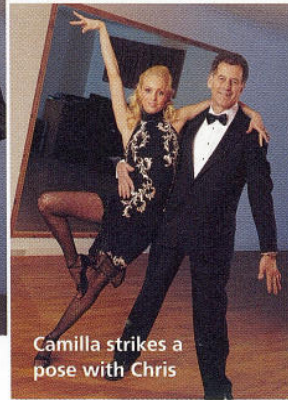




Taking it step by step...



Ian steers Helen in the right direction



Camilla strikes a pose with Chris



Eureka! Helen's cracked it!

I found myself falling ever so slightly in love...

Chefs do it, cricketers do it and so we asked Helen Lederer and her husband Chris to do it – learn to dance. Their teachers were the glam Camilla and Ian from TV's *Strictly Come Dancing*

Dancing is one of those unforgiving activities that separates the men from the boys. One minute I was upright and dignified, i.e. walking into the dance studio, the next I was flailing about and worrying if I had bad breath, so close was I to my new partner.

I breathed in and smiled bravely at our two slim and sexy *Strictly Come Dancing* gurus. No pressure, but we were to be taught by Ian Waite (handsome dance partner to Zoë Ball) and Camilla Dallerup (the Danish dancing champion). After all, it's one thing to let it hang out in a pair of trackie bots to a salsa DVD in the kitchen – with the blinds down – but seeing my normally horizontal partner flail about with a pretty lady?

Ian seemed very tall (but that could be because I'm very short) and Camilla positively screamed vitality, whereas we were already a little puffed and shiny from the walk from the taxi to their front door.

Had we danced before, they asked? What do you mean by dance? I wanted to enquire. Do you mean glide about in a balletic way or have a go at some salsa steps with a margarita in one hand and a Cuban in the other? I hoped Chris wouldn't tell them about his student dance lessons (two) and that they'd ask him to demonstrate. Would they smirk? I certainly have.

However, these two were not the smirking types. They were direct and jokey, unlike the two of us who had become oddly rigid and

inert. While I was trying to remember how to walk, let alone polka, they had a brief confab about what to teach us. They settled on the cha-cha. This announcement was made as if they were giving us a birthday present. I tried to look as thrilled as they were.

Suddenly, Ian gripped my trunk and we began swaying together and stepping forward and back while he counted the beats. Once I'd got over the shock of such intimacy (it felt slightly like my junior school country dancing lessons), I found myself falling ever so slightly in love.

I stared obsessively at his feet and didn't look up until I'd "got it". But I couldn't help comparing feet with Camilla's. Hers were petite and bendy whereas mine just did the one movement in a clumpy way. I decided to abandon any comparisons and before long we were moving in unison – very Morecambe and Wise.

Then Camilla suggested we swap partners – what you mean me with Camilla? No, me and Chris. Oh. All our confidence evaporated as Chris and I reverted to two awkward teenagers doing a shuffle. We quickly suggested we revert to our original partners.

Back came that strong hand round my trunk and suddenly it was decreed time to do it with music. It felt like we were out on a great double date as we moved into the next section called the "New York". This meant stepping to the side and opening our arms out. It was a bit

stately at first, like the Trooping of the Colour, until Ian whisked me about to get me going.

I asked Camilla how on earth she got those professional results from the novices on TV. Camilla did say she'd wondered what she was going to do with James Martin when she discovered she was to partner him (the beefy non-dancing chef). But when he decided that it was mind over matter they nearly won.

Ian and Camilla are genuinely very sunny people and it's impossible to feel troubled for too long over a dance section. Having mastered the cha-cha (as long as we were wife-swapped) we decided to attack the waltz. We both got rather cocky until we had to go backwards. I didn't mind reversing with Ian, but I started to play up and foot faulted when Chris did it with me. However, persistence paid off. At the final hour Chris became masterful and pushed me round. Our legs held up and there were no gallops. It was a eureka moment.

We went home more in step and keen to dance again. Trouble is, where will we put Ian and Camilla? The spare room? **w&h**

"I was trying to remember how to walk, let alone polka"



To book a lesson with Ian and Camilla, visit www.camilladallerup.com or www.ian-waite.com or www.trulyfabulousevents.co.uk. See them at The Arts Club, Dover St, London, 22 July, call (020) 7499 8581. Camilla is writing her autobiography with former dance partner Brendan Cole.