

When I next met with Sophia, she looked unusually hot. She was wearing a tight blue top and a skirt that showed a lot of leg, and I couldn't help but wonder if it was somehow for my benefit.

"I liked the schoolgirl story you sent me—good catch on making her over 18. I can't wait to see where it goes from there," Sophia said.

"What do you mean?" I wanted to know.

"You said it would be continued," she stated.

"Oh, well, I doubt I will ever actually do anything more with it. It was just a way to bail out on it," was my reply.

"I definitely think you should develop it. You appear to have uncovered a latent talent here. These stories might be the start of something big," she said.

"You mean to publish them?" I asked, somewhat in shock.

"Why not?" she asked.

"That would be problematic," I stated. "I mean, I would burn every bridge in my world if I did that. Most of the people in my tribe would be shocked to find out I know some of the words I use in those stories, let alone the situations I put them in. Hell, I have even had women I have had sex with tell me they weren't aware I knew some of the words I used, and this was while I was having sex with them. How lame is that?"

"Well, I don't notice you being particularly profane or vulgar when we talk like this," Sophia mentioned.

"Yeah, I try to restrict any explicit language to my stories. I don't usually go there in real life except under extreme duress," I said.

"Besides, the people I know firmly believe women in the sex worker or provider realm who are there of their own volition and aren't coerced, groomed, or trafficked into it simply don't exist," I continued. "So, for those reasons, I don't see how I could have my name attached to those stories if they ever got published."

"That's what pen names are for," Sophia said. "Have you ever considered using one?"

"Not really," I said. "I've never felt the need. There's no sex in my memoirs; they're about my real life."

"Why not try using something like Alexander or maybe Xander," she suggested.

"Yeah, use the back end of my name. I know at least one person who would think that is appropriate. Now I need to come up with a last name."

"Do you? A lot of people use one name," she stated.

"I'll think about it," I said.

Sophia brought up a sensitive topic. "I think I see where we are headed with these conversations. You stated that you wanted to figure out if your feelings and attitudes are normal. We can certainly explore those questions. But it might take some time," she said. "And time, as they say in my business, is money."

I knew what she was getting at. Maybe that explained why she was showing some leg. "Right, and the big issue I have is money leaves a trail. I don't have a problem with paying your price, but I need to figure out a way to keep it discreet." I figured I was living close to the edge with what I had sent Alice not long ago.

"I have some thoughts on that," Sophia said. "You see, I am working on a graduate degree in psychology. I think you would fit nicely as a case study in my thesis. If you're down with the idea, I could see my way clear to writing off most of the cost on a pro bono basis, so to speak."

"Hmmm, sort of like tit for tat?" I asked. "Then here's hoping I have an adequate supply of tat for you." Sophia sat stone-faced, staring into the webcam for several seconds until it started to get awkward. Finally, I made a show of jotting down a note: "No sense of humor," I said as I pretended to write.

"I'm sorry, did you say something funny?" she asked.

"Apparently not," I said.

The slightest hint of a crooked smile flashed across Sophia's face for an instant, and she resumed the expression which I started to think of as 'the look,' so I moved on. "Are we talking about abnormal psychology, then?"

"Oh, don't flatter yourself, you're not that fucked up," she shot back.

"It's comforting to hear you say so. What are you thinking?"

"My thesis is on how things in early development affect people later in life," she explained.

"So, are you going to name a syndrome after me?" I asked. "Like the Xander disorder?"

"Cute. If it comes to that, I'm sure I can think of something suitably arcane."

"Arcane," I mused. "You are the second professional person who has managed to work that word into a conversation with me."

"It refers to something obscure, puzzling, or understood by few," Sophia explained.

"Yeah, that fits me to a T," I said. Then it hit me. "Alright, there's my pen name: Xander Arcane. I think I can work with it."

"Sounds good," she said. "Now go write a story by Mr. Arcane."

"Any requests?" I asked.

"Perhaps something related to your early experiences in dealing with imagery from your dad's collection of, what did you call them, 'men's adventure magazines?' I have been curious about exploring those situations. I think it would be an interesting springboard from which to spin a tale. You can pull out all the stops, and we can delve into it in a big way."