



Fetish party whips up the inner beast

By JENNIFER PARKS

I think I sweated 10 pounds in the tight PVC outfit I wore last weekend.

Not only was the fabric unbreathable, I was as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs as I slinked into the New City Suburbs fetish party. (If it's possible to slink in four-inch metal-studded platform shoes.)

In my skull-and-crossbones leotards, black leather choker and painted-on dress, I became a trichotomy of goth, cuteness and kink.

Picture Avril Lavigne meets Elvira.

I'm lucky my boyfriend let me leave the house.

Parked three blocks away, I stole through the shadows of tall buildings along Jasper Avenue, yanking downward on my skirt the whole way. People stared disapprovingly at my skimpy getup, which was only partly masked by a short trench coat, making me look somewhat worse off, like a high-class hooker on her evening commute.

I felt like one of Jem's misfits.

With relief I ducked inside the old converted theatre. It was a split-second reprieve. Like in a horror movie, when the protagonist slams the door on the monster only to turn around and be faced with another ominous beast; I didn't know which way to run.

To say I was out of my element was a gross understatement. It was as if I'd just been time-warped by the cast of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

Then catching my reflection in a mirror, I figured I might as well go for broke. Reluctantly, I checked my coat and slinked straight to the bar, where I proceeded to order and throw back a Smirnoff Ice in record time.

It was as if I'd entered a nether world of dark, sensual characters. The sheer eye candy at this over-the-top costume party could send a hypoglycemic person on a permanent high.

Shirtless men in PVC pants and leather harnesses strolled about the room and tables were brimming with glammed-up girls in fishnets, corsets and skirts that redefined mini.

One minute, I was drinking in a guy in a full-body rubber suit, who looked like a smaller version of Val Kilmer. The next, I was watching two *Moulin Rouge* show girls conspire over martinis while my brain did backflips over the man-sized goth princess in a tiara who paraded past, followed by a dude in schoolgirl attire and a brawny babe leading her compliant boyfriend on a leash.



Sex columnist Jennifer Parks is ready to rule at the New City Suburbs fetish party.

I'll have to suggest that one to my better half!

On stage, Edmonton's Pocket Universe performed A Gothic Melodrama, a visual essay involving a balloon-chested mannequin who, by some strange alchemy, had come alive; a sultry dominatrix who liked to tie up lone damsels and make them struggle and submit under her masterful touch; and a synthesizer-playing ring leader who could turn master into slave in an instant by acting as the muse to her wild beast within.

The crowd sat riveted. Several couples were groping each other by now, the show's message seeming to serve as an intoxicating elixir.

"We all have an animal living within us," it whispered to those willing to listen. "Our primal desire rears its face when tempted, taunted, toyed with and mercilessly teased. It yearns, above all, to be unleashed."

Then it struck me. This was a place of pure fantasy - and not one, but many. Each person had come to this sultry safe haven to bear witness to the animal within - whether their bent is bondage, domination, submission, collars, spanking, leather, rubber, latex, Spandex, interrogation, erotic asphyxiation, cross-dressing, exhibitionism, voyeurism, water sports, electro-torture, clamps, clothespins, plugs, sensory deprivation, fisting or missionary-style love-making. You name it. day. When it comes to sex, we want to completely let go."

Another guy, the man in the rubber suit who, I learned, spent \$800 on it to tickle his fancy, told me he discovered his love of the snug material and of breath play quite unexpectedly, through his 18-year passion for diving. He came to the party to find others with the same kinks. So far, he'd had no luck.

"People say you're a freak, that it's not normal. But it's harmless. And here, you're accepted," he said. "You can't give it up because (the fetish) becomes a part of you."

I was starting to see that we are all just caged animals in society's zoo, where only domestic dogs and cats, and perhaps the odd house lizard or ferret, are free to roam.

In our culture, sex has been defined by the church, state and Hollywood. If it's not boy-on-girl and romantic, with all the kinks ironed out, participants all under the age of 50 with perfect bodies, then it's dirty or disgusting.

But if our bedroom is to be home sweet home, we need to come as we are.

That's what this little soiree was all about.

I won't pretend to understand some of the bizarre turn-ons people have that I learned about that night. If I were whipped with a ruler on my heiny, I'd probably rip it from my partner's hands and administer the licking of his life!

Someone might even call that a kink. Not to mention, the self-inflicted torture of going out for a night in four-inch metal-studded platform shoes. But thank you to B&D Emporium (101 11725 Jasper Ave.) for lending me the risqué outfit and helping me to push my own boundaries that evening. As I limped home, I noticed I was less self-conscious of people's stares.

My inner animal was even wagging its tail and purring contentedly after its playful romp outside, in the wilderness of desire. If people let go of their inhibitions, they might be surprised at what turns them on.