

**TRANSCRIPT: TAYLOR**

Interviewee: T TAYLOR  
Interviewer: SH Shane Hamby  
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**START OF INTERVIEW**

Shane Hamby: Where were you born?

Taylor: Cleveland, Ohio.

SH: Is it more city, urban setting?

T: City, very city.

SH: What was the neighborhood like?

T: Ghetto. White and black ghetto, a lot of blacks. There was white trash. but white trash ghetto.

SH: What did your parents do for a living?

T: I'm adopted. I was adopted at seven, my sister was nine. My biological parents were drug addicts. They didn't have jobs that I knew of at all. My adoptive parents; my mother owns a ballet studio and my father works in insurance.

SH: What other jobs did you have before this one?

T: Everything. I got my first job at ten, I had a paper route. I babysat, I shoveled shit. This is probably important. When I was adopted I moved from Cleveland to rural, very, very rural Amish country Ohio.

SH: Do you think that shaped your work ethic?

T: I was seven I don't think I knew what a work ethic was. I grew up on a small farm, it definitely shaped work ethic.

SH: How long did you dance in the adult type entertainment business?

T: About five years.

SH: What age did you start?

T: Nineteen.

SH: Did you consider it a job?

T: Yes and no. Yes, because I made money. No, because no one knew that I did it. My roommate knew, but my parents still to this day have no idea. My sister knew but she's my best friend. My other sister would disown me in a heartbeat if she found out.

SH: Did you find that hard or did you have another job to cover that?

T: Yea, I was in school full time and worked in home health care. I worked with mentally and physically disabled people adults and children.

SH: Did you dance to supplement your income?

T: Yes.

SH: Did you struggle when you first started?

T: Yes. I mean everyone, I'm not speaking for every single person, but you tell a girl that grew up in Amish country to get naked in front of fifty to hundred men, yea it's hard.

SH: Did you have people there to help you?

T: Yes. So how I started, my sister danced. She was into drugs and she lived a different life than I did. She started dancing to support her drug habit. I knew that one of my friends I went to High School with was dancing in the club that my sister danced at. So, Shelby and I were super close and we hung out. We we're just talking and I was talking about school, I was having issues with my parents and paying for college. My parents have a lot of money but they have stipulations on their money. They would pay for college if I followed their rules. I didn't want to follow their rules. I was eighteen about to be nineteen, fuck that. I wanted to be on my own, I wanted to party, I wanted to do what I wanted to do. So I got the talking to Shelby, and I knew at my current job there was no way that I make enough money to pay for school. I'm a very much a person that I don't borrow money from people, so I haven't taken out one student loan. So, I said, "Fuck It" I'll take my clothes off.

SH: Why do girls who strip say they're "in school", even if they're not?

T: Oh yea, everybody's in school. I danced for over five years and probably worked with over two hundred different girls. Every single one of them if a customer asked, they were paying for tuition. All of them. I'd say about thirty percent actually are.

SH: An article I read basically argued that the girls who said they were in school but weren't said it to feel better about themselves and the job, do agree?

T: Yes and no. Some girls just don't care, they'll tell everybody. Their uncle comes into the club, they don't care. They have a different set of morals, mental illness, if you want to call it, that they don't care. I was in school to be a teacher, my life was very private. I guess I could see that some girls want to feel better about what they're doing. A lot of them say they're in school and have plans to go to school. One girl, she's freaking brilliant. She danced for like eight years and went on vacations, had great cars, was living a really good life. Super smart, super funny and all of a sudden she was like, fuck it, I'm gonna go to school. She's now works for the Cleveland Clinic, she's a surgeon. Because of dancing she realized she had more potential. For her dancing pushed her to go to school, where if she'd gotten any old job, she'd been in the same rut.

SH: Is there a certain type of girl that works at certain clubs, like dive bar compared to upscale clubs?

T: I worked at the best. Except for when I came down to North Carolina, there are no good clubs in North Carolina, unless you're going out to the coast. The only club within two hours is Treasures, which is a piece of shit. In Cleveland, I worked at one of the best known clubs in the country.

SH: Did it make you feel more comfortable?

T: Safer. Valued more. I had better clientele; I was protected better by the police.

SH: Were you an employee or independent contractor?

T: Independent contractor.

SH: Would you rather have been an employee?

T: No. The whole allure and what draws you to being a stripper, you don't have a schedule. I could work once a month if I wanted to. After three months they give your name away. If you don't show up to work for three months they give your name away. If you come back you have to re-fill out your applications.

SH: What's that mean?

T: Your stage name.

SH: Are you living straight off the tips as an independent contractor?

T: Straight off the tips. I filed taxes one year, a W-3 or 4, I can't remember. But I did it the right way. I'll go over dues. So when you walk in the door you pay a door fee. You're renting security so you tip your housemen or bouncers. You want good music to be played so you tip the DJ. Some clubs have them, some don't, a house mom. She's pretty much in the locker room, helps you do make-up, helps you do your hair, all that shit, cleans the locker room. Unless she's literally wiping my ass I don't pay them. think it's pointless; I do my own hair and make-up. I don't need your opinion on anything, go away. If they have a house mom, it's typically the managers wife to make sure he doesn't get in trouble and that just fucks up your money.

SH: Did you work for more than one club or just one?

T: No. So, I worked for Christie's Cabaret. They're across the United States, there is one in North Carolina but it's on the coast. There were three in Ohio, Brunswick, Cleveland and Canton. I worked at all three. I worked at Diamonds for a period of time. It's in the flats, which is fucking' insane. So the Flats are right on the water. You got Christie's, Hooter's, Diamonds, it's like a strip club row. It's like three streets with just strip clubs you can bounce from one to the next.

SH: Would it be a Red Light District?

T: No. People lived there and there were other bars. It's like if someone was going to Cleveland for a bachelor's party you knew they were going to the Flats.

SH: Of any of the ones you worked at did you ever feel exploited, or used or mistreated?

T: I think in the industry you will feel exploited and used at times. That's the beautiful thing about being an independent contractor. I could tell you to fuck off and walk out the door. I don't have to give you two week notice, I don't have a schedule. If you piss me off I'll walk out the door.

SH: Why do you think women managers of strip clubs are bad?

T: Having a woman boss, being an independent woman in general, women are catty, bitches. Women are judgmental and very jealous creatures. I met a lot of female managers, this is the stereotype. Overweight, not that attractive, in her late thirties earlier forties, who thinks she's a feminist and can relate to women. No, you're a bitch and you're gonna sit there and judge me. They claim to be this feminist and I'd be a great strip club manager because I was a cocktail waitress once upon a time in my twenties.

SH: How do you classify a feminist? Do you classify yourself as one?

T: I hate the word feminist. Feminist, now a days has gotten such a bad rep. You see all these women wearing vagina hats parading around naked. I don't consider that a feminist. I don't like the word feminist because all these people think it's just about women. I don't consider myself feminist, I consider myself neutral. I think that everyone deserves the same treatment, no matter what sexual preference, gender. To me it doesn't matter. When the term feminist was coined that's what it was about, equal for everyone. Like your black, white, Asian, Indian, man, female, penis, vagina, whatever, it was about equality. Now, it's turned into this whole radical bullshit, where these white privileged girls who've never stepped foot into a city and don't know anything about life. They've got their daddy's credit card in their back pocket saying "I stand for all women". No you don't, because you don't know. So when I say these women managers are like "I'm a feminist", they come into the strip club and they think they can change things because they're on our side. Honey, I'm a stripper because I'm selling my body, because I'm hot. You coming in here preaching to me about all this equality and stuff, that's not what this is about. I know very well getting in to this that I'm selling myself. We're going back to the clays of whores and cowboys. That's what a strip club is; they have no room for this whole radical feminist movement. I'm selling my body, so you can jack off in your car in the parking lot. I'm gonna have a really nice house and a really nice car, have my tuition paid for or go on a vacation. Or I'm selling myself for drugs.

SH: Do you consider yourself a commodity?

T: Oh Yea. And I'm proud of that. You're purchasing a good. It's like anything else in life. You go to a restaurant you're purchasing food. You go to a fancier restaurant because you want a better quality steak and someone to kiss your ass while they're giving it to you. Or, you go to fucking McDonald's and you get food poisoning.

SH: Did working as a stripper ever cause a barrier between you and others?

T: Yea. I had friends quit talking to me, friends I grew up with. Because it's a sin. Once I was adopted we went to church three days a week. The Amish were our neighbors, I was home schooled up until high school. I did the whole pledge yourself to God at thirteen; I didn't even know the word sex. My denomination was a mix between Pentecostal and Southern Baptist.

SH: What did they think the sin was?

T: All of it. Drinking, being naked, the idea of tempting men, selling yourself.

SH: What are you talking about when you say selling yourself?

T: I'm selling a product, a fantasy.

SH: Did you think the whole thing was wrong or a sin?

T: No, but they did and I understand their viewpoint. The way that I was raised and grew up. I didn't follow that religion into adulthood; I didn't follow those beliefs or carry them on. So, I eventually left the church and was doing my own thing. A couple of people did find out, the world is very small.

SH: Did you feel you were living as two different people or were you the same person?

T: I'm the same person no matter what. Then, now, when I was a kid, I'm me. I know a lot of people don't believe that. I was told not long ago, "I'm just a different person at work". I was like that's weird, I'm me. Yea I told lies.

SH: What's one misconception about the job the average person wouldn't know?

T: One of the biggest misconceptions is that all strippers, during and after, they're all mentally fucked. That it fucks with you mentally, so much so, that you can't have a normal life. I've been told that by many people. Even people that have no idea I've ever danced. Strip clubs come up a lot in the service industry, people talk about strip clubs a lot or the news and when I hear people talk about strip clubs as a thing they've never been to one or they're someone on the outside looking in. One of the biggest repeat things is "she's fucked up in the head". They have this idea that all stripper's you'll know when you see them. That mostly comes from women that you can automatically spot out a stripper. I don't know how many times I've been to the club or even the grocery store with a group of girls, "Oh she used to be a stripper". They're dead serious.

SH: How the base that?

T: Look, dress, attitude. They don't think someone with a quite temper, modest would ever be a stripper. I've told some people and they don't believe me.

SH: When you first started, who helped you?

T: Two of my best friends in the entire world I met them at the club, they'll be in my wedding. Shelby, my girl friend I went to high school with, who brought me into the club, threw me to the wolves. She said, "Here ya go, here's a G-String have fun". I went out and almost shit myself but I was told to come back. I think that's the best way to learn.

SH: Is there any training for it or do girls just go do it?

T: There is training once in a while. The group that I started with, about ten of us girls that all started within two months of each other. We became super close. We wanted to learn, we wanted to learn the tricks and master our art. It is art. There were times if I didn't have school or my other job I'd spend all day at the club, stretching, training, working. It's one of the hardest workouts on the planet Earth. This is coming from someone who was mentally training to be an Olympic gymnast my whole life. We had a lot of people to bounce ideas, tricks, and training off of. The one woman who taught me the most, she was in her late thirties, early forties. Her name was Hazel; still to this day don't know her real name. Beautiful woman, completely natural too, drop dead stunning. That girl, didn't have a care in the world, she made so much freaking money. I was so young and naive at that point in my life, she taught me about the world. She taught me about men, sex, and a lot about other women. She was like my mentor. She just plucked me outta the crowd and said follow me, watch me, dance with me. But not in a demeaning, I'm your teacher, more like she saw potential and latched on.

SH: When you brought up her age, what is the graceful bow out?

T: Twenty-six. So we always had this joke that if you were still dancing by the time your twenty-sixth year is up you're a lifer, which means you'll be there til your fifty, sixty. We had this little Asian woman, she was in her seventies. Beautiful, Asians don't age, funny as hell, made a shit ton of money but a lifer. She'd do shows in Vegas, all over the place. If you're the average girl and you're still dancing by the time you turn twenty-seven you're a lifer there's no getting out of it. It's like any other industry, it sucks you in. Like hospitality, it sucks you in and at a certain point you get used to the routine. If your still full time dancing by twenty-seven and that's your only job, source of income, you're a lifer and I've seen that not be true.

SH: Would they consider that a career?

T: No one considers it a career unless you get into porn or start dancing professionally as in shows in Vegas. You become a tour girl. Every club, once a month, they'll bring in some fucking bimbo that

has basically zero talent but a huge rack, has done porn and will do a stage show with fire or blow up a balloon with her pussy, some crazy thing like that. That is a career.

SH: Do you think jobs or careers can help you accomplish goals but also crush dreams?

T: Oh yea. I think that's very accurate. People all the time say, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" My response is I want to be happy. If you'd asked me five years ago if I'd be living on this mountain, working at a spa, I'd said, "Hell no". If you'd asked me five years before that I wouldn't have said anything. A lot of people have this mentality that you are what you do and that defines you. I think you can find an industry that works well with your character and personality. There's so much more to a person than their job.

SH: Is there any upward mobility if you're in it that long?

T: No. The only thing would be if you in that long and you're good you have steady clients. They come in two times a week and they have a set amount of money they give you. So many people are like you're living off tips, that's not reliable, how can someone become a lifer. Because if you're good you could go and work for three hours and walk out with five grand.

SH: What would someone who's never been to a strip club be expecting to get? What would a regular expect?

T: If you've never been there I won't dance for you. Personally, I'd never dance for anyone under the age of thirty cause they just wanna take me home. They think it's something different because I'm the same age as them. I'm not there for that. Someone who's never been there, you just show them a good time and let them be. Regular, you get to know what they like, what their fantasies are, who's their wife, how many kids they have, how much money they make, what they eat. Can I tell you a story about one of my favorite, I should probably change his name, we'll call him John. John came into see me every Tuesday and Saturday after I'd been there for like three months. He saw me every Tuesday and Saturday for years. He'd come in and he'd buy me a drink. We'd sit and talk, How was your day, how's work going. He was slightly overweight had a really shitty haircut, his wife worked in politics and in the town that I grew up in, I knew his family. She was very powerful, she didn't have sex with him, ever. Not saying that's always the case but it's huge aspect of it. He'd come in we'd talk, I'd have a drink or two and he'd do a couple chair dances just on the main floor, two or three. Then we'd go back and he'd buy a fifteen-thirty minute room. About two weeks into him coming to see me I told him to wear a condom next time. He'd get off in five minutes and we'd sit there and talk the remainder of time he purchased the room. Great guy, seriously love him to death. He saw me for like four years and there was a period where I didn't see him. Everyone was like, Lexi where's John, what'd you do to piss him off or what'd he do to piss you off and you told him not to come back. I was dumbfounded. We talked a lot. He had a lot of issues, he was very insecure. His wife was a bully. He was a great guy, had a great heart. All of a sudden I didn't see him for like six months, someone runs up to the locker room, Lexi you'll never fucking believe who's sitting at the bar asking for you. I'm like yea whatever, so I walk down and look around and like he's not here. He taps me on the shoulder, he'd lost about eighty pounds, met a girl. I had convinced him to go on a dating sight and file for divorce. He finally filed for divorce, met a girl. He came in to thank me. He said I'm not gonna buy a dance because I met someone and I have you to thank, here's a thousand dollars; I hope I never see you again.

SH: Are they all like that? Give me the opposite.

T: Opposite. I don't remember his name but I'll never forget him though. Old, late sixties, early seventies, dirty hippy motherfucker. He'd come in get dances, he was handsy as hell, like so handsy

the bouncer would stand at the door. He was a perv but he loved me and he paid me a lot of freaking money, so I dealt with it. But he was funny, dirty old hippy. Then I had Jimmy Jackson. Jimmy Jackson would through his name around all the time. He called himself an OG, little black man walked around with a Louis Vi ton bag filii of hundreds. He was a gambler. He'd come in and see me and my girlfriend Revae. He'd get double dances from the two of us and he'd just pour money on us. Dirty old man, creepy, weird. He had a bunch of kids by a bunch of different girls. He went to all the clubs. I worked at Brunswick and Cleveland and he was at both of them. It's kinda fun because you build these relationships even though they're weird and quirky and they become part of your life.

SH: Why do you think everyone wants to date a stripper but no one wants to marry one?

T: It's hundred percent true. It's something you want to show around to your friends, bragging rights. You wanna show her off, take her to the club, stand back and watch, but you ain't gonna take her home to your momma. I can't tell you how many guys I've been with that it came down to you quit your job or we're breaking up. You don't want to take a girl that's been a stripper home to your mom. It's still viewed as a sin. No mom wants her precious fucking baby boy who's a goddamn saint to be with a whore. No one wants to hear that they're mother was a whore. The way I think men look at marriage is they want someone who is a wholesome person. Wholesome and being a mother and being a stripper are opposites. It's like Heaven and Hell. One of my best friends got pregnant a few months into dancing, has a beautiful son. Her baby daddy when they were fighting for custody brought up the fact that she dances. He now has full custody. He was in prison for heroin and won custody because she danced. I was at the hearing and you could just see the jury and people faces shocked when they said she works at the Cabaret. They we're like that poor child how can she be a mother.

SH: What's the ratio of girls that are either mothers, have a husband, or in a relationship?

T: Seventy-Five percent are mothers, if not more. Forty percent in a committed relationship.

Shane Hamby: How do you view your relationship with men?

Taylor: Before, during or after?

SH: All of them.

T: Before, I grew up very religious, I grew up very nai've. I was a very, very, very good child. I was a sneaky child, but I was a good child. I was very naive, I wanted to please everybody. I keep my head down did my work, did what I was supposed to do. I had a rough childhood with men. I'm not gonna get into it because that's not important. I was not treated well by men in my life growing up. But I believed in this whole fairy tale, like most girls do. The right man's gonna come sweep me off my feet and save me, I gonna have six babies and married by twenty-two, that whole view point. During, men are something to be used. Use them for sex, use them for money, use them to fix things, just use them. That's really hard to shake. Once you get into that mentality it's really hard to shake, because it's convenient. And even fully dressed I'm cute, so it's easy. After, like now, I know a lot more about how the male brain works. Especially, sexually and I can pick up on a lot more of men's emotions. So before, I danced, I grew up in an old school home where men don't cry, I mean I didn't even cry. My dad told me to grow a pair and suck it up. After working in a club it taught me that men are very

emotional. Other than the standards I grew up thinking, so I feel now I can read men's emotions a lot quicker than I could beforehand. And I understand more of what they want, and not just sexually, just want they want, or I can pick up and read men easier. Not every man is the same. I know how to listen to a man without getting my own thoughts in the way.

SH: How do you think men talk to a stripper as opposed to talking to other guys, do you think they talk different?

T: Guys talk to me, when I was a stripper and the men few and far between that do know that I danced, I'm one of the guys. They can talk to me a lot easier than they would talk to me if they just met me off the street. Men know that because I was a dancer, I've seen other men in a vulnerable state. I don't care if you cuss around me, I don't care if you spit, I don't care if you pull your pants down, I've seen it all. Nothing phases me, literally nothing phases me. So, I'm a lot easier to talk to than if you walk into work and there's a girl sitting there who grew up well and you cross or say something derogatory or smack a girl's ass and she has a full blown panic attack.

SH: How does the Me Too movement affect any of this, some guys now find it hard to carry on a normal "anything" with a girl and are becoming weary.

T: Oh yea, I really believe that, I know girls who have accused guys of rape and they'll tell you that was 100% false. But I know girls and personal experience, a lot of girls don't come forward, especially if you're a stripper. "I'm asking for it ten times more than a girl on a college campus that's just at a club".

SH: Do you think the MeToo movement is going to help or hurt the strip clubs?

T: I think it'll help the whole movement because you can go to a strip club, and I can tell you "smack my ass", it's great do it smack it. You'll never hear that, I mean you can't even get a girl to smack her ass while you're fucking her. I think this whole Me Too bullshit, and I think it's bullshit, but that's my own personal beliefs, greatly improves strip clubs. You can actually sit there and have a conversation with a girl and nowhere on the line of abuse. I'm not saying I've never felt abused or taken advantage of in the club because I have security. Now I worked at a very good club. I know clubs that are not like that. But it's better cause it's somewhere guys can go and they don't have to be scared.

SH: In Katherine Frank's article she said when she danced that not one guy was in the strip club for any sexual release, do you agree or disagree with that?

T: I think it's bullshit. Guys wanna have sex. Girls wanna have sex. People want to have sex. Now you're chances of going to a bar and hooking up with an RN are about a hundred times more likely than hooking up with a stripper. That's like a huge joke, in the strip club world, RN's are easy. Even if you're not going home with a girl, you're still getting some sort of sexual satisfaction. You're getting something to go home to jack off to or you'll get off there. Which is few and far between, but some guys literally don't have sex, so to have a girl wearing a piece of clothing that's literally this big (describes size of thong, about 2 inches by 3 inches) covering just what's legally allowed. Being otherwise completely naked, grinding on you, once in a while somebody's gonna get off.

SH: What type of release, if not sexual do you think a normal average guy looks for in the strip club?

T: Most of the time I did end up talking to people for hours. I had regulars come in that would never get a dance from me, we'd sit there and talk, never bought a dance. Now they paid me. I tell them up front, after fifteen minutes if you're not gonna buy a dance, you're still gonna pay me if you're gonna talk to me.



SH: How'd they take that?

T: It depends. The guys actually there that want to talk they'll pay you. They'll pay you more than you'd make if you were dancing for them.

SH: What did they want to talk about?

T: Everything and anything. Work, their fantasies, their kids, their lack thereof, their shitty boss, even sometimes their great wife. People just want somebody to talk to and a lot of times there's a big stigma against men going to therapy. There's less of a stigma to a man going to a strip club than going to therapy. If I'm gonna sit there and listen to your bullshit, I think I have a pretty good heart and knowledge, my degrees with mentality disabled people, so I have a little bit of that education, to where I help them through some things. And some people just need someone to freaking talk to.

SH: Do you think these guys can't talk to their male friends for fear of being seen less masculine?

T: Yea. I don't think a lot of people come in with that mentality. If you're with the right girl and she'll sit there and listen and try to lend some, at times even shitty advice, but advice or just sit there and listen and then it becomes a habit. There were other customers that would come in and didn't want me to say a Goddamn word unless it was Daddy. They don't want to talk. They wanna see a hot girl naked.

SH: Did you consider yourself a dancer, entertainer or sex worker?

T: A dancer. I mean it is sex work to a degree, but I consider myself a dancer. I've danced professionally my entire life. I did gymnastics on a professional level my entire life. So a huge part of it was the stage, the outfits, the shoes the hair, the make-up. It's a show and I'm a character. Now there were times I didn't want to do all that and I was just a sex worker.

SH: How did you switch in personas? Tell me about the college paper you did?

T: It was called Lexi and her Shoes, and it was about living a double life. Now I am the same person, no matter where I am, but it is another life because nobody knows about it. You can't go to Christmas, or there was one year, I was at my parents, Christmas night. I get a text from Stace, "we've got guys in here and there's one girl and she's hit, I need you to come in". He's like you're gonna make so much money. Called my mom and said, "Hey I got called into work". Now I worked at in home health care, so I would get called into work, because I went to individuals homes and fed them, bathed them, took care of them. So if there was an emergency, and I was like almost management level, cause I'd been doing it for so long and that was my degree, so I would get called in. I texted my best friend and roommate at the time, I said "pack my bag, we're gonna go work tonight". She goes you're batshit crazy but I hate my dad anyway so fuck it we're leaving. We grew up together in the same neighborhood, we drive back to our apartment, throw our stuff in a bag, as quick as possible get there. We walked outta there with ten grand each, on Christmas at like 10 o'clock. And that sounds like a lot of money and it's a lot of money but it was Christmas. There weren't that many guys in there probably fifty guys in there. And there were three girls, me, my roommate and some girl who had just started and didn't have a Goddamn clue what she was doing and she was not that cute. I mean I didn't even do anything.

SH: Would a good looking girl make the same amount of money if she didn't work at the higher in clubs such as yourself?

T: She wouldn't make a penny. I was at the right club in the right environment, in the right town at the right time. I wouldn't do good in Atlanta.

SH: You wouldn't?

T: No. First of all I don't twerk, second I keep my panties on, and they don't come off. And I don't twerk. You have to be selective about where you work, know your clientele and selective about the music you play. I dance to anything, I got this little thing that was made for me, it's all camo and I'd play country. Other days I'd wear head to toe black and leather and play rock.

SH: Who chooses the music? What role does the DJ play?

T: You pick a few things. Stacey knows me on another level. He's a very good DJ because he got to know his girls. On a level, he good tell what mood I was in by the way I walked in and he would, come up to me and say, "what do ya think about this for tonight". I'd say love it or hate it. He kept a file with every girls name on his computer with their top songs. There were times he'd come up to me and be like, listen I know you're feeling the country tonight and you're killing it but the crowd isn't. I'm gonna switch up your music, don't hate me, cause I think you'll make more money dancing to this. I had to learn how to trust him. A lot of girls wanna fight, a lot of girls are I'm only dancing to this. I danced my entire life so I could pretty much dance to anything. I have my own style but I can pretty much make it work to any music. There were girls will only dance to one genre, and the kill themselves. You kill yourself because not everybody likes that. A strip club one night you could have all ghetto people in there, the next night like on bucket night. Tuesday's were bucket night; you could get a bucket of beer for ten bucks. They're all a bunch of fucking hillbillies. Friday Saturday I wanna dance to The Weeknd and Rock, something more that style. Day shift versus night shift I'm gonna dance to different music.

SH: Is it a misconception that a night shift on a Friday makes the most money?

T: No, cause on a Friday or Saturday night you have guys, like yourself, come in want to have a good time. They don't necessarily have a lot of money. They might get a dance or two. If you have the stamina to do it you can but those nights are fucking exhausting. You're bouncing from bachelor party, to bachelor party: dance after dance, after dance. It's exhausting. Whereas, I could work on a Tuesday at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and I have to dance for one guy for maybe an hour and I make the same amount of money I woulda on a Friday night. My typical shift, I worked Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. I worked 2:00pm til Midnight. That was the perfect shift, cause I didn't have to deal with all the girls that were high at night but I didn't have to deal with the daytimers all day. I still had that after work crowd, which a lot of girls don't realize you want the Happy Hour crowd. In Ohio, we do Happy Hour, four til seven, so we do a drink special; we had food for a little bit, Christie's in Canton has really good food. That Happy Hour was freaking great at the one that had food. People would come in after work, get a couple beers, have a piece of pizza and then go. They just got outta work their stressed; they're only there for a short amount of time so you don't have to deal with them all day. They want to get a quick release and go. With whatever that is, dances, talking, whatever. That was the best time to work. When I first started dancing I loved the weekends, but I was younger, I had a lot more energy. The stamina the excitement, I could bounce around, as I got older, I started working more towards days. I gave myself a set schedule and let everyone know my set schedule. Which helped a lot because I was in school and I had another job. It made things easy for the clientele, for the DJs for everybody to know when I worked.

SH: Is there a difference dancing for one individual as opposed to a group of guys, do you do the same routine?

T: I'm pretty much a creature of habit. I know what works for me. I know my strong points. It's pretty much same routine.

SH: Back to the girl that works at a lower end club, how much of her making money is not on the customer but on her?

T: Seventy Five percent is on her because girls that work at a big club that are used to the flashy lights, they have a shit attitude. When they come to a smaller club they got a shit attitude. You've got your crew, you're family and if they don't mesh well with the family they're not gonna make shit.

SH: What if her attitude was good but she was just in a small rural environment away from the flashy lights?

T: She'll make money but she still won't do that good.

SH: You think she'll be treated the same?

T: No, because guys want the girl next door.

SH: What does that mean?

T: You can't talk to a girl from L.A. You can talk to the girl that lives down the street. It's a better fantasy. Anyone can sleep with whore from L.A.

SH: So she's selling a different fantasy based on her clients and locale?

T: She could try to sell a different fantasy, but girls get into a very routine on the way the talk to customers, the way they dance. The night when you walk into a club is pretty much routine, no matter where you are. It's if you've established yourself as a dancer you can pretty much keep it easy on yourself.

SH: Would it be equated to like a job in production or assembly line?

T: Kind of, but even when you go to work you have the same routine. Everyone does, no matter what job you have. I mean it could go batshit crazy but it's generally the same. To make your life easier you want to keep it that way. If you're working in North Carolina or Ohio, you wanna keep it the same. Girls that work in big cities, Atlanta, Vegas, Chicago. Cleveland is kinda a big city but our laws are a little bit stricter when it comes to dances and things like that. I've seen the girls come from the big cities to our smaller clubs. Christie's is a big name across the country but it's a smaller club. It's more of like of family place in my mind.

SH: What are some of the laws that regulate stripping?

T: When I first started, it was your first song you wear three pieces of clothing. So you do a stage set and it's three songs, first song you have three pieces of clothing on, second song you take your top off, third song, it used to be when my sister worked there mandatory panties off. When I started it was optional then the government got involved and they said no more. No more vaginas if there's alcohol. There was a law for a little bit where everyone had to wear pasties. That no one ever really follows up on, so it's kinda to the wayside.

SH: Do people come in and check?

T: Yea, cops are in there all the time. In Brook Park, a super sketchy part of Cleveland, they had a three arm rule. So basically the distance I am sitting from you that's three arms and that's how far the dancer had to be from the customer. Because they had so much sex going on in those clubs. It became mandatory three arm rule and the girls would get arrested for prostitution if they got any closer. On the spot arrested for prostitution. It became so bad because of so much sex and drugs

going on in that part of Cleveland that the detectives would come in and just walk into a back room, walk through the club. They're undercover, some are some aren't but for the most part they are. They'd be like, that's wrong and she'd get arrested for prostitution. Now that's in a shady club in a shady part of town where they were actually doing a lot of shady shit. The detectives and police had reason to be there. They'd come into our club but to make sure the customers were behaving, not so much us because we had really good management. They'd search our stuff all the time. Management and bouncers if they thought if drugs or underage drinking, cause you could dance at eighteen. In North Carolina you can't drink while you're dancing but in Ohio you can. So if you're underage drinking or if you had alcohol they'd fire girls.

SH: Did you find it offensive that they could search you? Did they tell you they were going to?

T: Ninety percent of the times they did, unless the girl is nodding out and is actually a danger to herself or other people, then they'd just do it. Most of the time they'd be like, "Hey, Lexi, I heard rumor could I search your stuff, can you unlock your locker for me so I don't have to break it". I had nothing to hide.

We got a discount on booze and it's paid for most of the time, so I didn't feel the need to bring in my own stuff. Once in a while I'd make myself a cocktail and bring it in with me and drink it while I was getting ready but for the most part I didn't need to. I didn't care, I knew a lot of people got offended by things like that but I grew up in a way where you respect your elders and respect those in charge.

SH: It's like liability too, it's a business.

T: Yea, it's a business. I had a very good report with the bouncers; I'm still friends with most of them, the manager, the GM of the company. I'm friends with all of them. There were one or two that get hired the last three months and they were shady and they would leave. I've got nothing to hide, mind you though, I was in school to be a teacher, so I keep a pretty clean act to begin with.

SH: Is there a high turnover rate? Are the bouncers, managers, DJs doing this to supplement their income, do they have more than one job or do you know?

T: The club that I worked at that I always kept going back to even if I worked at other places, Christies in Brunswick. There was turnover rate here and there but for the most part it was a solid group of people. The guy who was a bouncer when my sister started working there, he's now the GM. Stacey's been there forever, he was there when my sister worked. They treat us well. That's another one of the things, is you can choose where you work.

SH: Was there an employee handbook? Or was it straight on the job training?

T: No. Most girls don't get training, if they like you they'll help you out.

SH: Were there any secret words, codes or gestures that you would use for any uncomfortable situation or any situation?

T: Oh yea, "Dinosaur". Me and my girlfriends used it when we went out clubbing and stuff. Creepy, Unsafe, not comfortable. With the different bouncers, I had different signals for them. If I'm giving a guy a dance and he's handsy, and I can't control him, there were different things that I would do to signal the bouncers. We had a pretty good group of guys. Not every girl did this cause some girls don't care. They don't care if they're groped. With different bouncers it was a little bit different but I had a good rapport with them. So they would watch everything that was going on with me and if it felt uncomfortable I'd do something. We had a locker room upstairs and downstairs in the basement

there's a bunch of private rooms. In the back corner we had our smoking lounge, so we had our own lounge where we could drink or take break or smoke. The city wouldn't let us go outside. We could always just run off there if you needed some time.

SH: Why do think the majority of the scholarship and research material I've found has been written by women?

T: Because things like that it's a men's world. That's where all the stigma comes from are the men. The stigma and negative things come from men because they go there in secret and come out giggling. Kind of like locker room talk. Saying you went all the way with someone. That kind of thing comes from guys. All these articles are from women trying to get their story out saying, "I did this and I made a great living and I succeeded and I'm not mentally fucked up". Stop judging me.

SH: You think women have easier access in finding someone to talk to about stripping?

T: Yea, you could not walk into a strip club, sit down with a girl and say, "I'm doing a paper I need an insight on what you do for a living". The girls gonna look at you and say, "OK, that'll be five hundred dollars". And she'll give you some bullshit of whatever you want to hear.

SH: What do you think could change that attitude?

T: I don't think anything. Because of the amount of bullshit lies I hear from guys trying, the things that come outta guys mouths when they wanna take you home, is so crazy out there farfetched. It doesn't matter what you say I'm not going home with you. You could say that you're God, I don't care, it does not gonna happen.

SH: What would a male have to do to break down that barrier for academic purposes?

T: He'd have to spend a lot of money and get a half ass story.

SH: How do you think stripping helped you to where you're at today?

T: I have confidence. Some girls it doesn't work that way. I'm speaking for myself. I grew up in a home where my parents are supportive but not really. They have their ideas of how the world works, like most parents do. I was, especially in High School, one of the most insecure. I had eating disorders, insecure, self-loathing young adult and child on this planet Earth. Dancing gave me the confidence to walk into any room and say, "Fuck You I know what I'm doing". Dancing gave me the confidence to say, "No" to a lot of things. Like I said, growing up I was that kid that wanted to please everyone. And I would say yes to everything. Someone say I need you to babysit and then do this, clean my house, wash my car, wipe my ass, OK.

SH: Could there have been anything else that could have given you that confidence?

T: No. I don't think so. I think that if I would not have danced, I would have ended up never leaving. I realized I could make money and a lot of it very quickly gave me the confidence. I didn't even know this town existed and I packed up everything I owned and drove ten hours by myself to start over. Dancing gave me the confidence to do that. I would have never dreamed of doing anything like that. Dancing gave me the confidence to stand up to my parents. I don't think it's all specifically dancing. It's the friendships I made, it's the support that I had. Like Stacey, one of my best friends in the world. Dana, who's now the GM but was a bouncer when my sister started and was bouncing when I started. Great guys, I consider them my brothers. I could go to them for anything, they'd kill for me they would. It's a whole other level of support. Two of my best friends I met dancing. I don't think everyone should dance, I would never tell a girl who is insecure to go out and dance. I think it's

person by person and my personality is the type, the way I was raised and grew up. I'm a very stubborn but level headed human being. I was able to do it and take away the positives. Of course there are some things that are negative.

SH: Are girls that danced viewed as either upper, middle or lower class and are they viewed differently than say Belle Knox who did porn while attending Duke but is now in NYU law school?

T: Oh yea, the girls that grew up in a trailer park that danced alongside of me may be beautiful, but they still are living off welfare. They live in Section 8, they don't have a car. They're dancing and it's under the table. They're making a fucking killing and they're still living in Section 8 housing. Then you have girls like myself and my best friend, Revae is what she danced by, her dad is one of the best lawyers in Cleveland. We both grew up pretty damned privileged. My parents instilled in me at a very young age a good work ethic. If you don't work you don't eat. Up until I was adopted I never went without. When my parents pass away, I could retire. They have that kind of money. We are treated differently but I think we carry ourselves differently.

Sl-1: What's making the girls stay in a lower class system, if they are making a lot of money, than moving up to middle class?

T: They don't want to tell anybody where they make their money. There's more a judgement for them dancing, than for me dancing. Because I'm a strong independent woman and I'm gonna make my money however I want to. Whereas them, to be frank and honest are low-life trash, so them dancing puts another stain on their already fucked up record. Now like legally, I got into some legal trouble, and I've seen it happen time and again. While I was still dancing and all the cops knew I danced and knew where I lived, saw me coming and going. They let me off, whereas, Sammie and the girls that live in the trailer park, do the same thing leave the club drunk get pulled over, they'd let me off, they wouldn't let them off, because they're already a red flag as a human being. But that's society; I'm not saying they're bad people. Now I've seen some girls take that money and do the right thing, pay their taxes, tile a W -4. They pay their taxes and work their way outta the system. I've seen quite a few girls do that and work their way out of the system. Get their kids outta section 8, get a car, get their kids into a private school, and live a mediocre life.

SH: Is there any aspect of stripping that you would consider chasing the American dream?

T: If you do it the right way it's the American Dream, hell yea. Because it's the only country in the world where you can be a stripper and you're not, other than like Canada, that you're not forced into it. I did it on my free will and it's amazing being a woman in America having this opportunity. I was in school for five years and I don't owe a single penny.

SH: What set you apart from the other girls or other dancers in general?

T: It's not just one thing, its multiple things. There were girls who were a lot better than me. What makes a girl stand out and successful is branding herself, giving herself a name. I had a designer I'd go to for my outfits where they were along the same level of sophistication.

SH: Did your outfits come out of your expenses?

T: Yea, but if you pay your taxes, it's a write off. The year I did pay my taxes, I wrote off every manicure, pedicure, haircut, every single trip to goddamn Victoria Secret, trip to Target. The other thing that most people will find fascinating, cleanliness. Once in a while you'll find a few sketchy girls here and there. But the cleanliness, what other jobs in America is it required to shave your asshole?

Shane Hamby: What do you like to do outside of work?

Taylor: Normal, Twenty-something things, drink. Living where we live I do a lot of hiking. I have my dog. It always kills me when people are like, "what do you do on your day off?" It's like, I do the same thing everybody else does on their day off, I do laundry and I clean the house. I travel a lot.

SH: Is there any one thing or multiple things you'd change about the business of stripping?

T: There's so many but there's not. It's like a perfectly imperfect world, because it's a different world. The only thing I'd change is that people wouldn't judge you. And then it wouldn't affect your future roles in life.

SH: Do you think it does though?

T: Oh it does, I know that it does because for example, I started working at the company I'm at now. The club closes every November, so I had to find a job in town. I was a serving as a waitress in town. My roommate at the time found my bag cause I still have that. When I moved to North Carolina I got rid of a lot of stuff, outfits, shoes. I still have two pairs of shoes and a couple outfits. mostly just for me. But I had it under my bed and I guess my roommate went in to look for something, God knows what. She found my bag that says Christie's Cabaret on it went and told my boss, I got demoted. And I quote, "You are not quality". At Madison's. And I feel like I had to work ten times harder to prove that I'm a good human being. But then because they said that I was like ok fuck you I'll be part time and that's when I started working in Asheville. I was like if they're gonna call me this and treat me this way and I'm making \$3.25 an hour, fuck you. So that's when I went down to Asheville.

SH: Did management address any concerns you had while dancing like other job's management would have?

T: It depends. There was a while there in the main club I worked at in Brunswick, which is just right outside of Cleveland. We had management for a while that was shitty. And that's when I left and went to the other clubs, either the sister club in Cleveland or Canton or I went and worked at Diamonds.

SH: What made them shitty?

T: He expected things, he was a douche. There was one manager for a while that expected sex. It was none stop. He was like, "come over and have a threesome with me and my wife". Like every single fucking day. I'm not putting up with shit like that. There was another manager, not to get into TMI, but Brunswick is not far from the town I grew up in. When I was just starting out college right before I was dancing, I was raped. And the person who did that to me would come into the club. I went to the manager and said, "I'm extremely uncomfortable, I don't want him here". He said I don't care he's a paying customer. So I left. Its little things like that, because I'm selling sex they don't care. So I left until that manager was no longer there. Now Stacey was behind me 100%, he's like if I'm working I'll tell him to leave, but legally they can't tell someone can't be in there unless there's a formal complaint, or I file a restraining order. That's just too much legality so I waited until that manager was no longer working for the company and then I came back.

SH: Tell me one or two funny stories that happened while dancing?

T: There's so many. It's mostly between the girls themselves. Like the camaraderie between us, we we're like sisters. We fucking hated each other we fought. One of my favorite stories, Stacey also while a DJ at the Club, there was a bar across the street that he would DJ at on Thursday nights it was ladies night. Nicki and I who's my best friend now, we worked a lot together. How we met and became best friends is because we had the same tits. Like the exact same tits. She was a cocktail waitress and we we're all sitting clown there smoking a cigarette and we're like you're pretty you should dance. She's like no my boobs are small. And I was like let's see 'em. So she shows us all her boobs and I'm like, "Oh my God we have the same boobs". Then it became like a thing we'd always dance together. So Nichole and I would have this one customer that would come in and he would buy us like a VIP, not like a dance. He wouldn't buy any dances but he would buy us a VIP setup so a big bottle of Grey Goose with cranberry juice and orange juice and sprite, and just watch us get shitfaced. I was twenty-two she was twenty-one, we would drink the whole bottle between the two of us, and we wouldn't share we anybody. Which is borderline alcoholism but we we're young and the best time. So that night, he would pay us like five hundred bucks and we would split it between the two of us. He would just watch us get drunk and dance with other guys, he was weird. So we we're super shitfaced and nobody came in all night. So we we're just sitting there and it was one of those weird random nights, where nobody was there. No customers, it was dead. But we both have this bottle of Vodka to drink, we can't take it with us, they're not gonna like hold it for us for tomorrow. So we sat there and got shitfaced. We we're both grumpy cause we didn't make any money. Stacey was DJing at the bar across the street, him and a bunch of our friends. A group of friends came in and somebody looks at me and was like what the fuck is your problem. Cause I was just grumpy and I look at my drink and they'd already called last call and it was my last drink of my Vodka. And I look at him and go Fuck You, and grabbed Stacey's Sprite and threw it in his face cause I couldn't waste my Vodka.

SH: What do you guys do when there's nobody in the club?

T: They say they'd like you to be there for at least six hours. So from the time you get there be there for six hours. Now give or take on your relationship with your manager you can be there or you can't. Now there's another thing, like stage sets are mandatory. You do a rotation and you start with the first girl who gets there and every girl they do a rotation on stage. If you're good friends with the DJ or tip him extra you don't have to. But if you know you have good clientele coming up and you don't need to be on the stage. Being on stage is like an advertisement. "I'm what they can get". And they choose to take you to a room or get a lap dance. You can tip the DJ extra for him not to put you on stage, if you already know you got people set up. I've only seen one girl in my entire life that danced with no tattoos. And the tattoos increase the longer you dance.

SH: If you could have one dream job what would that be and why?

T: I wanna have a farm. Legit. I just wanna have a farm. I just wanna be at a point where I don't have to worry about bills, save up enough whatever or retire early. I just wanna have a farm and have cows and kids and take care of people that need to be taken care of. By nature, hospitality comes naturally because I'm a caregiver. I've worked with special needs, I've worked with the elderly, I've taught Sunday School. I wanna take care of people, I grew up on a farm, I love farms. Just the whole idea of that, to be happy and be at peace and not have to punch in or punch out. Just take care of people and animals.

SH: Is that a goal or a dream?

T: Both.



SH: Think you can get them both or is one going to supersede the other?

T: I think I can get them. I'm very smart. I've had two forms of retirement set up since the day I turned eighteen. And dancing helped but a big chunk into that. I plan on retiring by forty, which to me sounds old right now but I know that it's not. I kinda have things figured out to where I won't have to work.

SH: How do you think stripping, exotic dance or pornography fits into the history of America?

T: That's how America was built. It comes down to even if you skip over American and go to Roman times sex is sex. And we are by nature very sexual beings and everyone needs to release that in some way or form. Whether it's sleeping around, going to strip clubs, or watching porn or masturbating or being in a monogamous relationship. Everyone, I don't care who you are, needs to have some sort of sexual release. I think especially America being founded as a Christian Nation. We have had brothels since George Washington. If you study history, look at witches. Salem witch trials they were accused mainly of sex acts and selling sex. That's our history I mean look at the Wild West, there's the whorehouses and the brothels. I don't think it's something that will ever go away in our country. I think there might be changes, but like I said earlier with the whole Me Too movement it's making the industry stronger.

SH: How has the "whore" be changed in definition or has it?

T: It's like in England; Cunt is used like the word Bitch.

SH: Is there any questions what would you want to see answered historically about stripping?

T: I don't know. I don't think so, I think at this point in society we're getting to the point where it's not that big of a stigma anymore. I think in small towns it still is, but I think as society as a whole it's not that much of a stigma as it used to be.

SH: Is there anything else you want me to ask or you think I've left out of these questions?

T: That men are mean. Men are mean. You wouldn't believe the amount of criticism that you get after you shave and wax, literally head to toe. Men will still find something wrong with you. It's not all men; there are many, many men that'll worship the ground you walk on. That's one of the things I tell girls that'll start, that are new to the whole thing. Don't take it to heart, because men are nasty. I mean they will tear apart your gum to tooth ratio. I swear to God. But when you take the female body, which is perfect, no matter what size shape whatever and put it on a stage and put a spotlight on it, and get fifty drunk men. It takes a very strong girl not to take it to heart. I've seen girl after girl after girl quit. I mean like sobbing run out the door.

SH: Why do you think men do that?

T: Because they're ashamed that they're there in the first place. Because they have to pay to see women naked. They don't have to pay to see women naked, but they are. I'm not talking about every single person that comes into a strip club, this is a select few that doesn't get talked about a lot. Everybody talks about the pervert, everybody talks about the bachelor party, everybody talks about the regulars who are harmless and come in. But nobody talks about the man that comes in to make himself feel better and sit there and tear every inch of your body apart.

SH: Is there anything that you think I've left out when talking about jobs or stripping either one?

T: You didn't talk about the hiring process. How you become a stripper.

SH: Ok, let's talk about that.

T: Cause I've worked at multiple clubs. So certain clubs, certain places that I know not from firsthand experience. You walk in there's a doorman at the front. You say I want an application and they're like ok you want to audition tonight. There are certain days that you audition or certain clubs now because there's so many girls dancing now they do a Sunday night amateur night. You compete and they'll hire the top five. You come in you fill out the application process, you can't have any felonies to be a dancer. You get dressed in your choosing of outfits. Now every club has different requirements. You have to wear three articles of clothing or at least two or you have to have pasties.

SH: Do you have your stuff with you?

T: Uh-huh. I do, not everyone does but I do. You get dressed, you meet with the manager, he gives you the once or twice or ten times over and then you wait for your name to be called on stage and you dance a two or three song set or whatever their requirements are. It's weird though because at different clubs sometimes they won't make you do that. At Cleveland, all I did was got dressed and they were OK you're fine. In Asheville, I was wearing a hoodie and jeans and he was like you're hired. In Asheville they don't have a requirement on weight or like preference. Whereas, in Cleveland, Cooper the owner, he liked certain girls. He owned three clubs in Ohio, two in North Carolina and one in Florida, two in Atlanta, three in Arizona and a couple sporadic here and there. He likes a very specific girl. I've seen him walk into the club, there's a girl on stage, I don't like you, get. Then it comes to manager preference. That's also an interesting thing, when I was Brunswick for so long, we saw a turnover of manager for a while there because Dana went to work down in Canton. There was so much turnover you could see what the managers like themselves by what the hire. It throws off everything. It's just very interesting. It wasn't until I came down South that I ever seen a fat stripper. The clubs that I worked at were higher end. I mean we had "thick" girls but you never had anyone that was borderline obese. There was a while where we got so many complaints, like every single fucking girl is skinny and white. What the hell we want a little variety. But it's very interesting to see how different managers hire different types of girls based off what they like.

SH: Anything else to add?

T: I think with Wood since he's in Asheville, ask him about his hiring process, because with me I walked in met with him and he hired me on the spot without ever seeing me naked and that's pretty fucking brave. Stacey, I'd ask him more like music related more timing related questions because the DJ controls how the night flows. Stacey would be a good one to ask any type of bartending questions too.

## **END OF INTERVIEW**

Shane Hamby

November 30, 2018