

My Dirty Little Pole Dancing Secret

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It started _____ Adverb enough at a chair dancing class in _____ Proper Noun last summer. The instructor was joyful. She had no inhibitions. She told us what to do: lift this, squeeze that, shake this, swivel that. I tried it. I felt _____ Adjective and _____ Adjective. And strange. For a full hour, all the conflict and confusion that single life in New York had congealed into my sexuality was gone.

After class, the empty pole studio down the hall caught my eye. I wanted to climb.

Ten months later, I have to climb past three floors of porn and inflatable body parts to get to the wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling selection of stripper shoes at the DVD Depot on Eighth Ave. After about 100 hours of pole class in New York, I need a new pair. The cherry _____ Adjective, patent leather coating on the left one has torn, exposing a milky white, _____ Adjective substance beneath. The spiked heel of the right one is _____ Verb - _____ Present Tense a rhinestone. The platforms are still solid -- two inches of indestructible clear plastic -- but the treads are wearing thin. I'm not light on my feet.

The shoes and I used to be so unmarred. The first _____ Noun I showed them to naturally requested I model them, but I was _____ Adjective. All I could do was hold them up in one hand, _____ Verb - Past Participle by their super hero gleam, and let them dangle from their ankle straps. "_____ Verb?" I said. "Aren't they great?"

Since

then, I've _____ Pronoun _____ in them, _____ Pronoun _____ on them, _____ Pronoun _____ in them, _____ Preposition or _____

subordinating conjunction _____ them around the _____ Adverb _____ and even used them as a weapon: The stripper gunshot.

You lie on your _____ Noun _____, throw both legs over your _____ Noun _____ and whack the platforms on the _____ Noun _____.

I admit, the shoes did eventually make an appearance in an _____ Coordinating conjunction _____ situation or two, but the closest most _____ to _____ get to them is when they're in a bag over my _____ Determiner _____ in the event that I have a date after my evening class.

As a general _____ Verb - Non 3rd Person Singular Present _____, the shoes stay in class. So does all the acting I do behind those _____ Adjective _____ _____ Adjective _____ doors. In class, I act _____ Adverb _____ confident. I _____ Verb - Non 3rd Person _____ Singular Present _____ like I know how to move in ways that attract or distract a guy. I lead with my body instead of my _____ Noun _____.

In real life, I move at an _____ Preposition or subordinating conjunction _____ angle towards things I want and I remain, as always, distressed, guarded, undersexed and _____ Adverb _____ surprised when anything romantic comes my way. Pole dancing makes no difference whatsoever.

I'll never even be great at it. Not like some girls. The ones with a traditional dance background are easy to spot. They

move in an intelligent, fluid way. They never turn left when the instructor said turn right. They instinctively activate the correct muscles for, say, a single leg knee brace on the pole, leaving the other leg free to make a "girly kick" or whip itself around to create a spin in the air around the pole. These women are beautiful monsters. They live in their own momentum.

Then there are the girls who might still be in high school. Young and smart-phoned into flaccidity, they clutch at the pole and try to scuttle their way up. They won't make it the first time, but they're determined. And they're lucky. They have a lifetime to get strong and good. There are also women in their 20's, 30's and beyond -- licorice thin or pumpkin plump -- who just come by it naturally. They pop and wiggle without looking, as I sometimes do, like an Energizer bunny that stalled out.

Some girls bear spectacular bruises they're not sure how they got. Some stay for two or three classes in a row. "I do it to release my wild side," one told me, "No other dance keeps me in such good shape. It works everything" -- and she's a graduate of the School of Performing Arts. We're all addicted. There's a work-study program.

There are student recitals. Instructor recitals sell out months in advance. Visiting pole divas -- international competition winners -- teach showmanship and artistry. The studio offers stretching classes, "Booty Camp," and all levels of instruction, from a basic spin to an Olympic-like series of Batwoman moves, spinning sideways, upside-down, backwards and forwards at the same time, ending with a beautiful arching back, neck surrendered up to the ceiling, hair cascading down and the floor five feet below.

"Making something look sexy is hard work," said one instructor. Another explained patiently to me, "I'm working really hard from the shoulders down, and I'm keeping my face calm." Another said, "When you slap your thighs here, you can use the opportunity to wipe the sweat off your palms."

I tried ballet. It's a lot of work with no instant gratification. I tried boxing, but I kept projecting psycho-sexual fantasies onto my instructors. It got messy. I tried salsa. I went to the clubs. After a dance or two, I'd end up standing by the bar drinking gin and tonics. At any moment, some suave Latino could fling me aside for any one of dozens of luscious, shimmying Latinas.

In pole class I can feel sexy on my own, in my own time. The music pulses and throbs, we wait for our cue, and suddenly I'm Olivia Newton John in black spandex giving John Travolta multiplying chills.

I sometimes get unsolicited complements, which I never believe. Inside, I'll always be a beginner and a poser. But at least I don't get nauseous and dizzy anymore. I don't even get angry at myself when I'm facing the door and everyone else is facing the windows. Sometimes I even approach the illusive Zone, when things flow, one trick to the next. The thrill of finishing a spin smoothly, not with a sag but with a flourish, is always great.

My life remains a vortex of hopes, delusions and intermittent delights, followed by long stretches of waiting. Pole dancing remains an impractical, time-consuming, sometimes perilous obsession. But it's my great escape. It makes

me feel vital and centered. Now, please excuse me. I'm off to the porn store for some new shoes.

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