**For Newbie Tops and Bottoms:**

**Ruining Your Reputation and the Myth of Confidentiality**

Once upon a time a newbie bottom made a play date with a top on Saturday (after a first meeting and full negotiations as per the top's standard procedures) and approached another top for a coffee date on Sunday.

Coincidentally, the two tops were friends and in casual conversation at an event Friday evening discovered they were both meeting the same bottom that weekend. Did they breach confidentiality or were they watching each other's backs with a newbie bottom?

The first top spent hours preparing a very special and tasty dinner with very restrictive dietary requirements as well as preparing a play space and a scene outline in accordance with the bottom's expressed interests.

Half an hour before she was expected, a text arrived saying she was exhausted from a work situation and wouldn't be coming. The top immediately wrote back understandingly, saying it would be preferable to reschedule rather than cancel entirely.

Four hours drifted by during which time the top, feeling very depressed, nibbled on the delicious dinner and downed chocolate while watching movies, waiting for a reply. Finally it came and she agreed to come mid-day on Sunday.

The top didn't say anything about the second top's meeting, feeling it wasn't any of his business and assumed that her meeting with him would be later in the day.

After the play on Sunday, the second top messaged the first top saying that she'd stood him up and said he hoped the first top had had better luck.

The first top rose to her defense, relaying her exhaustion from the work situation and said he was confident the bottom would be very apologetic.

Two days later, the second top asked if they'd played on the Sunday and the first top saw no reason to lie. The second top then reported that the bottom had told him that she had been sick all weekend and hadn't gone anywhere.

Oops! Were the two tops breaching privacy and confidentiality or was this a normal way in which poor behaviour is noticed in a small community where people are in frequent contact with each other?

The second top had a short text conversation with the bottom and said that he didn't appreciate being stood up and lied to.

The bottom put one and one together and asked the first top if he'd told anyone about their play. The first top admitted that a friend had asked and that he didn't lie.

The bottom went into a tirade about privacy, confidentiality and the ease of contacting her before answering such a question. She then broke off contact saying she could never trust him again.

***Facts about life in the public kink community:***

1. Both tops and bottoms share information about play partners, especially unfortunate situations.

2. We don't boast and generally don't gossip or flame to destroy reputations, but like families we tend to know things about others.

3. Anyone requiring strict privacy and confidentiality had best request it.

4. They would also be best not to mingle with the public community, i.e. the "family" of local kinksters. Not that they'd be outed to the vanilla world, but they can't avoid becoming known within the family. Reputations are built whether we're aware of it or not.

5. Bottoms are told repeatedly to seek references and to ask about prospective tops to ensure their safety. Tops had better not expect privacy if they play publicly.

6. Tops are not concerned about physical safety, but they are concerned about emotional safety. Flakey, unreliable or untruthful bottoms are very hurtful. Tops tend to protect each other and rightfully so.

7. Depending on the severity, it's generally not appropriate to volunteer unflattering information, but it is certainly appropriate to answer direct questions with reliable facts.

***Moral of the story: Reputations are difficult to build and easy to self-destroy. Don't expect dishonesty and other poor behaviour to go unnoticed.***

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