**Selfies**
by Emi Tsuruta

In some ways, it wasn't so bad being back home at my parents' house in Japan. I'd enjoyed my time in the States, but my mom seemed happy to have me back, and even though she was making me dress like a schoolmistress with long sleeves and buttons done up to my neck, we were getting along okay. I had managed to stay out of trouble for the first few weeks at least.

I ended up phoning Takahashi, the kind guy, to find out if I'd got the job I interviewed for at Oote Trading. He said the big-wigs hadn't decided yet, so I had to wait. It was good to hear that I might still be in the running. I thought I'd messed up my interview completely.

It rained quite a bit around that time, so I tended to stay home. At least inside, it was nice and dry. In the morning, I brought down a football jersey - you know, the kind with the numbers on the front - to pull on after my shower, but my mom said it was too 'boyish' or 'American.' She made me go change into something else.

I found out that in Japan, they now have special 'room wear' for around the house. It's all pinks or yellows, cotton knits or terry cloth, sweater dresses, cardigans or tank tees. I found some nice ones online, but when I went to the stores nearby, I couldn't find exactly the same thing. I ended up ordering online. Until those arrive, I'll just have to wear long-sleeved p.j.'s or hoodies and workout pants to keep my mom happy. Dressing in such bulky clothes made me feel like one of those Arabian girls wrapped from head to toe in cloth, but I guess it isn't that bad. I really wasn't used to wearing so much in the summer.

If I was still in my p.j.'s in the late afternoon, sometimes my mom would make me change before Evan came home. Evan is my sister Norika's fianc?. I guess he looks a bit like Benedict Cumberbatch with his sharp eyes and dark hair. He's been staying with us while they're fixing up their new place.

Evan is a bit of an strange guy. He doesn't know quite what to make of me. Around other people, he seems pretty confident, but whenever he sees me coming, he turns away. I think I make him nervous. Evan is handsome enough though, and seems nice. I'm glad Norika found someone.

Anyway, one day, I got a call from Miori. She's the girl I met at the Shinto festival in Tokyo a few years back. She'd been phoning, wanting to ask me something, but with Evan and my mom around, I hadn't gotten a chance to talk to her in private. This time I was holed up in Norika's room on the second floor, banging away at her computer. I was pretty sure my mom was downstairs, and everyone else was at work, so finally Miori and I got a chance to catch up.

"Hey, Mi-chan. How are things?"

"Yeah, I'm good. I'm working today, but I'm on my break. How are you?" Miori works in her dad's kimono shop, and lives just above it with her family.

"Fine. It feels a bit strange to be back in Japan, but I'm adjusting. What was it you were asking about last night?"

"Oh yeah. Do you remember you told me about that photography course you took?"

"Yeah. What about it?"

"Do you think you could do me a favor? Can I send you a picture, and you tell me what you think?"

"Yeah, sure."

Photography is big in Japan right now. Girls my age take pictures on their smart phone, and then upload them to an 'app' for their friends to see. Miori got me to install her favorite app (instantgram?), so we could send each other pics.

Soon, her first photo arrived on my phone. She was standing - stark naked! - in her bathroom wearing a white surgical mask and a bracelet, taking a picture of herself in the mirror. It was so strange, seeing her naked like that. I don't think anyone has ever sent me a nude picture of themselves before.

"Does this look sexy?" she asked. It wasn't the greatest picture, art-wise - very stark - but it did have a weird bondage kind of vibe to it, what with the mask and the red panty marks on her skin. Miori had really filled out too. Her waist was as spindly as ever, but her breasts were now large and globular like two massive grapefruits. She had more pubic hair too.

"You look fine I guess," I replied, not knowing quite what to say.

"No, no. Tell me what you really think. I want to take better pictures."

Oh. OK. This is about art, is it?

"Um, you should try to fill the frame with yourself... if that's what you are taking a picture of," I told her. "Also you might want to hold the camera at an angle to make the shot more interesting."

"Oh, thanks. Um, listen. I've got to go. My break's almost over."

"Oh OK. Talk to you later."

I hung up the phone, wondering if I'd handled that right. Maybe I shouldn't be encouraging Miori - she is kind of young and impressionable - but actually, I was kind of curious about this whole nude selfie business. Who is she planning on sending these pictures to anyway? Was there a boy in her life? I thought she might have a thing for her classmate Keisuke, but she hadn't mentioned him lately. Anyway, I'm sure she'll tell me all about it the next time I see her.

I went back to my job hunt, but before long, another pic popped up on my phone.

"How's this one?" Miori texted. She was naked again, in a different bathroom, maybe one off her parents' bedroom. Her hair was kind of wet and matted down. She must have just had a shower. She was accenting her curves, but she was still centered in the frame straight up and down, covering her face with the phone. Not too bad, but still...

"Those water droplets on the mirror distract from you," I texted back, trying to be helpful. I wondered if I should warn Miori not to keep nudes on her phone. I'd read about people who've had their phones broken into. Miori is pretty mature for her age though. She probably knows to be careful.

I actually felt kind of guilty. Here she was sending me all these nudes, asking for my help, but I hadn't sent her anything in return. She trusts me so much. I felt like I should do something to pay her back.

I began wondering about how I could take one of these 'selfies' of my own. On the first floor of our house, there is one mirror in the make-up nook just outside the bath. That was kind of out in the open though, right next to the kitchen, cordoned off by just a thin, see-through curtain. I could try my bedroom I guess. I kind of wanted a blank background though. Hmm. Anyway, I'll worry about that later.

After lunch, I went up to my room. I took a few test shots - with my p.j.'s still on. Taking a good picture isn't as easy as it looks. Our instructor told us to look directly at the camera, but we hadn't really worked with mirrors at all. When we did self-portraits, we always used a tripod and a timer. With a mirror though, your phone kind of gets in the way. I had to figure what to do about that.

Once I was ready, I listened at the door to make sure my mom wasn't coming, and then stripped out of my p.j.'s. I felt kind of funny, standing here naked in my room. I don't think my mom would barge in, but it was kind of scary. I wonder how Miori does it. Do her parents know she's doing this kind of thing?

I guess I should hide my face. I held the phone in front of my mouth. The flash went off when I took the shot. In the photo, the flash came out as this eerie blue white almost like a poltergeist or something. I really should find somewhere with more light, so I don't need the flash. I kept wondering about the mirror downstairs. There wasn't much sunlight there, but it did have a white wall I could use as a background.

Anyway, I finally sent Miori the nude shot from my room. She was so excited. I'd tilted the camera at a weird artistic angle, but I think more than my technique, she was thrilled that I trusted her enough to share a nude with her. For her, this was such a big thing, a symbol of how close we were getting. I didn't quite see it that way, but I was glad she got a kick out of it.

One problem with all this was I had to guard my phone. Everywhere I went, I took it with me. I hid it under my clothes when I took a shower, and brought it down with me to meals or when I watched TV. I definitely didn't want my mom finding these pics. She wouldn't understand.

I continued to puzzle over how to take some shots in the mirror next to our bath. I kept hoping that my mom would go out, leaving me home alone, but she always seemed to invite me to come shopping with her. I guess she was just trying to be friendly, but it made it hard to take these pictures.

I was still waking up early, so one morning, before anyone was up, I tiptoed down the bath to try to get a picture then. First though, I went around to the living room to check on Evan. It looked like he was still asleep, but I had to be quiet. The sofa he sleeps on is just around the corner from the bath area.

I stripped out of my p.j.'s, and took a few quick shots - naked - but the camera made these loud clicking sounds. Soon I heard rustling coming from the living room. Worried that I'd woken Evan up, I quickly pulled my p.j.'s back on, and went back upstairs.

I called Takahashi again to see if Oote had decided yet, but he still hadn't heard anything.

Eventually, my new 'room wear' outfits arrived in the mail. One was grey shorts with white frills around the cuffs and a pink tiger-print tank top. Another was a long-sleeve but short-hem pink and white stripe sweater dress. I thought they looked great, but my mom didn't approve. She said they were too revealing, and made me promise not to wear them in front of Evan. I'd been pretty careful around Evan so far, but I didn't think it was a big deal if he saw my bare legs. Anyway, to humor her, I agreed not to wear them around the house till he moved out.

One day when I was down in our Japanese room, a new picture came through on my cell. It was Miori again - another nude, the third one. She was down on all fours on her bedroom floor showing off her cooch, but hiding her face with the camera. It's weird though you know. Like she's a girl, and I'm a girl, but even so, I found it kind of sexy seeing her crawling around on her carpet with her tush up in the air. It's like she's trying to tempt some guy to come, and stick his you-know-what in her you-know-where. Oh my! What am I thinking?

I tried to focus back on my resumes, but for some reason, that image of Miori kept popping into my mind. I wonder if I can just nip over to the bath, and take a quick pic to send her. Unfortunately, my mom was right there. I guess I'll have to wait.

The next day, I got yet another picture. This one was better than the first few. Miori was in her bedroom this time showing off her pudgy little rump. It was quite the pose. She was arching her back, alluring, seductive. She's becoming quite the little temptress.

Every time a new photo arrived, a ringtone would go off. The next picture was a blurry shot of Miori in her bedroom wearing just a bra. After that, she sent me one of her naked in a change room somewhere, wearing green runners. Her pictures were always a bit rushed, but she was getting more daring over time, wandering further and further away from the safety of her bedroom.

Then one morning, by some miracle, my mom went out! I finally had the place to myself! It looked like a beautiful day out, so I grabbed my phone, and dashed downstairs to take some pictures. I was so happy to finally get a chance to do this.

I wanted to try to take some without a flash this time, so I needed a place with some sunshine. Our dining room has floor to ceiling glass doors, but that's on the street side, so there are people or cars going by. I didn't really want people staring in at me while I was naked.

At the side of our house, there's a door to outside off the kitchen. I opened it up, taking a peek outside. The sun was up, but the house to the east of us left the alley in shade. Hmm. Maybe if I go a bit further down...

My smart phone camera is a bit small, so I went, and got my dad's tablet computer. It has a camera on the front, so I thought I'd be able to take a picture of myself without using a mirror. I fired up the camera app, but holding it at arm's length, I could still only get in my face and breasts. I stripped out of my p.j.'s, but even naked, I couldn't get much farther down than my bellybutton into the picture. There must be a timer though. I can set the tablet down somewhere, then set the timer, and back away to get all of me in.

All excited now that I was naked, I scampered over to the side door, and peeked out. I could see the windows of Takuhiro's house above the garden wall, but he'd moved to Tokyo, so he wouldn't be around. I stepped out into the garden slippers, basking in the feeling of the warm summer air on my naked skin. 'This is great!' I thought. I felt so alive, so charged up.

In search of more light, I scooted down to the back corner, peering up at the house behind ours. I knew I was taking a terrible chance running around outside naked, but I was too excited to stop. It felt great!

Worried though, I peered up at the neighbor's house. The blinds were shut in two of their windows, and the third window looked dark. I guess they could be home, but they were probably inside somewhere away from the windows, I told myself. I felt really nervous, flitting around naked, but this was my big chance. I had to get one picture at least.

I set the tablet down on the rain barrel at the back of the house, and turned on the camera app. Where's the timer icon? My hello kitty was all atwitter, making it hard to focus. I glanced back up at the neighbor's house, still worried that they might be watching. Suddenly, I heard a moped come up, and then race by. It's kind of dangerous being out here naked like this.

I tapped away at the tablet trying to find the timer, but I was getting too excited to think straight. I reached down, and touched my pussy, trying to get it to behave. I'll never get anything done if I start playing with my kitty. I was worried about my mom too. She might come home any minute, and my p.j.'s were inside on the dining room floor. I kept worrying that she'd come back, and find me out here naked.

I fiddled with the camera some more, but I was just way too worked up. I finally just shut the camera down, and came back in. Ah well. I'll work on this some other time. I took my p.j.'s upstairs, got some clothes out of my closet, and went down to have a shower to cool off. I really should be more careful. My mom has been on me to settle down, and act like a proper young lady.

Later that day, I headed up to Yokohama to do some shopping. One mall there is called Lalaport. It's quite modern with brightly lit stores all shiny and new.

They even had a Hollister. Hollister is an American chain with a California surfer theme. It reminded me of when I used to live in Oceanview. Outside the store, they had these buff guys standing there in red board shorts and jean jackets trying to lure the girls in. They were obviously being paid by the store, but it was kind of funny, seeing these half naked men prancing around outside. I try not to get taken in by these things, but anyway, I do kind of like their fashion, so I ended up going in.

The store was almost exactly like the stores in the States. The colors are a bit muted, but actually, they had a lot of clothes I like: bikinis, lace bras, mini-skirts, crop tops and 'bodycon' dresses. Unfortunately, that wasn't what my mom wanted me to buy. I did find a kimono sleeve top that I might be able to wear as a dress. It was red and black with almost a floral design. The 'kimono' part just meant the sleeves were wide and short. I wanted to try it on to see, so I went, and found their change rooms.

Just outside the change booths, I noticed the same 'Clothing Optional Beyond This Point' sign that they have in the States. Hmm. Does that mean that it's okay to wander around naked? I actually had a picture of myself naked by this sign in one of the stores in California. I wonder if I can take one here too. Miori would probably get a kick out of that. I went into the change room, and stripped out of my clothes wondering how I could do this. There was no mirror by the sign. Maybe I should ask a passerby to take the picture, I mused. That would be pretty funny, me posing naked for some complete stranger.

I took a picture of myself in a change booth mirror. The shot has my breasts and my pussy covered with my hand, but my head was cut off at the top. In the background, you could see the curtain covering the entrance to the change booth. I peeked out. There was this little alcove with the "Clothing Optional" sign, and then an open doorway leading out to the main part of the store.

My heart pounding in my chest, I slowly pushed the curtain open, standing there naked in the door. I tried to maneuver the camera, so I could get a shot of both me and the sign in the mirror, but it wasn't so easy. Worse, I could hear people wandering around just outside in the store. I finally gave up, closed the curtain, and got back dressed. Phew! That was a bit scary.

I took another look at the picture I had taken. It's just me naked, but I think I look pretty good. I clicked a few buttons, and sent off a copy to what I thought was Miori. She'd love it no doubt.

Unfortunately, soon after, I got a text message from Takahashi, the nice guy from Oote trading.

"Nice pic. Is that you?"

What? How does he know about the picture? Did I send it to him by mistake? I scrolled back to my last message, and sure enough I'd sent it to Takahashi not Miori. Oh god. That is so embarrassing. Now what do I do? All in a panic, I texted him back.

"Takahashi? Is that you? Sorry. That was a mistake. Can you just delete it?"

"Delete it? You're kidding, right? Whoever it is is absolutely gorgeous."

Shoot! Of all the crazy things! My cell phone was so new I hadn't really figured out all the functions yet. I thought because I kept sending pics to Miori, it would send that one to her too, but I guess I'd talked with Takahashi on the phone after that, so it was his number that came up in the address field. So stupid!

"Takahashi? Promise me you won't tell anyone about this!" I texted him again. Unfortunately, he didn't write back this time. He didn't pick up when I called either. I guess he might just be busy, but I couldn't help worrying. Was he showing it around to people at work? My future bosses? That would be horrible! The only bright spot was in the picture, you couldn't see my face, so they wouldn't know for sure that it was me.

Anyway, not sure what else I could do, I ended up heading home. I was so angry at myself for not even thinking to check the phone number before I sent the picture out. How could I be so stupid?

When I got home, I went upstairs, and lay on my bed, thinking dark thoughts. My dad has some kind of connection at Oote. I hope this doesn't get back to him. However, Takahashi wasn't even answering my messages now, so there wasn't much I could do.

Not long after, I got a letter from the personnel director at Oote asking me to come in for a second interview. I really didn't want to go - I mean they might have seen the pic - but I probably should go. It could lead to a job. I ended up getting dressed up in my recruit outfit, and heading up to Tokyo to see what they'd say.

One of the men from the first interview was there, and two new men who were apparently higher up in the company. They all looked pretty calm, asking me all these serious questions. I guess Takahashi hasn't shown the picture to these three at least.

After the interview, I went looking for Takahashi. The receptionist said he wasn't around, and I should book an appointment. I asked when he'd be back, but she didn't know. I decided not to leave a message. Maybe he didn't even know I was here.

When I got home that evening, Dad asked how my second interview went. I winced at the question, but said 'fine,' and went up to hide in my room. I guess there's no sense in fretting about this now. There's really nothing I can do in any case. I'll just have to be more careful... and figure out how this stupid phone works!