

# The Burlesque Dancer: April 4, 2015

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1 min

I was in a writing w/s a while ago.

One of the participants was a woman burlesque dancer. As you all know, I'm a computer programmer, so you won't be surprised to learn that I lead a totally boring life. I've never even met a burlesque dancer. Everyone else seems to know dozens of them.

Wow! Imagine me in the same room as a burlesque dancer. I can't believe it! Wait till I tell me mates about this!

She had a story about her love life. I was fascinated. What sort of love life does a burlesque dancer have? I'm sure it's more exciting and daring than anything I could possibly imagine, even in my wildest dreams. I couldn't believe it. Not only am I in the same room as a burlesque dancer, but I'm about to hear all about her love life. This was my lucky day!

Well - it was boy-meets-girl, boy and girl are very nice to each other, there was an amusing twist, which was the point of her story, they dance around each other for a while, they fall in love and live happily ever after.

I recognised that story straight away. This is just how it is for me.

(sell it to audience)

What do you know? I have the heart of a burlesque dancer.

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From an e-mail to Jocelyn

Much of what you saw in Heart of a Burlesque Dancer came from Virginia's class. This piece was how I really saw that the acting class worked.

It took me a year from when I was with the burlesque dancer, to be able to do anything with it. Until then, all I could think about was how yummy she was and that I'd actually been in the same room as a burlesque dancer. Her story of falling in love and being with the same guy ever since, was very sweet. She actually was very nice and not at all intimidating, in the sense of flaunting her power over men by being good looking. If she had been intimidating, this story would still have not made it out.

Spending half the day fascinated by this woman, wasn't exactly the sort of thing you're supposed to tell other people about. At least that's what I thought for a year. Then one day I realised that this is exactly what you're supposed to tell everyone about. This is humour - some guy sitting in a room, with his brain jammed, unable to take his eyes off a burlesque dancer, while listening to her love life. It wasn't till I'd written the whole thing down, that I found I had the heart of a burlesque dancer. I asked myself how I was different after listening to her story. The fact that she was so nice, made it easy to see that I did have the heart of this particular burlesque dancer.

I first presented the sketch to Anoo, who said "you have to sell that you do have the heart of a burlesque dancer". At that stage I just had the text. It had the logic that I had the heart of a burlesque dancer, but that was all. I didn't know it, but I was telling, not showing. I had no idea what Anoo meant, or what selling the idea might look like. I already knew from Virginia's class that you have to act it, and you have to practice it many times before you find something that works. As far as I can tell, finding your way through to something that works, is just a random walk. Presumably after enough experience I'll find a faster route, but the random walk will get you there.

I practiced the last 4 sentences of that sketch, over and over for 3hrs. Just by not being able to do it exactly the same every time, I got variations, some of which I thought were a teeny bit better. Eventually I realised that if I was to have the heart of a burlesque dancer, I had to be the burlesque dancer. With my training to be a man, I had to overcome the internal hurdles of acting as a woman. What does a burlesque dancer look like? I'd seen plenty of photos of showgirls. They are displaying as much of their bodies for you to see as possible. I remembered their poses. What expression do they have on their face? It's not "don't I look good?". No-one wants to look at that. You need an expression "I'm having a great time standing here". Then you can look at her all you want, because she's not noticing you or expecting anything back from you. I tried posing and smiling before the bathroom mirror for about 15 mins until I got it and I was done.

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