

by Megan Ellis

Your First Burlesque Rehearsal

occurs in a hollowed-out apartment above Anthony's Pizza. "Pony" by Ginuwine thrums tinny from someone's iPod speakers while you stand in a circle, learn to swivel your hips in tiny drain-swirls. The motion

seems intuitive to the others, but you have only been fucking for three months. The fluid curl of your spine is unfamiliar. Your knees and thighs bend like an inflatable man outside a used car dealership. You tell yourself, even baby

elephants step on their trunk like it's not a part of them. You run your palms over your bare shoulders. Everyone else is. The hair prickles against scaly palm-skin. You should have moisturized. You're going to flake

into nothing. Maybe it's the speakers. Studies show that high frequency noises paperize the texture of human skin. But you arrived hating your skin and your body and your wacky wavy inflatable man knees.

You're instructed how to take off your shirt. A strip tease should be a sexy struggle—pretend to be stuck. Pretend that the body is an impossible puzzle. You grab the hem of your shirt. Everyone else is. Your pinkies brush

against stretch marks (the human finger is so sensitive). Some call them battle scars, war paint, violence in bodies that grow and change. You do not call them anything. You take off your shirt.



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