a flavor of "no" you have more work to do before you engage with BDSM
 - At least until you understand the scope of the problem

Additional questions for everyone

- Can you be honest with others?
 - If you have people pleasing or conflict avoidance habits (like me) you need to overcome those for the purposes of the scene
 - My personal experience is that this will be a deep challenge
 - [A helpful video explainer](#)
- "Are you technically capable of doing the scene?" is **only a part** of the decision process for **should you** do the scene

Further questions for yourself

- How do you decide who you're interested in playing with?
 - Attraction (whichever way that works for you)
 - The experience of the scene and how it may make you feel
 - Curiosity
 - The flattery of being asked
 - Others?

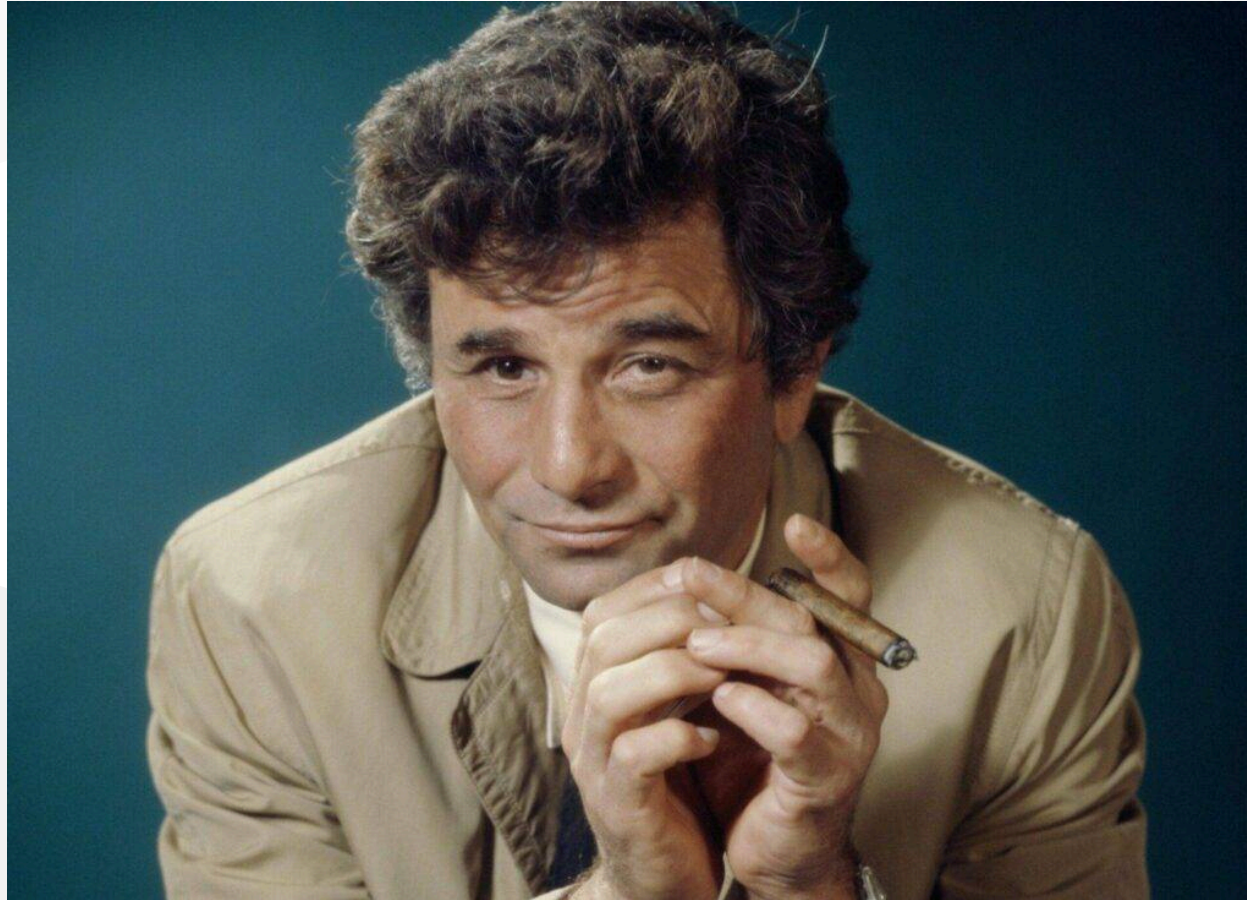
Even more questions for yourself

- What risks am I concerned about?
 - What is the information I need to gather to inform my decision?
- How do I decide if a person is safe to do a particular scene with?
- What information sources do I have available to me?
 - Do I need to postpone a decision to find more sources?
 - Do the sources I have give me a full enough picture?
- Can I proceed at all?

Culminating personal question

If the scene goes sideways is the other person someone I want to navigate that with?

- Follow on questions
 - Can I scope the scene such that if it goes sideways I would be comfortable?



Gathering Information

General good practices

- Do not ask questions that are likely to provoke a refusal to answer or antagonize the other party
 - "I think you've been drinking, prove to me you haven't"
- Frame your questions in such a way that requires a narrative which forces the person you're talking to to think about their answers
 - "Have you done a spanking scene before?" vs. "Tell me about a recent spanking scene you've done"
- Give yourself time to process information and avoid making decisions in the moment

Human information sources

- Current play partners
- Former play partners
- Metamours
- Romantic or otherwise entangled partners
- Spouses
- Exes
- Organizers or event staff
- Other people in the scene generally

Digital information sources

- Non-kink social media
- Kink social media

Pick up play vetting

"Is there anyone here you've played with before that I can talk to?"

Follow up questions

- Do you still play with them?
- Tell me about the last scene you did with them
 - Establish pertinent facts: when was it, what did you do, how did it go
- Is the scene similar to what you want to do?

Pick up play vetting (direct confirmation)

"I was thinking about playing with Robin tonight, they mentioned you had played before and I was hoping you could tell me how that went"

Follow up questions

- Without asking leading questions, try to see if their experiences match
- Be direct
 - Is there anything I should know about playing with Robin?
 - Does Robin play a lot? Have you heard from other people that they've have a good time with Robin?

Pick up play vetting (crowd-sourcing)

"I was thinking about playing with Robin tonight and they mentioned they had a scene with Drew that sounded fun! Did you see it?"

Follow up questions

- Do you know Robin?
 - Is Robin a close friend? Lover? Acquaintance?
- What do you think about Robin as a player?
- Is there anything I should know about playing with Robin?

How can we establish confidence in the information we've been given?

- Is there a consistent theme or narrative from each person you speak to?
- Is there a variety of longitudinal examples or is everyone only referring to a handful of examples?
- Is there supporting evidence from a variety of people?

Handling / interpreting negative reporting

- Does the information you learned apply to the activity you're going to do?
- Does it apply to the person's character that may influence their behavior in a scene?
 - ex: The person has anger issues vs. they vote republican

It is within your power to

- Accept risk
- Adjust the weight of or ignore the input/experiences of others



The High End

More in-depth vetting

- Do they teach?
 - If yes, is it at a variety of events and have they done so more than once?
- Do they attend classes or events?
- What experience do they have in the thing?
- How do they think about risk?
- Do they read related literature?
 - Do they have opinions on the above
 - **Red flag:** Is everyone wrong but them?

Processing mistakes

- Does someone reflect deeply on their mistakes or suboptimal experiences?
 - What did they learn
 - What are they going to do differently so it doesn't happen again?
 - Are they taking appropriate ownership?

Your evaluation: do their answers make sense? If I were in the other person's shoes, would I be satisfied? (Don't forget to ask them!)

Realities of the high end

- Everyone has to start somewhere
 - Are you willing to accept the risks for someone in this position?
- Mistakes in intense scenes can have their intensity magnified
- No reference (book/class/blog) will be one size fits all
- Scenes you see may not have gone as well as you think

Case study: Carmen vets Alex

- About Carmen and Alex
- Talked to an Ex
 - Bad breakup, asked Carmen about non-scene mistakes I had made to gauge honesty and what I learned
- Talked to previous play partners
- Talked to people I organize with

Information obtained

- Pertinent Info
 - Alex has been around a loooooong time
 - Regarded as a safe and kind person/player
 - Good with floggers and canes
 - Can be a little shy
 - Regarded as responsible
- Extraneous info
 - Doesn't do rope, minimal bondage
 - Dad was a kinkster, raised in the scene
 - No one (at that time) had seen me fuck in public



Gathering Information from FetLife

Use the examples from
the following slides and
put them in your
worksheet in the
appropriate bucket



FetLife: Profile

- Does the text of the profile represent a whole person?
- Does it tell you why they're here and what they're looking for?
 - How does that align with your scene?
- Do they have some type of relationship listed? Is that reciprocal with the corresponding account?
 - Is that account a real person?

FetLife: Activity Feed

- Do they only like pictures? If so, what are the themes?
- Do they leave comments? On what? Of what sort?
 - Are the comments trolling?

FetLife: Pictures

- Is it memes only?
- Are the pictures only of their genitals?
- Do the pictures place them at an event?
- Do they have pictures with their partners?

FetLife: Friends

- Remember: being FetLife friends with someone **is not** an endorsement of that person
- Real people or content accounts only?
 - Yes, I know content creators are real people
- Anyone who is on your 'no' list?
- Do you have anyone in common?

FetLife: Events

- Remember: event organizers and educators **can be** unsafe as well
- What sort of events do they *go* to
 - Are those relevant to your scene?

FetLife: Groups

- Groups you may find problematic
 - Race fetish, body type fetish, etc
- Are they a member of local/regional groups?
- Are they a member of educational groups?

Fetlife: Universal-ish Red Flags

- "Discretion is paramount"
- "Only looking for *True X*"
- "Do whatever you want, I have no boundaries"
- "I am an open book"
- Angry and/or specific shortlists
 - "ABSOLUTELY NO: overweight women, gold diggers ..."
- "Looking to push some boundaries"
- "You will address me as {insert bullshit}"
- Only personal information is a description of their body



Food for Thought



Listen to your gut, but ask if
your gut is calibrated

Personal calibration

- Have you done the thing before?
 - How often and with how many people?
- Have you seen the thing go wrong?
 - What does a bad scene of this type look like?
- What is your internal state?
 - Horny? Drunk? Lonely? Bored?
 - How is that influencing your decision?
- Has your gut steered you wrong in the past?

You have fantasized about being an astronaut for as long as you remember. You can know in your heart you're an astronaut.

It does not mean you're qualified to pilot the shuttle or are ready for the ride.





Mistakes in BDSM are
inevitable

What is a recoverable mistake?

- If you can't think of one, don't do BDSM
- Negotiated for back and ass flogging, top accidentally hits upper thighs
- Someone doesn't know a word is off-limits
- Non- sexual rope placement
- Group sex mishaps
- Is this a pattern?



"Being immediately & completely accepted into a close group/polycule is actually a red flag. Just like a job hires without an interview, etc."

credit: [_pavlov_](#) on Fet



Shit people say

The shit

- "I've been in the scene 25 years!"
- "I am certified by X"
- "I am 'old guard'"
 - Are they a gay man between 65 and 80? If not, then unlikely.
- "I was trained in one of the olde houses of europe"

Handling the hard part

- "I've had a chance to think and I've reconsidered, we won't be playing tonight"
- "I don't want to move forward with play plans"
- "The reasons aren't up for discussion, I've made my decision, we won't be playing"
- "This doesn't feel like a good fit, I don't want to play"

Remember: you **do not** owe anyone a discussion or reasoning, just the outcome of your decision

Homework

- Fill in your buckets
- From the assembled questions (and your own) what is your minimum set of questions to do an activity in each bucket type
- Plan for how you'll do vetting in situations common to your experience
- Go out and practice!

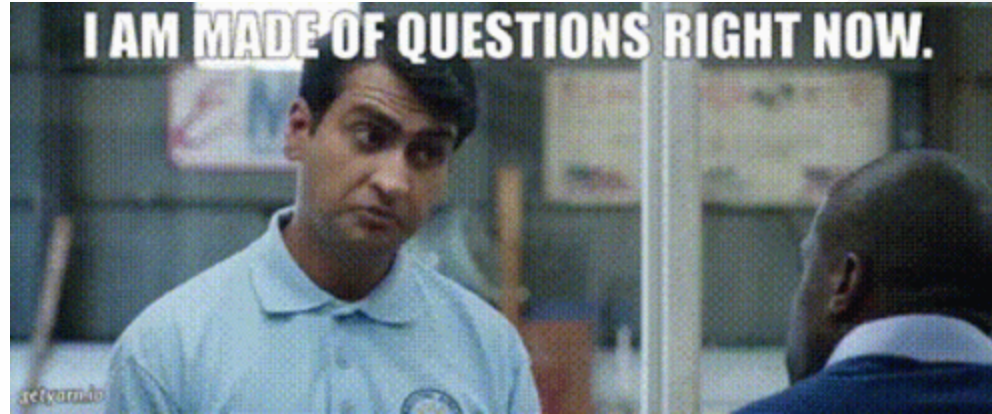
Information for educators

- This class was ~40 hours of work over 2.5 months
- Two draft cycles with comments from reviewers
- Revision process:
 - After each presentation of the class I make adjustments and edits based on my experience and feedback from the audience
 - If they're major updates, I'll go through the draft/comment cycle again
- Because this is so dense, I'm using speaker notes for now

Thank Yous!

- Carmen Monoxide
- -orane-
- _pavlov_

Questions from the audience



Anonymous feedback link

