**Lisa, Naked and Invisible!**

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Despite having looked forward to moving to New York City for at least the last year, the transition from a quiet college town had been hard for Lisa. Her husband was hardly ever home, insisting that every new hire at the investment bank he'd landed at was expected to put in a minimum of 80 hours a week and many did more.  
  
Her own lack of success in finding work in her chosen field made not having Rob around much feel even worse. As a newly graduated psychologist she was finding the interviews she was able to get at various agencies were so far leading not to job offers but only to another round of interviews; she understood the process but couldn't help being discouraged. She knew there really was no excuse for it given the almost limitless things to see and do in New York, but she found herself bored much of the time.  
  
Spending most of her time in their tiny apartment didn't help her mood any. She'd never lived in anyplace so cramped and dark; the only natural light was whatever managed to bounce down a light well 4 floors to their third floor apartment. Even though they had culled a large part of their belongings before the move, the minuscule apartment was stuffed with boxes piled high. She picked away at getting the space in order a little each day but there really wasn't anywhere to put a lot of it, so the place was still a maze of half-emptied boxes two months after they had moved in.  
  
One thing Lisa did like about their apartment was the shower. For some unknown reason, the shower was as spacious as the rest of the place was cramped. That, along with an apparently infinite supply of hot water and excellent water pressure made it her favorite space in the entire apartment; given her fondness for it, her presence in the shower when the lights went out just after 1 AM on Saturday night was no surprise.  
  
"Shit, now what?" Lisa said to herself. Though the shower itself was still pumping out hot water the windowless room was now pitch black, disorienting her slightly. The direction the water was coming from was really the only clue to which direction she was facing. Taking a moment to think about where the towel rack, door, and any obstacles were before turning off the water, she cautiously stepped out onto the bathroom's tile floor and felt her way to the towel rack. She wrapped a towel around her and tentatively set out into the apartment's one other room; she took tiny steps, knowing that there wasn't much space not covered in furniture or haphazard piles of boxes.  
  
Feeling her way to their small dining table, she found the small radio which lived on it and hoped its batteries had some juice left in them. The radio crackled to life and she tuned it to a news station. The announcer said that the latest update from Con-Ed was that the power was likely to be out for several hours, and City officials were urging people to stay home and particularly not to drive anywhere unless it was absolutely necessary since all street lights and traffic signals were out.  
  
Lisa noticed that even though she had been in complete darkness for several minutes now her eyes hadn't adjusted to at least allow dimly seeing shapes as they usually do; a look in the direction of the light well explained why. She couldn't see any difference in brightness between the window and anywhere else; there just wasn't enough light for her eyes to adjust to! She decided having a flashlight would be highly advisable, but her first attempt to find a box she thought might have one led only to her tripping over something, barely keeping her balance. Her second attempt led her not to a flashlight but to a painful collision between her left shin and a coffee table.  
  
The one positive result of her failed search for a flashlight was accidentally finding a large umbrella, which she began to use as a blind person does a cane, sweeping it back and forth to locate tripping hazards. Now able to move about slowly but safely, she wandered around until she found the nightstand next to her side of the bed, and on it her phone. Her dead phone.  
  
"Nice work, Lisa," she told herself, "of all days to forget to charge it!"  
  
Feeling restless, she started to slowly move around the apartment again, eventually reaching the door to the hall outside. Standing within one umbrella length of the door she squinted at the full-length mirror covering most of it, trying to see her reflection. She could just barely see the shape of the white towel, but nothing else. The nearly complete darkness and her olive skin tone made the towel look like it was floating. Even the towel was a very dark shade of gray, barely visible at all!  
  
Just to see if it would work, Lisa continued to look at the mirror as she dropped the towel. Sure enough, with the towel gone, it was if she was invisible; she saw no trace from head to toe of her naked body. She laughed out loud, thinking to herself, "It's like I have a superpower!"  
  
After a minute or two of trying and failing to see her reflection, Lisa picked up the towel and fished around for her keys on a small table she knew was next to the door; even knowing exactly where they were it was hard to get hold of them, but she eventually did. She slipped on a pair of flip-flops she kept by the door for trips to the laundry room, opened the door and stepped cautiously out into the hall, umbrella in one hand and keys in the other. Sweeping her path with the umbrella she made her way down the hall, eventually realizing she was in front of the elevator; it wasn't any use tonight as transportation but its mirrored doors gave Lisa another chance to try and see her reflection. Instinctively looking around to see if anyone could see her before laughing at herself for bothering, she dropped the towel again. The effect was the same as in her apartment; the towel was just barely visible while she was not visible at all.  
  
Though her temporary invisibility was still in effect she listened carefully for the sound of any door opening, knowing most people would be organized enough to be able to lay their hands on a working flashlight; she wondered if she would be able to cover up in time if anyone were to open their door, ultimately deciding that as late as it was she prbably didn't need to worry about it. After a solid minute of trying and failing to see herself in the mirrored door, she somewhat reluctantly put the towel back on; she was enjoying the idea of being impossible to see, even if she had to be naked for the trick to work!  
  
Lisa realized she still hadn't seen just how dark the blackout had made the world outside and decided to walk down the stairs to see how the lobby looked. She cautiously felt her way to the door to the exit stair and stepped into the stair enclosure.  
  
"Now, if I can just find the first step without breaking my ass..." she thought to herself. Slowly feeling her way down the stairs, she counted the floors as she continued her descent. She peeked through the small window in the door to the lobby but still saw nothing, just more blackness.  
  
Lisa had planned on repeating her towel-free visibility test in the lobby, but as dark as it looked through the window she was already sure she would be impossible to see if she was naked; she thought it was ironic that in the current conditions she was more concealed when nude than when wearing a towel! She decided to try something slightly more exciting. Shaking slightly, she took her towel off, neatly folded it and set it down next to the lobby door. Taking a deep breath, she stepped out into the lobby with only her keys and an umbrella for cover!  
  
After several minutes of wandering around the pitch-black lobby, Lisa was thoroughly sure she couldn't be seen, having tried and failed to see her reflection in any of the lobby's many mirrored surfaces. Just as she began to relax she heard the door from the street click unlocked and swing open! There was no time for her to try to retreat to the stair, and the new arrival was most likely headed to the stair himself anyway. Lisa was pretty sure about the sex of her new companion based on the voice she heard just a few feet away muttering about the damned elevator not working. She tried to quietly back away from the voice, definitely not wanting her body to be what he touched as he felt his way to the stair. She heard the stair door open and close followed by some cursing and finally the sound of his steps heading up the stair. She finally exhaled; had she been holding her breath the entire time she was sharing the lobby?  
  
As nerve wracking as her time sharing the lobby had been, Lisa quickly realized how excited it had made her being naked in close proximity to an unsuspecting stranger! Just as thrilling, the close encounter had proved she couldn't be seen in her current state! The confirmation let a thought she had briefly entertained but rejected as too risky come rushing back, this time seeming less frightening, but still daring enough to be unsettling; she decided to continue her naked exploration at least as far as the sidewalk just outside her building!  
  
Even though she was pretty sure it was as dark outside as in the lobby, her heart was pounding as she opened the door; she stood in the doorway holding the door for a minute, straining to hear any sound close enough to her to be worrisome. She finally let the door close behind her, standing nude on a New York City sidewalk for the first time in her life, "And likely the last time, too," she thought, "this kind of opportunity doesn't come very often!"  
  
Scary as it was standing in front of her building naked, Lisa still wasn't able to see her reflection in the lobby windows; a look up and down the streets failed to show anything else visible. The only light she could see was a blinking red light on a plane high above. She laughed as she waved to the plane.  
  
Having become fairly comfortable loitering in the nude in front of her building, Lisa thought over her options; head back to her jumbled apartment, hang out here or...she couldn't believe this thought was running through her head...WALK AROUND THE BLOCK!  
  
Lisa told herself it was too risky, that she couldn't be sure what she might find around the corner, that she had no way to call for help, that she couldn't even run if she was in danger. She considered the many arguments against the long walk, but the street was dark and quiet, and she now felt more comfortable out on the sidewalk than indoors; it was around 70 degrees with a gentle breeze, way more comfortable than her stuffy apartment.  
  
Despite the many sensible reasons not to walk away from her building, Lisa ignored them all as well as the butterflies in her stomach, setting out for a long nude walk.  
  
The first leg of her trip, taking a right turn towards the corner of her block farthest from her front door, was actually pretty uneventful. Her sweeping umbrella warned her of a few obstacles but so far there was no sign of any other people out and about.  
  
Shortly after turning her first corner, Lisa heard some voices from somewhere ahead of her; she continued walking but slowed, struggling to see if she was sharing the sidewalk. She remembered having seen a small dive bar on this block; maybe they were still open, serving by flashlight? The voices kept getting louder, worrying Lisa enough that she considered turning back. Only the fact that nobody was in sight, and presumably she wasn't either, gave Lisa enough bravery to keep moving forward.  
  
Suddenly Lisa saw the first light she had seen in over an hour (not counting the plane); Looking through a window she saw a few candles lined up on the bar. She could make out the outlines of a few patrons leaning on the bar. Suddenly panicked, thinking if she could see them they might be able to see her, Lisa froze in place. She looked around the area near the candles and realized their light wasn't strong enough to carry to where she stood, just a few feet away from the candles the bar was as dark as everywhere else. She relaxed again and moved forward, losing herself briefly in a fantasy where instead of passing it she strolled naked into the dive, stepped up to the bar and had a drink. Part of her wished she could do it just to see the reactions she'd get; another part, large enough to shock her, wished she could do it just to see how it felt!  
  
Distracted by her little fantasy, Lisa didn't notice the small cluster of intermittent glowing orange spots near the bar's door until she was almost right next to them! Too late to avoid them, she tried to veer a little to her left to get some separation from what she now recognized as cigarettes held by a group of bar patrons smoking outside the door. She was sure the sidewalk couldn't be more than 8 feet wide; that meant that the clear path available to her to get by the smokers was...not much. Stepping carefully in as straight a line as she could, she cleared the smokers, breathing a sigh of relief.  
  
As it turned out, she relaxed a little too much, a little too soon. Not yet daring to sweep her umbrella back and forth for fear it would make a noise and alert the smokers to her presence, she continued to take small steps. Unfortunately one of those steps scattered several empty beer cans, sending them clattering along the sidewalk!  
  
"Jesus! Did you hear that?" Lisa heard a man say, slurring his speech, then: "Who the hell is out there?"  
  
Lisa froze in place, considering her options; stay silent and hope the unseen man lost interest, or speak up and try to calm the man and move on? She doubted she'd enjoy the drunk guy's company much even if she was fully dressed, and definitely wanted as little interaction as possible with other people tonight given her complete lack of clothing. She opted to remain silent. Her choice was validated when the club of smokers went back into the bar a couple of minutes later.  
  
Once she saw the glowing orange spots drop to the sidewalk and be ground out she moved on, reaching the corner and making her second right turn, now walking along the street behind her building.  
  
"Halfway home!" she thought, realizing how fond she was suddenly getting to be of her tiny apartment.  
  
Lisa had a nice stretch of nothing going wrong after turning the corner until she noticed a small light up ahead, moving toward her; someone heading straight for her, someone holding a flashlight! She couldn't stay on the sidewalk, but where to go? Though she couldn't see them as anything other than dark lumps, she knew there were cars parked just a few feet to her left; she found one and quickly felt her way around it, taking a position on the street side of the car. She waited for the flashlight toting pedestrian to pass by, hoping no cars would come along until she was back at the sidewalk. A car did cruise by, but not before Lisa had made it back to the sidewalk side of the car after the flashlight crisis was over.  
  
Once Lisa had survived the flashlight and passing car challenges, she just wanted to get home as quickly as possible. She picked up her pace as much as she thought safe, still sweeping her path with the umbrella but striding much more quickly. Her higher speed was probably why she never noticed the man in her path walking his dog until she crashed into him, sending her and the understandably shocked man crashing to the sidewalk!  
  
"What the hell..." said the man, pinned down for a moment by Lisa. She struggled to get off of him, not understanding at first how her legs were tangled in the dog's leash. Between her frantic efforts to disentangle herself and his to get himself free from whoever had tackled him, he inadvertently had touched enough different parts of her body to understand that he had been knocked down by a woman, who seemed to be naked! Thoroughly confused, he asked, "What are you do...where are...why are you nude?"  
  
"Sorry!" was all Lisa managed to say as she finally got to her feet. She was far too preoccupied with getting out of there to stay and share the reasons for her nudity, even if she had been able to fully understand them herself.  
  
As she stood she took stock of her situation: "No serious damage from the fall, probably a few scrapes, about three-quarters of the way done with this crazy stunt, STILL NAKED! Keys still in my right hand, good...Umbrella? Shit, I lost the umbrella!" Besides being her only tool to keep from bumping into things, she had been counting on being able to open it and use it as cover to hide behind if she had no other way to hide. She considered crawling around to look for it but was desperate to put some distance between herself and the man on the sidewalk. She moved on, walking more slowly since her outstretched hands were now her only way to tell if she was about to walk into another obstacle.  
  
Lisa managed to avoid bumping into anything too hard the rest of the way to her third turn. As she turned back towards her apartment's street, she was shocked to see a fairly well-lit building near the middle of the block! Another bar, this one apparently equipped with a generator; light was pouring out from its windows, even the neon sign above its door was lit up. Lisa stood still, staring at this new obstacle. "No freaking way!" she said, "I can't just stroll past there like this!"  
  
The only way Lisa could see to get beyond this unwelcome island of light was to go to the street side of the parked cars and crouch down enough to hide behind them when she came to the lit-up area. Scary, being highly visible to any passing cars and anyone who happened to be looking out from the buildings across the street, but at least this option gave her a chance to remain unseen. She thought even if someone were to see her from across the street or briefly passing by in a car, that would be preferable to a close encounter with someone looking out from the bar just a few feet away from her as she strolled down the sidewalk.  
  
Lisa set off down the street next to the parked cars, getting within four cars of the lit-up area outside the bar before she felt a need to duck down below the level of the car windows. She was pleased her plan seemed to be working, though she knew there was no way to tell if she had an audience in some window across the street, watching her creeping alongside the cars.  
  
Just as she came to the lit-up area a half dozen guys came out of the bar and headed to the parked cars directly in front of the bar! Two got into a car 2 or 3 cars ahead of Lisa's position before it even occurred to her that she might already be somewhat visible in the light spilling out of the bar; she backtracked a few feet and ducked between two cars. From her hiding spot she couldn't see where the rest of the men had headed, but she could hear their footsteps getting closer. The footsteps stopped, "Close," she thought, "but at least they stopped before seeing me!"  
  
Lisa pretty much freaked out when the car directly in front of her hiding spot started up and drove away. Freaking out seemed to be called for, since anyone in the bar who happened to look out the window would be able to see, hiding in plain sight now that the car had driven off, a naked woman. Her.  
  
She noticed there was only one car still parked in the lit-up area in front of the bar now that the two cars had left. She had tried, really tried to avoid being seen, but now the fight left her; she gave in to the inevitable, thinking: "If I'm going to be exposed anyway there's no point in all this crouching and hiding, I might as well own this."  
  
She stood up straight, held her head up and stepped back onto the sidewalk! Her heart was racing and she was shaking like a leaf in a windstorm as she walked on, forcing herself keep to a normal walking pace as she began to pass in front of the bar. She was sure she must have been spotted by now, but had to know; she turned her head towards the bar windows and saw several women around her age staring at her, slack-jawed and speechless. Lisa felt first a deep blush, then a head to toe tingle in response to seeing that she had been seen; she felt a broad smile spread on her face. In less than a minute she had passed the bar and began to disappear into the deep darkness beyond the bar's light. "Too soon!" she thought to herself, fighting an urge to go back for another pass!

Another minute wasn't enough to stop her shaking, but did get her safely away from the lit area and back into the fully blacked-out world. One uneventful minute more brought her to the last corner of her journey; she turned onto her street. She was a stones throw away from the door to her building; now she just needed to find it in the darkness. When she felt what seemed like her building's door she felt her keys, eventually finding one which felt like her lobby key. Just as she was about to attempt to get the key into the lock she heard a click and jumped back just in time to avoid getting whacked by the door swinging open. She stayed out of the path of whoever was coming out, then reached for the door, trying to avoid having to unlock it herself; a near miss, with the door just slipping out of her fingers.  
  
Lisa found the correct key and managed to get it into the lock, but turning the key didn't unlock the door; the mechanical lock itself seemed to be working but there was also an electronic latch, the one which allowed tenants to unlock the door from their apartment for visitors. "How the hell did that guy let himself in when I was in the lobby earlier?" thought Lisa, "Maybe he was the building super and knows some trick or has different keys..." She waited next to the door for another opportunity to grab it the next time it swung open and get back to the safety of her building.  
  
Lisa stayed next to the door until a few other tenants arrived and clustered around the door; afraid one of them would pull out a phone and inadvertently light her up, she backed off around 15 feet, hoping to be safely out of sight at that distance but still be able to reach the door before it closed again, assuming it ever opened! She waited with her unsuspecting neighbors for an opportunity to get into the lobby for over an hour, sitting on a nearby bench most of the time.  
  
She tried to imagine what they would say if they knew the young brunette in apartment 3E was naked and sitting close enough to them to join in their conversation. The thought led her to start playing with her nipples; "What would they think if they could see me now?" followed by her right hand drifting down over her stomach, "And what if they saw this?" She was on the verge of giving in completely to the urge to get off right there on the sidewalk when she noticed traffic lights a few blocks down the street come on, followed by streetlights! She scampered to a hiding spot in the recessed entrance of the building next door, reaching it just as her block's power came back on!  
  
Though she now stood to be totally exposed to anyone happening to enter or leave the neighboring building, Lisa forced herself to wait for her neighbors to have enough time to get the now functioning door open, file in, wait for the elevator to make it to the lobby and take them away before she dared to make a dash to the door of her building. The sidewalk lit by streetlights had never seemed so bright before; a passing car honked as she unlocked the door and hurried inside. She was relieved to see the lobby unoccupied, but the elevator door began to open just as she passed by on her way to the stair; she was pretty sure the man getting off the elevator who yelled, "Hot Damn!" didn't get more than a quick glimpse of her from behind, but considering how she'd spent the rest of her evening it didn't really seem to matter.  
  
Lisa retrieved her towel from the stair and walked up to the third floor. She put the towel on just as she was leaving the stair and let herself into her apartment. Rob let himself in less than a minute after she arrived, telling her about how he had to wait an hour out on the sidewalk with a group of people before the power finally came back on and let the door work.  
  
"Yyyou wwere waiting on the sidewalk just now?" Lisa stammered.  
  
"Yeah, and something really crazy happened after that," he said. "I came upstairs as soon as we got in, but before getting to the apartment thought I'd go back down to see if we had any mail. When the elevator door opened at the lobby, I saw a naked woman go into the stair, totally freaking nude! Can you imagine it?