

Your Safety Word is “Cranberry”

by George Sapio

Marley – male, 50+

Malicia – female, 50+

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[MALICIA's basement/dungeon]

MARLEY

And so, I have given myself a year off for bereavement.

MALICIA

Very wise.

MARLEY

I'd hardly know about wise. I was thinking respect.

MALICIA

I'm sure it was a wise decision in any respect.

MARLEY

I was totally devoted to my wife, you understand. She was a decent, giving, honorable woman. But her nature was such that I had to forego some of my more...eclectic tastes.

MALICIA

Relationships are always give-and-take.

MARLEY

It's a question of prioritization. You determine what is important and arrange your life around those items. Some things, no matter how dear they are, sometimes need to be put by in order to let other benefits...flower.

MALICIA

You do what you do to get by. That's all I know.

MARLEY

I do appreciate your making time for me on such short notice.

MALICIA

These days, all I have is time. Yep, too much time these days... sigh. And now, here is my little cloister of correction.

MARLEY

My goodness! What a marvelous array of devices!

MALICIA

Gotta admit, I haven't used this stuff in a few years. Personal fulfillment services come and go in phases. Back in the 80s, I had lines down the block. Bring 'em in, give 'em what-for, send them home to mommy. Clean up the blood in between.

MARLEY

I like the steel-reinforced wall cleats. Nice touch.

MALICIA

Cost me a pretty penny way back, I can tell you.

MARLEY

No cushions on the rack, I see.

MALICIA

Hell no. One should not be reprimanded in comfort. Defeats the purpose.

MARLEY

And this rather complex...is this a homemade dungeon tower?

MALICIA

I adapted it from an old universal exercise center. Four stations, each one for a different purpose.

MARLEY

Quite clever. And you welded wrist restraints on the ends of the pulldown bar!

MALICIA

Yeah. I just strap 'em in, tug 'em upwards into the air. The client's loss of control is key, you know. The old "airborne assault" has greatly enhanced more than a few final moments.

MARLEY

Outstanding!

MALICIA

I can move 'em any which way I want. Spin 'em around, even. And it also allows the spine to stretch out, effectively popping out those cranky back pain spots. Chiropractor designed, actually.

MARLEY

I can see you've put a lot of careful thought into this dungeon.

MALICIA

I took great pride in the level of service I provided. I was always looking for the next ingenious tool to bring out a client's inner child. Granted, a child that cried incessantly.

MARLEY

We each have our own taste in life's music.

MALICIA

I could restrain a client in over five dozen ways and inflict surgically precise stimuli at a moment's whim. My thrashing arm was the best in the

business. But now...all I do down here is use it as a root cellar and practice my golf swing.

MARLEY

Ahh, yes. I wondered what the net was for. I thought it might have been for some role-playing activity, like a pirate and captive flogging-on-the-rigging scenario.

MALICIA

Ooh. I like that idea. But nahh. Golf swing. I'm a 12 handicap.

MARLEY

Sadly, my dear departed Castrata never discovered the joys of the Scotsman's Revenge.

MALICIA

I am sorry for your loss. It must make the days so lonely.

MARLEY

One never knows what one has until it is no longer there.

MALICIA

I absolutely agree. Living alone is not all it's cracked up to be is it?

MARLEY

Indeed it is not. There were times, I confess, when I seriously weighed the benefits of wedlock against the many lost pleasures of... Omigod... Is that... a St. Andrews cross?

MALICIA

Betcher paddled ass it is. Picked it up, of all places, at a garage sale.

MARLEY

The wood is still strong. And the straps...

MALICIA

Oiled leather.

MARLEY

And a roof grid! With a pulley system!

MALICIA

Capable of hoisting over three hundred pounds.

MARLEY

And a complete rack of beating utensils!

MALICIA

Everything from a close-range cat-o-nine tails to a genuine buffalo-herding grade bullwhip. So. Does my facility meet with your approval?

MARLEY

Beyond my expectations. This is like discovering the fountain of youth!
Oh, madam, I do believe I will be finding many things to atone for.

MALICIA

Well, that's what I'm here for. I just hope I haven't lost the touch.

MARLEY

I confess I have already interviewed several other dominatrixes. Most of them seemed too...businesslike. Too detached from their work. Just wanted to tie me up and get it over with.

MALICIA

Fahh. Kids today have no values whatsoever.

MARLEY

Do you know that two of them wanted to charge me extra for a safety word?

MALICIA

No!

MARLEY

Needless to say, I did not avail myself of their services.

MALICIA

That's shocking. Everything hinges on the safety word. The safety word is the shutoff valve; it guarantees an immediate stop to the proceedings.

MARLEY

My favorite was always "cranberry."

MALICIA

Good choice. Distinct, yet homey.

MARLEY

Pain and correction are paramount, but at the very minimum... the relationship between dominant and submissive requires... shall we say a personal attachment?

MALICIA

I totally agree. Humiliation without trust is meaningless. Today's generation has no sense of sympathy whatsoever.

MARLEY

I blame Reaganomics.

MALICIA

You into verbal at all?

MARLEY

I can find no higher form of pleasure than verbal humiliation.

MALICIA

[*Sotto voce*] Jackpot. [*Normal voice*] I believe that the best way to bond with a client is to vocally strip them of their dignity. A good...

MARLEY

...tongue-lashing? I tell you, it's an art form.

MALICIA

When you consider the... fragility of the whole process...

MARLEY

It can be so easy to lose the moment sometimes.

MALICIA

Lose your focus... you lose the client.

MARLEY

Then it just becomes...

MALICIA

Physical.

MARLEY

... yes...

MALICIA

Not to downplay the physical aspects, of course.

MARLEY

No, no...

MALICIA

I mean pain is the way to satisfaction...

MARLEY

Punishment is a frequently misunderstood form of devotion.

MALICIA

I like to think of it as “moon-struck.”

MARLEY

Indeed. Good pun, by the way.

MALICIA

Trade joke. Comes with the territory. Most people miss it. My profession isn't known for it's humor.

MARLEY

True. And one profession that sometimes suffers from the lack of it.

MALICIA

I do have a clown outfit....?

MARLEY

Errr.... I think we'll not mention that again.

MALICIA

You're the boss. No, wait. You're not. Anyway, I think I have some good ideas of how to fulfill your needs.

MARLEY

I'm glad to hear it.

MALICIA

I could take you now, if you're ready, but I think it would be better if I had some time to tidy up.

MARLEY

That's fine. I have a pretty open schedule. I'm very interested, but not overeager.

MALICIA

I'd feel better if I could get some of the dust removed, polish the chains a bit. Move the golf clubs upstairs. Helps to not have distractions.

MARLEY

I appreciate a perfectionist. And the expectation only serves to heighten the outcome.

MALICIA

You're rather droll yourself.

MARLEY

May I assist you?

MALICIA

House rules. Only slaves may do my bidding.

MARLEY

I've never had that experience.

MALICIA

It's a difficult arrangement to maintain. Next you'll be telling me you like to cook.

MARLEY

Two years as a chef in Poughkeepsie's finest French restaurant, actually.

MALICIA

[*Sotto voce*] Thank you, God. [*Normal voice*] Ah, yes. I had a husband for many years. We did everything together. He was also a wonderful cook,

plus an excellent house cleaner, did all the errands. When he folded the laundry, it had edges. He could kneel at my feet for hours while I knitted.

MARLEY

Sounds like it was a lovely arrangement.

MALICIA

I miss those nights. Knit...purl...stab Jeremy...

MARLEY

Oh my. You're quite delightful.

MALICIA

You're too kind. But I gotta tell ya...it gets hard sometimes, being all alone in this large dungeon. I mean house.

MARLEY

Yes, I know. It does get difficult some days. When did Jeremy pass?

MALICIA

He didn't. Left me for an ER nurse.

MARLEY

The cad.

MALICIA

I made sure to get the house, though. It's beautiful, but way too large for me these days. Four bedrooms, hot tub, 20x20 kitchen, reinforced beams with heavy-duty shackles over the king-sized concrete-reinforced four-poster bed. Yes... I love my house. And it's just big enough to share again. With the right person, of course.

MARLEY

Life has a way of working itself out. Take me for instance. I thought my joy was gone forever, my needs relegated to sad, messy, private memories, and then... then I found you.

MALICIA

Would you like some tea?

MARLEY

That would be nice.

MALICIA

I keep a small stove down here and brewed a pot just before you arrived.

MARLEY

I learned a long time ago in the navy, that, in addition to the rigid discipline, a small personal kindness goes a long way to rendering a more efficient relationship.

MALICIA

Did you say...navy?

MARLEY

Twenty-six years. And I can still fit into my uniform.

MALICIA

I always had a special predilection for men in uniform. Kind of a mix between a girlish crush and a desire to draw serious blood. You know... this seems almost too good to be true... us meeting, I mean.

MARLEY

I feel the same way. I am tremendously excited.

MALICIA

Well... this may seem abrupt... but at the risk of stepping outside our proposed relationship...

MARLEY

Excuse me?

MALICIA

Well, I mean here we are. Two pieces of a puzzle. Both needing... a certain special someone...

MARLEY

I'm not sure that's...

MALICIA

You're alone. I'm alone. You have validation issues and I'm sadistically inclined. We're perfect for each other! Would you like to cook me dinner?

MARLEY

I don't think that's...

MALICIA

You could feed me! And after, I have the BlueRay dvds of both *9-1/2 Weeks* and *Fifty Shades of Grey*. With deleted scenes. You could kneel in front of me while we watch it. Wouldn't that be romantic?

MARLEY

Madam, I...

MALICIA

We could get to know each other. I wouldn't even charge you for our sessions. It could be... *our* dungeon.

MARLEY

Stop! You clearly have misunderstood my needs. I have no wish whatsoever to embark upon another relationship. My dear Castrata may not be at my side, but she still resides in my heart. This would have only

been a relationship of consensual sadomasochism, not some Harlequinesque shack-and-smack.

MALICIA

Oh come on! Just give it a try, will you? We could be perfect for each other. We're both *alone*. We *need* each other.

MARLEY

Madam...!

MALICIA

I've got a whole set of unused ultra-ribbed enema tubes! I've got hot wax in thirty-two colors!

MARLEY

Madam! Listen to me closely.

MALICIA

No... no...

MARLEY

[*Picking up his hat and coat*] Cranberry. [*Exits.*]