

What Would Bruno Do?

by DONALD PFARRER

She invited me, she asked me *three times* — but it was a football night. She really pressed me.

“Georgie, Sweetums, there’ll be foxtrotting, waltzing, jitterbugging and ballroom — how can you pass it up? And we’d be so close, oh so close!”

But! I should give up football for a class on “Dances of the Golden Era”? I kissed her goodbye and turned on the TV to watch 300-pound bozos smash each other.

And I thought: “We can get real close when she comes home.” So I settled down to witness the great

American spectacle sport with popcorn and a Bud.

Which turned out to be four Buds.

It wasn't till the fourth quarter that I started to miss her. I paced and fretted — she should be home by now.

Where's my Baby?

The phone rings. I'm thinking maybe she'll ask me to join her and the other dancers for a drink. I grab the phone.

“Hi Babe.”

“You creep, you loser, it's not Babe, it's the guy who's had Babe in his arms all night. In my arms! What are you doing? Watching football! You are truly a moron and not worthy of this woman.”

“Is this Pinhead?” I can hardly believe he's still chasing my Tiffany Marie.

“I'm the guy you call Pinhead but listen, you baboon. Quote: You are the best I ever danced with.

End quote. Tiffany Marie to me. Best best best! I call her TM and she giggles. It's kinda my pet name for her, eh?"

"What the f-ing what!"

"Hey, I hope you liked the game." Crash.

I flop into a chair and keep hearing in my brain: "Best I ever danced with." Arg arg arg. Best what? Best dancer or best *man*?

O.K. I can handle a crisis. I can be cool, rational. Fact: the dance class is three sessions long, so TM — arg! — Tiffany Marie — will be going again next week. I'll keep a low profile till then. I'll act like nothing happened — nothing really did. I bet she meant *best dancer* — so that's just fine. If Pinhead wants that title he can have it. I've got bigger ambitions. She has already said to me — gard! the stuff she whispers in the heat of the moment!

When she comes home I say, “Was it fun?”

“Oh god Georgie I had a ball. There were a dozen women and only three men, but one danced with only me. He was terrific!”

Crikey. Friggin despair! Hold'er, Knute, she's a rarin'. Eye on the ball, cool, no panic.

So I say with suavity, “He was a pretty good dancer?”

“No Georgie, not pretty good. He was the best.”

“Uhh — best — uhh —” I sort of hint that *real men* don't make the best dancers.

To which my angel responds: “Real men? Could you define that for me?”

So I subtly suggest maybe we could act out a definition in bed, but she says:

“Oh god Georgie I'm bushed.”

So I say, “O.K, Babe,” and I brew up a cup of hot chocolate for her and turn down the covers. She’s asleep in five minutes. I lay by her side listening to her angelic breathing, and I seethe and smolder, and strangle Pinhead in my dreams.

I know dancing can be sexy. I remember Sue Simmons in the bygone days of high school, me rubbing against Sue Simmons and Sue Herself rubbing against me! But competing with Pinhead on the dance floor won’t work. All I can do is rub, and Pinhead can dance.

Decision: Silence, play the waiting game. Give her something supernatural *the night before* second week’s lesson. Let her compare.

The flaw in my plan is that when that night comes she’s not in the mood. Doesn’t feel too well. But on dance night she’s in the shower, then she’s doing her

face and eyes and slithering into the wow dress I just bought her and then she's out the door, with no invitation for me, just “Bye bye Georgie, hope it’s a good game.”

“Have a ball,” I croak.

“Don’t wait up.”

In the fourth quarter my phone rings.

“Hello,” says I.

On the other end laughter — soft, malicious Pinheady laughter. No words.

O.K., O.K., O.K., no panic. She’s my roomie so I’ve got this big advantage which is: Pinhead can dance, but I can satisfy. How many times have I heard, “Georgie you’re the best,” or “Georgie what you do to me!”

So I call Bruno. I do all my sharpest thinking while walking Bruno. He jumps all over me, paws me

(he's got mean claws) whirls in circles making it hard to fasten his leash, then we're out the door — prowling the streets of the metropolis.

Nobody would ever say about Bruno: “He's only a dog.” No sireebob. He's smarter than most humans and I wish he could talk so I could praise him on his extracanine brains. But he's more than smart. He got instinct and empathy.

That very night while Her Loveliness slept the sleep of the innocent Bruno showed me the way. I saw how he greeted the lady dogs. Bold. Familiar. You could see the ladies go still, quiet, patient — while Bruno went through his technique. If I tried anything like that in public I'd be arrested.

I ask myself: What would Bruno do? Answer: be bold — but be intimate; be (or seem to be) ready to walk away. Not just bold but also confident.

Now's the night of the last dance. When Pinhead calls I just laugh. And when Tiffany Marie comes home I step forward and help her out of her coat. I take her little dance booklet and glance at it and smile. She starts to tell me about the foxtrot and I pull a Bruno — I make a bold, decisive move — not like I'm asking. Would Bruno ask? Not like I'm waiting for a signal of acceptance. Would Bruno?

I sweep her up into my arms and she lets out a kind of squeal. We're in the bedroom and she hasn't protested yet or talked about how tired she is — for this plain reason, she might have been tired two minutes ago but she's not tired now. More like — well, here's what she said.

“Oh Georgie, what?”

“You know what.” Pretty Brunoesque, no?

“But Georgie.”

One thing I do not say is “No if’s, and’s or but’s.”
In fact I don’t say another word.

In the meantime Bruno makes his majestic
entrance to our bedroom and plops down on the rug.

I set Tiffany Marie on her feet and reach out to
take her face, to kiss it, but I miss — she’s falling back
on the bed, spreading her arms and closing her eyes.

An hour later we are awakened from an innocent
slumber by a shrill yelp from Bruno. He’s dreaming,
kicking, gasping, twitching on the rug. He lets out
another yelp and a whine.

Tiffany Marie asks, “What do dogs dream about?
Maybe he’s chasing a rabbit.”

I say, “I think he’s up to something else.”

We lie there listening till Tiffany Marie snuggles
up closer and says, “Georgie is your manly energy all
used up? I mean —”

“Used up? Me?”

Two more muffled yelps from Bruno.

“Georgie, you’d be a wonderful dancing partner. I mean — the things you do to me. I mean — if you could dance like — well like — I mean —”

The phone rings. At this hour! I curse and start to grab it but Tiffany Marie holds me back and says, “No Georgie, let it ring.”

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