

## **The Art of the Striptease**

*by Buffy Shutt*

You come early  
prepare the room.  
Your head cocks when they drift in.

You unbutton your baby blue sweater  
quicken their mood.  
You're here to show the movie's ad campaign,  
so you pull off your earrings.  
Toss one gold hoop to Boss.

He sucks on it; one you let roll down The  
Table.  
The Others jump for it.  
Boss and MoneyMan watch.  
Rearrange themselves.  
The Others dip to their iPhones, scanning.

Fingertips on your collarbone,  
you lean back, offer a quick peek-a-boo of lacy  
white  
and their phones fall silent.  
Challenge takes its place at The Table.  
You know they feel the heat.

You tease off your silky blouse, let it fly,  
shimmy down your jeans.  
A PowerPoint erupts on the screen.  
You thumb the clicker, run the slides.  
You hook your fingers into the top of your  
panties.  
All eyes on you now.

You don't mind their relishing your breasts,  
or even your ass,  
your saucy side dishes.  
You mind they might see your heart squeezed,  
your ribs working overtime to keep yourself  
stitched together.  
The meeting-weather turns icy.

The only other woman takes the last thing,  
your shoes,  
places them with respect in the corner.  
You stand thong-naked. Barefoot.

You're close, very close to approval.  
The air is thin, almost blue  
when the meeting is broken.

Hang on.  
An actor-director-producer shows up.  
Heat-seeking boss missiles right out the door.

Hard to the mirror in a ladies' room  
on another floor,  
hipbones against the sink  
you dream-hate:  
How to Get to The Table.  
how to get to the table.

You deserve The Table.  
You want to watch someone else, unlikely a  
man,  
remove clothing, remove covering, remove  
volatile content.  
Be deprived of status, be taken apart.  
Stripped.

**Buffy Shutt** lives in Los Angeles. A two-time Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee, her recent work has appeared in *Split Lip Magazine*, *Rise Up Review*, *Bird's Thumb*, and *Dodging the Rain*. She was awarded Cobalt Review's Prize for the baseball issue. She has marketed many Hollywood movies and documentaries.

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