**Photography**

by Emi Tsuruta

I've always been a little interested in photography. I take pictures whenever I go travelling, or my friends get together for a reunion, or there's some other big event. My boyfriend Ryosuke used to take pictures of me... and then there was that time with my father's photographer friend... I wasn't always happy with how the pictures turned out though, so eventually, I decided to take an art photography class to learn how to do it myself.

Our teacher, Tom, was from Eastern Europe. He took the 'art' part of the course very seriously. He taught us about composition, lighting, creating an atmosphere. He asked us what we wanted to 'say' with each photograph. You couldn't just dash off a few quick snaps, but had to spend time thinking about the angle, the weather, the time of day. He also taught us how to find, and work with models, what to look for, and how to bring out the best in them.

I found it hard at first to take photographs that Tom would like. Still he gave us a lot of feedback, and slowly, I began to get better. For our end of term assignment, we had to take a series of photographs on a common theme for our portfolio. At first, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, so I read up on famous photographers to see what they did.

One photographer I like is Miru Kim. She is a bright young Korean woman with sparkly eyes, a bit shy maybe, who lives in the States. In university, she originally planned to study medicine, but switched to fine art. She became involved in 'urban exploration,' and wanders around in old abandoned tunnels, theatres or train stations taking pictures of herself... in the nude. She says that she started to do that partly as a way of overcoming her shyness and fears. She does talk about the rush you get when you manage to get away with wandering around naked in these places without getting caught. In one of her videos, she tells a story about a homeless man who stumbled on her while she was naked in this tunnel. She just explained to him that it was for an art project, and he stood there watching her scurry back and forth - in the nude - and then offered his shirt for her to wipe off her feet. I thought it was so cool that she could do things like that, and get away with it. Sometimes people are not so understanding.

Anyway, for my portfolio project, I started thinking about doing something on urban exploration. Tom liked nudes - he'd made that pretty clear in class. He even hired nude models sometimes for the students to photograph. I guess I didn't really mind if he saw me naked in photographs. I was pretty sure I could trust him, and it would be kind of funny to present them to him, and see what he thought. I doubt he'd complain about the nudity part of it.

The problem though was more how to get good pictures. I didn't really know of any abandoned buildings nearby. I remember seeing an abandoned house in this gorge my boyfriend and I went hiking in once, and once we came upon an abandoned hot spring cabin out in the desert, but those were kind of far away.

Around that time, the front tire of my bicycle sprung a leak, so I had to fix it. Early Monday morning, after my host mom Loretta and her kids had headed out for the day, I went down to the garage to take a closer look at my bike. I couldn't see any holes in the back tire, but it was definitely flat. The wheel was squeaking a bit, so I poked around in the garage until I found some lubricating oil. I didn't want to get oil all over my clothes, and it was then that it struck me. I wonder if I could take pictures here in the garage. It was kind of bleak and industrial looking, like one of Miru Kim's urban explorer settings. My teacher Tom would probably like that.

I peered out through the window high up in the garage door. It didn't look like the neighbors across the way were home. I don't think that that particular family had ever caught me naked before, but one of my neighbors had. Soon after I moved in, the daughter in the house just south of us and one of her friends saw me standing out naked by the side of the house. That was a long time ago now, and luckily, nothing ever came of it.

Anyway, while I was thinking all this over, I'd absent-mindedly started fiddling with my belt buckle. My pants felt tight, and I wanted to take them off, but I was still a bit worried about the neighbors across the way. At night, there was usually an older man sitting in the front room, but it looked pretty quiet now, and their car wasn't in the driveway. Maybe it'll be alright.

Still watching out the window, I slowly unbuckled my belt, kicked off my runners, and took off my jeans. It felt a bit strange getting naked in such a harsh place, all cold concrete and motor oil, but the contrast was probably something that Tom would like. I took off my panties next, feeling my heart speed up. I was pretty sure no one could see me, but even so, it was kind of nerve-wracking getting naked out here in such an open area of the house.

I took off my blouse and bra next, but I felt a little bit too exposed, so I ended up pulling my blouse back on, leaving the front buttons undone. The cool air tickled my skin, making my nipples perk up. To get my mind off the feeling of being naked out here, I tried to focus on my bicycle instead. I took off the wheel with the flat, so I could take a closer look at the tire. I finally decided to go get my camera, so I could get some of this on film.

Before stepping out into the living room, I peered over at the front window to make sure that no one was walking by, and then dashed up to my room. Usually this time of morning, there aren't many people out on my street, but it was kind of a thrill streaking around the house almost naked.

Anyway, I got out my camera, flash, tripod and everything, and brought them all down to the garage. The garage was really dark though. The light on the ceiling was the fluorescent glow-in-the-dark kind, and would probably make my skin look a strange color. Flash would look unnatural too. I guess I should open the garage door to get some sunlight in here, but how's that going to work? If anyone walked by, they'd be able to see me standing here naked.

I stood staring up at the window for a long time trying to see if anyone was outside. It seemed pretty quiet. Maybe if I just open the door for a minute, take a few quick shots, and then close it again. That might work.

Hiding in the doorway back into the house, I pressed the button that opens the garage door. The motor makes this horrible racket as it rolls the folding metal door up into the ceiling. Once it was done, it was quiet again. Everything seemed calm outside on the street. I was still wearing my blouse, so I was more or less decent, but I should probably take it off when I take these pictures. I just stood there though, hiding in the doorway for the longest time trying to gather up the nerve to take off my top, and go out into the garage.

As far as I could tell, there didn't seem to be anyone on the street, but this was actually kind of a silly idea, parading around naked in my own home. At least when we're out somewhere, people won't know it's me. Still I felt safer here, and I finally decided to chance it. I pulled the two sides of my blouse together to cover my breasts, and carefully tiptoed down onto the concrete floor. I felt terribly anxious, all butterflies in my tummy, but I slowly padded out to the entrance to the garage. Now I could even see this house up high on the hill behind the houses across the street. I couldn't really tell if anyone was home there. I hope I don't have an audience.

Almost as if to check, I let go of my blouse, letting it fall open, exposing my bush. I made a half-hearted effort to hold the blouse together to cover my breasts, but there was a bit of a breeze, tickling my bare flesh, and making the tails of my blouse billow up, exposing my bare backside as well. It felt so weird to be standing out in front of my house nearly naked... but it felt good too - liberating actually to finally being doing it. It took quite an effort to focus though, and remember what I came out here to do. Oh, the pictures! That's right. I'm supposed to get some pictures of all this.

I went back into the garage, and set the timer on the camera. I took off my blouse - stripping naked finally - ran back, and posed for the shot, propping my bike up, and sliding the front wheel back on. While I was doing that though, a car drove by outside! Oh god! I hope they didn't see me.

I was a bit nervous after that, but I still had to get more shots. I scampered back to the camera, and started to set up another shot when I heard voices coming from out on the street. I dashed back to the doorway to hide, but before I could get there, a group of joggers came into view. I was so worried because they were right there, but by some amazing stroke of luck, I don't think they saw me. My heart was pounding in my chest by that point, and it finally sunk in that it was just too dangerous trying to do this on my street. I reluctantly pulled my clothes back on, rescued my camera, and closed the garage door. Ah well. I'll have to come up with some other idea.

For the next few days, I lay low, but I still had the problem of where I was going to take the rest of my pictures for this assignment. A couple of the bicycle shots had turned out okay, but I needed quite a few more. I did have a couple of ideas. When I went through the ravine on the way to that new supermarket, right at the end, there's a wooded area with trails running through it with no one there most of the time. The main path heads up the hill, and you can see the bright shiny facade of the supermarket through the tree branches. Maybe if I went there early some Sunday morning, I could take some shots.

I was worried though about going out there alone. Sometimes there were people in the park, teenagers drinking, neighbors walking their dogs or strange homeless men. Maybe I should bring someone along to act as my bodyguard, but the real question was who. My boyfriend Ryosuke was probably too busy, and I didn't think my friends Satomi or Asuna would be that keen on watching me strip naked out in the woods.

There was one person though, a guy in my photography class, Oliver. He was tall, blonde and from Switzerland. He was very serious about the course, and seemed to know a lot about cameras. We kind of became friends, going out on photo walks together, exploring the town, looking for interesting things to take pictures of.

It would be easy to invite him to come take pictures with me, but the harder part was figuring out how he would feel about my getting naked. He was always very serious, telling me all these technical things about 'backlighting' or 'parallax.' He didn't really show that much interest in me romantically though... nor in any girl for that matter. It was hard to tell if that was because he wasn't interested in sex, or just hid it well.

One of my Japanese friends, a stewardess who'd been to Switzerland, mentioned to me that when you go to a sauna there, everyone gets naked. That's a lot like Japanese hot springs, so I mentioned that to Oliver, just to see what he'd say. He told me yeah, it was no big deal. I watched his expression very closely, and finally told him that I'd been thinking about taking some nude self-portraits for our class project. At first, he just kind of nodded, maybe thinking I was just joking or teasing him. As I talked about it more, he slowly realized I was serious, and he seemed cool with it. Phew! That's a relief.

Anyway, we made a date, and then one Sunday morning, I got up crazy early to get ready. I packed up my camera, tripod and all my other equipment in my backpack. I dressed in my sneakers, cargo pants, safari jacket and baseball cap, trying to look as unsexy as possible for the trip over, so I wouldn't attract attention. I was going to strike - like a ninja - in and out before anyone noticed. Oliver showed up at my house a bit after 6, and laughed when he saw my outfit.

"What?" I asked.

"No, nothing. You look fine," he assured me, still laughing to himself. At least someone thought it was funny.

We hiked through the ravine in the dark, on the lookout for signs of life. All the time we were walking, Oliver had this faint grin on his face. I do think he was actually cool with the whole nudity thing, but it was more that he was amused that usually prim and proper me seemed so willing to go through with this. I could hardly tell him that it was nothing new for me, but surely he must have been wondering what was up.

Past the bridge that ran over the creek, we branched off into one of the side trails, and then headed right into the woods to get as far away from the main path as possible. It was still dark, but there were a few lamps over by the main trail which made it easier to see the trail. There was also a fairly full moon in the sky. It was so dark though that I could barely see Oliver's face.

Right near the end, there was a small clearing, where someone had set up some logs to sit on. I set down my equipment, and then followed the last bit of the trail back to the main path. The sun was coming up, and I could see the shiny supermarket show window, just as I pictured it. Unfortunately though, on the street at the top of the hill, there was a truck parked there and a construction crew milling around. What on earth are these guys doing out here so early in the morning on a Sunday? Wasn't Sunday supposed to be a holiday? The truck was clearly in the way, and I could hardly get naked with all these people around. I looked back at Oliver, and he looked doubtful too.

"Shoot! I can't believe it. Of all the luck," I sighed. Oliver put out his lips in a pout, obviously at a loss for what to suggest. "We can't just go back. We've come all this way."

"Maybe you could wait until they finish their work," he said.

"By that time, there'll probably be other people around." I didn't want to just give up though. I headed back the way we came in, checking to see if there was some other place I could take a photograph from, unshaded by trees with some variety in the background. The early morning sun was casting very deep shadows, meaning I had to find a more open space if I wanted to get any light.

Oliver was hanging nearby, waiting to see what I wanted to do. I headed back to the logs, still a bit torn, but wanting to do something.

"Let's just do it," I finally said. Oliver looked a bit surprised, wondering I guess what I planned to do about all those workmen up there. Actually, I wasn't really sure how to handle that, but I was vaguely hoping that we could somehow sneak up the path there without them noticing.

I got out my sandals, and set them out on the ground, prying off my sneakers and socks. The sandals would be easier to get into and out of quickly. I moved to take off my shorts, but Oliver stared right at me, obviously shocked to see proper little me so willing to strip in this very public place.

"Here, can you just turn away or something?" I asked him, a little embarrassed.

"Emi, if you take off your clothes, I'm going to see you naked," he laughed. I scrunched up my face, but eventually, went ahead, and pulled down my shorts. He seemed quite interested by my underwear, but they were just plain white cotton panties. It took a bit more nerve to take those off in front of him.

I glanced around one more time to make sure no one else was watching, and then looked straight at him as I pulled my panties down. I felt embarrassed of course, but actually it was quite a rush being able to get naked like this out in public with Oliver right here looking on. I picked up my shorts and panties, but actually I didn't cover up, and let him stare at my pussy. I didn't know if he had a girlfriend back in Switzerland, but anyway, he seemed impressed with my bush, adding fuel to my own excitement.

I scooted back to get my bag, bending over to give him a look at my bare bottom. I have to focus here, remember why I came. I'm here to get photographs for my portfolio, not tease Oliver. Luckily, he seemed to understand that. The problem was more me I think. By then, I was getting seriously horny.

I stripped off my safari jacket and bra, standing there completely naked, save for my sandals and necklace. I felt terribly self-conscious, displaying my birthday suit to Oliver almost as if my body were a present for him. He was trying to keep up this gruff expression, as if it wasn't affecting him, but every once in a while he'd break out into a smile, obviously delighted. I was plenty happy myself to be free of my clothes with a friend I could trust guarding over me. I slowly turned around, arms out, showing him my body from every angle to see what he thought. He grudgingly nodded his approval. Even if he wasn't going to say so, the bulge in his pants was proof enough that I looked pretty good out here naked.

I'd gotten so caught up in showing off my body to him that eventually, he pointed towards my camera, the real reason we were out here. I laughed, and covered my mouth, embarrassed that he had to be the one to remind me. I stuck out my tongue, and grinned at him, trying to get him to laugh too, but he made this mock stern face to get me to behave. Pretending to pout, I finally fetched my camera bag, and set out along the path towards the main trail. I kept glancing back at him to see what he thought of my rear end, but he was still trying to pretend like this was all very serious business. How could it be serious? Here I was roaming around stark naked in the middle of town right near the supermarket I shop at. What could be crazier?

Once I'd made my way out to the main trail, I kept going right on up the hill until I could see the supermarket and the tops of the construction workers' trucks. In my giddy state, I began to wonder if I could get the workers into the shot. Oliver, though, didn't seem so sure, and motioned for me to slow down before they saw me.

I finally did stop, and set the tripod down, trying to frame a shot with at least the top of the supermarket in the background. Oliver still looked worried, but he did keep watch while I scurried back and forth - buck naked - taking test shots trying to get the framing right. I was trying to concentrate on getting good pictures, but running around out here naked so close to the street was getting me excited like you wouldn't believe. Despite Oliver's warnings, I kept going closer and closer to the workmen, deliberately tempting fate.

At one point, I came back to my camera, but was very seriously considering walking straight up the hill, and posing in clear view of the workmen and street. Just then though, I heard a rustling noise back on the path behind us. On instinct, I scooped up my camera, and ducked into the woods. It's a good thing I did too, because coming up the trail straight our way was a cyclist guy! I think he must have seen me too, because just at the entrance to the trail I came in on, he stopped, and took off his backpack.

I froze, stock still, heart pounding in my chest, peering through the leaves, trying to tell if he was looking this way or not. Fortunately, there were a few trees between us, but one problem was that my pink skin probably stood out against the greens and grays of the forest.

The other problem was that I was getting seriously turned on by the situation. The cyclist was kind of handsome in a rugged outdoorsy way, and the way he stopped seemed to show that he had seen me, and wanted to see more. Where's Oliver? He must have ducked into the woods too because he didn't seem to be on the trail, but I couldn't see him for the trees.

Anyway, finally realizing that I shouldn't just stand here - naked - within eyeshot of the cyclist, I carefully made my way through the woods back towards the logs where my clothes were. The cyclist didn't follow, but I did find Oliver.

"What's he doing?" Oliver whispered, pointing towards the cyclist.

"I don't know. He's just standing there, looking at a map or something. I don't know if he saw me or not."

I set my camera down, but just stood there, peering over at Oliver, who seemed more and more surprised at how I could take all this in stride. I nervously fiddled with the flap of my camera bag, trying hard not to let on how excited this all was getting me.

"Do you think he's gone yet?" I asked.

"You're not going back out there?" Oliver gawked, scandalized.

"No! I mean, not if he's still there! Go check."

Oliver looked doubtful, thinking I guess that we should just call it a day. I hadn't gotten enough pictures yet, but even more than that, I was enjoying myself far too much to want to stop now.

Oliver finally set off through the woods, but without waiting for him to report back, I headed off too following him. He shooed me to go back, pointing out that the guy was still right there, but I just giggled, finding the whole situation funny. It was pretty clear by then that the cyclist must have spotted me - I mean why else would he be hanging around - but that just made it all the funnier. Here we were sneaking around trying not to get caught by the workmen, and then this other guy pops up out of nowhere, and catches me naked. He didn't seem offended or anything, but was probably just trying to get a better look.

Oliver kept me shielded until the guy finally gave up, and headed on his way. I actually found Oliver's efforts to keep me hidden kind of funny too. I mean he'd signed up for this in the first place, and must have known there was a chance someone would see me. Anyway, his chivalry - trying to protect me - was touching, even if it did seem a bit much.

Anyway, now that the coast was clear, I nodded for Oliver to keep going back towards the main path. He shook his head though, signaling that he didn't think it was a good idea with all these people lurking around. I didn't want to argue, but I didn't want to stop either. To humor him, I headed back to the logs where I'd left my things, so we could talk about what to do.

"I know you think it's too dangerous, but I still want to get a few more pictures," I told him. He fidgeted with his collar nervously, unable to meet my gaze head on. I think part of the problem was his hard-on was starting to get uncomfortable. Still, if I'm ever going to finish this, he'll have to bear with me for a while longer. Doing my best to ignore the obvious, I suggested,

"Let's head back along the side trail here, back the way we came. Maybe I can get some shots there."

He still didn't look convinced, but he took the bag with my clothes in it from me when I handed it to him. Still naked, I bravely set out along the narrow path through the woods with Oliver limping along behind me.

When we'd come this way earlier, it had been pitch black out, but now the sun was higher in the sky, and the trees weren't providing as much cover as I'd hoped. Opening out on the left, we came upon this huge apartment building overlooking the park. Here I was trotting along - stark naked - with just the small camera bag for cover, and up there on the left were hundreds of balconies and windows looking down on us. Even though I couldn't see any people, I felt these waves of embarrassment wash over me, fueling my desire even more.

A little ways further, we came upon another apartment. I looked back at Oliver to see how he was doing with all this. His face looked very grave, worried I guess that I would be spotted. It didn't look like there was anyone at their windows there either, but it was hard to tell for sure.

Eventually, we came to the end of the side trail where it branched back into the main path. There was a clearing here where I could take pictures, but the question was was anyone else hanging around in the park. I glanced back at Oliver for reassurance, but then bravely walked out onto the main path. There was a huge arching bridge overhead just a little bit further on, and almost too late, I noticed an outdoor cafe terrace on the far side of the park. Outdoors, there were a couple of busboys dressed in white aprons setting out silverware on the tables, and back inside the cafe you could see other people buzzing around.

Realizing that they would be able to see me if they looked over this way, I backed up into the woods, bumping into Oliver who was just coming out. It took Oliver a moment to spot the cafe himself, and he went into a fit.

"Oh, c'mon, Emi. You've gotta put on your clothes! There are people everywhere!"

It was definitely true that we seemed to have come to the end of the line. If I go out there, the busboys will spot me, and if I go back, we'd have to worry about the people in that apartment. I wanted to take one last picture, but there was nowhere to go. My pussy was buzzing like crazy making it hard to think, but I knew he was right. We had to stop before we get caught.

I finally signaled for him to dig my clothes out of my bag.

"Oliver, I just want to say thanks for sticking with me through all of this. I know it mustn't have been easy," I smiled.

"No, that's okay, Emi. You're... um... you're something else, really!" he smiled back.

After that day, I saw Oliver in class, but I didn't invite him on any more nude expeditions. He eventually ended up going back to Switzerland, but I still hear from him, now and then. He was a good friend, and now I admit I sometimes miss having a 'bodyguard' around for my little adventures.