

It has been three years now since I have been writing “One Teacher’s Opinion,” and I still have not run out of thoughts and ideas, many fueled by readers and students. However, I’d like to take this first column of the new year to have a few laughs and look at the light side of belly dancing! These stories were culled last year in a request put out to the bellydancema e-mail line. I hope you enjoy them! I want to thank everyone who submitted stories on their own behalf, or on the behalf of others. Real names are used unless a specific request was made to tell the story incognito!

The first stories are told by Lisa Tieman – the first one is about Lorraine Lafata: “Lorraine always had double safety clasps on her bras, but there are moments when the fates manage to circumvent all our careful precautions. Lorraine was nearing the end of an exquisite routine, had just finished an extended drum solo and launched into a triumphal karshilmar. She raised her arms high, and I could tell by a mere millisecond's flicker in her eyes that she had just felt the back of her bra release. In a flash she deftly reached around her back and with one hand and grabbed both sides of the bra and held tight. With the smile of someone sharing a delicious secret, she arched upward and launched into a fast spin that lasted a minute or two. She then grabbed her veil, bowed, and flounced gracefully offstage, never losing her smile, her composure or her modesty. It was indeed a secret shared by very few of us, and my admiration for her increased tremendously.”

In the second story, the dancer shall remain a mystery: “Another time involved a dancer I’ll call Deva. Sumptuous in her costume right down to the delicate silver chain hand covers, she was just entering the chiftetelli part of her routine. Deliciously raising her hands overhead, the backs of her palms touching, she did a sensuous belly flutter. As she attempted to separate her hands, she realized the chains had caught and were locked together. For the next several minutes, she thus explored every possibility of this hand position, finding amazing new variations. Her expression - alternately poignant and sardonic as she played within the limits of her confinement, evoked tales of bondage and the struggle to be free. She never lost the rhythm, and her own secret drama was transformed into the drama of her dance. Eventually the chains separated with a little well-timed yank, and the next phase of her dance was one of liberation. It was thrilling.”

Lisa's wisdom having witnessed these two, and many more, mis-adventures: "The joy of performing live is when we can truly surrender to the moment. To have authority as a dancer means to be prepared, but also to dance lightly with whatever surprise destiny throws our way, to take it as a gift and flow with it."

This next story was contributed by Val Kerin, and she entitled it *The Veil That Came to Dinner*. "On the evening before our big debut, our little troupe, which had been rehearsing for eons in practice duds, got together to dress rehearse our smoky, sex, flirty, big veil piece. I was wearing a long black velvet Ghawazee coat with a nap, that I had just finished, and because my hair is short, a long, lush, synthetic ponytail hairpiece a la' Barbara Eden. As the music came up, we dramatically threw our gorgeous, brand-new, 100% silk gauze, colored veils up in the air and they floated down shawl-like, over our heads and around our shoulders. On beat four, I should have dropped it in a puddle on the floor like the stunning dancer to my right wearing..... rayon. By beat six, I had given up on the luscious, come-hither veil drop, and was attempting to pull it angrily over my head. The crepe of the veil, and the aggressive, short nap of the velvet however had morphed, and wrapped my body tightly into a single unit with the combined tensile strength of pig iron.

By beat ten the beautiful dancer on my right was performing a smoking gaze over her shoulder at the audience, accompanied by rolling camel steps, while the pulling and tugging over my head had yielded only one result: to tease my formerly long, sexy, synthetic ponytail into an angry tsunami, reminiscent of some low budget, sci-fi, mummy flick. At beat 12, the veiling over my face was covered in angry red lipstick mouth-marks, which contributed an alarming mien to my now strenuous efforts. This was accompanied by elegant veil spins by the rather plain dancer on my right. By beat thirty, I had finally managed to extricate myself from the cannibal-veil, with all the grace of Brear Rabbit and the Tar Baby. As the veil finally relinquished the last of my velvet Ghwazee, I kicked it repeatedly off the performance area, and out the door, now in mortal fear to ever pick it up again, accompanied by wild laughter from my supportive colleagues, leaving Miss Perfect Poise & Attitude to finish the piece alone."

This next story is contributed by Cathy Moore: "I was dancing for a friend's retirement. The party was held at a little lake cottage - very small cottage, small porch,

etc. After looking the place over, I decided that dancing on the little beach in front of the lake would be the best place for my performance. I was doing my "turning" piece ... The beach was very narrow and had a slight incline toward the water. I had never danced on sand before, so was unprepared for how unstable your footing can be... I started out OK, but just as I started my first of many spins in the dance, I lost my footing & stumbled into the lake!! I only fell onto my knees, so was able to recover & finish the dance. I was personally humiliated by this event, but have since recovered, and my audience was very gracious..."

A dancer, who shall remain anonymous, has made this contribution to our foibles collection: "I was dancing at a restaurant one evening, in a costume I have worn several times before. I had normally inserted those gel pushup pads into the bra to give me some cleavage. They have never been a problem as they normally kind of stick to your skin. This one night I must have been sweating more than usual. As I did a shoulder shimmy the gel pad slipped right out of the bottom of my bra and landed on the floor with a plop ... right in front of 3 full tables!! I quickly swooped down and recovered it, danced behind a pillar, clutching the pad to my chest with both hands, slipped it back in and cautiously finished my set. :o) Needless to say, I will never wear a pushup pad I cannot secure to the bra again."

One last story (for *this* episode... part two to follow in the next edition), and this one is mine: Last year I did a show at the Athenian Corner in my brand-new (and actually tested) costume. It was the first time in along time I had worn a bedlah instead of a gown but still felt very confident. Half way through the veil piece I felt something come loose but I wasn't sure quite what it was. I brushed the hair off my shoulder and looked down trying to figure out the source of this sudden lack of support. Couldn't figure it out, so kept on dancing... At some point I realized that my strap had popped off the front of the bra, leaving the cup all on its own. Thank heavens it was a sturdy hard cup and it stayed put.

One of my students rushed over with my now-discarded veil and tried to cover me with it. I remember telling her "Why bother?" I turned to the musicians and showed them what happened (by way of holding the loose cup by its corner and pointing out "Look Ma – no straps."). They had a chuckle and made the show mercifully short –

although they played it in its entirety. I did a fab drum solo, a taxim, and a finale that included going for tips. I even did my signature back bend – I teased the audience and said “Do you think I ought to give it a try?” and managed a nice deep one while holding the cup tight against my body.

My choices were (a) run off the stage in humiliation and not come back, (b) stop the show while some serious pinning was done off stage, and then start again, or (c) keep on dancing and having a good time. As you can see from this, and the other stories, “C” is always a good choice. It was actually one of my most fun and memorable shows.

P.S. By the way, I learned my lesson to never do a show in a bedlah without a diaper pin handily tucked inside the belt!