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Contortionist

Hands down (and legs around), Bonnie Morgan has one of the most twisted gigs in town

BY BEATRICE VERHOEVEN

♦♦ “I was about eight years old when I discovered my ‘secret superpower.’ My older sister was trying to pull me off a piece of playground equipment. She kept pulling my ankles until she eventually pulled my legs over my head, then screamed, ‘Oh, God, she’s being weird!’ I hopped off and showed my parents, and my dad said, ‘I can make a buck with that!’”

♦♦ Morgan, a professional body manipulator, can squeeze through an unstrung tennis racket and fold into a duffel bag. She holds the Guinness World Records title for having spent the longest time (nearly three minutes) in a two-by-two-foot box with two other people.

♦♦ Her repertoire includes cyborgs, aliens, and demons; she’s had a string of freaky roles in films (*Minority Report*, *The Devil Inside*, *Men in Black II*) and in TV series (*CSI*, *ER*).

♦♦ A classically trained actress, Morgan is also a third-generation circus performer. Her father is a stuntman, her godfather is an acrobat, and her belly dancer-thespian sister plays the “quintessential Goth girl” on *The Big Bang Theory* and *Two and a Half Men*.

♦♦ “Most contortionists are very serious. I was a clown first. I was born a ridiculous human being, and then I get to do this for a living. I love my job, and aside from contortion, I have all-around circus skills. I’m an aerialist, I can walk on stilts, do high wire and rolling globe.”

♦♦ There are several kinds of contortionists, each with his or her own specialty, among them frontbending, backbending, and dislocating.

♦♦ “I don’t think there is a trick I couldn’t do no matter how much I try. There are girls who can sit on their heads, but they can’t dislocate their elbows or smash their hips. Nor can they act. Anybody can read the words, but can everybody make them come alive?”

♦♦ Morgan was nominated for a Screen Actors Guild Award for her devilish pretzel posing in *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*. The Oscar-level accolades in her line of work are known as the Taurus World Stunt Awards.

♦♦ Whatever you do, don’t call Morgan double-jointed.



The correct term is “hyper-mobile,” which means having joints that are genetically predisposed to extend beyond the average human capacity.

♦♦ “I have heard things that would make you blush. The awkward, inappropriate weirdness that comes out of an audience’s mouth is astounding. But it’s OK. I’ve had great comebacks.” ■

“There are a lot of dancers and yoga enthusiasts who are limber, but there are very few true contortionists.”