**Nude Enough**

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There I was, looking out at the balcony of my apartment. From the eleventh floor, the view includes a little greenspace, but all of it is within the city. No view of the lake.  
  
It was National Nude Day, and I was nude, a few feet behind the closed glass door. Where I live, the COVID-19 lockdown had been loosened somewhat, but the lake beach was still closed.  
  
Last year was my first Nude Day as a participant. It was great, but when it ended I had unfinished business. I told myself that I could finish it on next year's Nude Day. Now it was next year, and I couldn't.  
  
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I like the idea of nudism, but I have my doubts about its lofty principles. Nudity gets you closer to nature? Okay, but pass me the insect repellent. Clothes create class distinctions and cultural biases? I think exposed bodies do that too. Nudity doesn't have to be sexual? Well, maybe it isn't, for some people, but I don't think I'm one of them. And I'd have to assume that men who see me nude would have functional hormones.  
  
Still, in July 2019, I was inclined to say yes when my friend Judy suggested going to the lake with her. The lake has more than a mile of public beach, and the county has always approved letting part of it go clothing-optional on Nude Day. That addressed the legality question. Also, being starkers there with Judy would seem safer, or less intimidating, than trying it alone. In addition, there have never been reports of trouble at the lake on Nude Day, and the county closes the beach at sunset.  
  
It looked like the tough part of getting this excursion together would be convincing our friend Carla. The three of us knew each other from our gym, where we'd formed a team to play in a sports league. We were unattached, in various ways. Judy was divorced, Carla lived with her parents, and I hadn't dated much lately. The Nude Day discussion always presumed that we'd arrive and leave as a group, without men. As Judy put it, this would be a Girls' Day Way Out.  
  
When the talk of Nude Day had arisen before, Carla found reasons to shoot it down, such as:  
  
"I don't want to touch anyplace where there might have been somebody's naked butt. Everyone would have to carry around a towel to sit on, and keep track of which side goes where."  
  
(Judy responded that we'd spend most of the time on our own towels, on the sand.)  
  
"You'd have to put sunscreen where it's never been before. And what if you have to put on more? Can you touch yourself like that, with people watching?"  
  
(Judy said that one could reapply on a trip to the ladies' room.)  
  
"What if somebody steals my backpack? Then I'm stranded, and helpless, and also naked."  
  
(Judy pointed out that the fieldhouse at the beach has lockers, and you can keep the key in a zipper-pocketed wristband.)  
  
Apart from that, Carla didn't talk much, about herself or anything else. Lately she had seemed even more reserved, and generally unhappy. A week before Nude Day, as we sat at a coffee shop after leaving the gym, she didn't bring up any negatives, but at first said nothing at all. Then, as Judy was touting the excursion, Carla finally asked, "Why do you keep bringing this up?"  
  
Judy, of all people, looked a little timid. "Maybe so I can do this before I get any uglier."  
  
Carla and I shared a look, then directed it silently at Judy.  
  
Judy hesitated. Then she said, "Okay. I did Nude Day at the lake last year, before you knew me. With Jeff."  
  
Her ex-husband.  
  
Judy looked around at the mostly-empty shop, then leaned in and lowered her volume.  
  
"We knew that things weren't going well, and I thought Nude Day might stoke us up, get us back to banging until we could sort things out as people. That part of it actually worked. At the beach, he had this idea. We'd look around and find someone else on the beach we could get hot for, and if we really got turned on, Jeff and I would sneak off somewhere and screw.  
  
"I saw a tall black guy, skinny but muscled. I think Jeff was staring at a blonde with big boobs. I told Jeff I was ready. We wandered to a cove next to a bluff, blocked from view by high boulders. We started making out, each thinking about the fantasy partner. But then we were gazing at each other and it was Jeff who was turning me on, and he was mouthbreathing and saying 'Jude my god you're so hot!' I wrapped my legs around him and he held us upright and pumped into me. He was sunlit and sweating, and I must have been too. We'd never had sex outdoors. I came and yelled and squirted and he came and yelled. I could feel him jizz in me! For those few minutes we were everything we had always wanted."  
  
She smiled, with a faraway expression.  
  
"But you still broke up," said Carla, always pouring ice water.  
  
Judy raised an eyebrow. "We did. For a couple weeks after, we had great sex, and no arguments. Then it started to get same-old. And the stuff that we didn't agree on came back into the foreground. Fortunately, I'd stayed on the pill, so it was a pretty clean break. Nude Day had the effect of delaying our return to circulation by maybe a month."  
  
"And you want to do it again?" I asked. Judy had never struck me as a beater of dead horses.  
  
"Yes," she said, leaning back in her chair, grinning. "In honor of Jeff's great idea, and how he made me feel like the sexiest woman on Earth, for the only time in my life. I still remember those orgasms! Maybe three, I couldn't tell. And how he wept as he came, the tears on my sunbaked boobs." She blinked, and her eyes focused again. "I'll enjoy being nude there again, even if my body doesn't contact anyone else's." Then she whispered, "But if Jeff's there, don't be surprised..."  
  
"You're terrible," said Carla. Her voice always seemed monotone, so I couldn't tell if she really disapproved.  
  
"So you're out?" Judy asked her.  
  
Carla exhaled, looking down.  
  
"I'll do it," she said quietly.  
  
"Why?" Judy persisted. "Peer pressure? Then if you don't like it, you'll blame us."  
  
"No, it's..." Carla looked up. "I need to find out who I am. I won't blame you if I find out I don't like showing my naked body."  
  
Judy and I said nothing at first. Carla wasn't just shy. We knew nothing about her personal life, if she even had one. We'd inferred that she seemed intimidated by her Catholic family and her parish community, and she was never in a situation to put herself first. Still, the fact that she was considering Nude Day told us that she didn't believe deep down in church dogma.  
  
Finally I said, "You're okay if your family finds out?"  
  
Her look was stern. "I'm 25. I keep overhearing things like, 'If she doesn't get married, she ought to be a nun.' I'm tired of it. There should be other options."  
  
And we were silent again.  
  
Carla actually smiled, and held out her hands towards us. Judy and I took them, unclear what was going on.  
  
"I like you, and I want you to keep liking me," she said, sounding timid despite the smile. "Can you promise you won't hate me?"  
  
"Why would we hate you?" Judy asked.  
  
"Of course we won't," I added quickly.  
  
"Thanks," said Carla. After quick squeezes our hands parted, and Carla's face again lost all expression.  
  
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I was given the name Cynthia, in honor of a great-grandmother I never knew. Growing up, there was the option of replacing that formal, flowery moniker with the diminutive of Cyndi. That is, my parents were already calling me Cyndi before I had command of post-toddler language.  
  
To make matters worse, I never grew taller than 5' 1," and I have a doll-cute face. That made it much tougher for Cyndi to be taken seriously as an adult.  
  
I work in wholesale auto parts and make a point of being very no-nonsense. After a few years of this act, my co-workers got the drift that I didn't want to be thought of as a cutie pie. In my career, at least.  
  
In life generally, I've been okay with who I am and what I've done. But I was 27, and the solitary life was losing its appeal. It's been fun to sow wild oats, but what I've gotten from that has been pretty much the same oatmeal. Sometimes it's nice to wake up next to a guy, but other times the morning doesn't work out so well. I was starting to like the idea of a steady relationship, with good mornings every day. So far, though, I hadn't found anybody I'd always want to see the first time I open my eyes.  
  
I think of myself as medium-sexed. What I felt going into Nude Day was mostly curiosity, but I couldn't deny that there was also some physical excitement. I had to remind myself that seeing strange men naked could impair my judgment. So far, my choice of partners has been pretty sound: No controllers, no losers, no braggarts who'd tell the world how I am in bed. This was no time to change that, with everyone's genitals visible.  
  
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Judy advised us to bring two bags or packs for our stuff, with the most important personal items (ID, money, phone, respectable clothes, etc.) to go in a locker, and the rest (hat, towels, reading material, sunscreen, etc.) to stay with our naked selves. I liked my big sun hat, and didn't consider it expendable, but if the kind of thief Carla worried about ran off with it, my life would go on.  
  
When Judy picked us up in her SUV, she gave us wristbands for the locker keys, which we'd wear at all times while undraped.  
  
"So we won't be totally nude," I said from the passenger seat, wiggling my banded wrist.  
  
Judy snickered, and put on a crass guy voice. "Hey bay-bee, show us the left one too!"  
  
From the back Carla said, "We'll be nude enough," sounding worried.  
  
Judy angled her head that way and said, "Are you sure—"  
  
"Yes," said Carla impatiently.  
  
Carla had left the house clad as we were, in a sundress, for a normal beach day. Carla's mother had watched from the doorway. I was pretty sure Carla's family didn't know that this beach day was abnormal.  
  
On the way to the lake we got into more discussion about nudism, with Judy in the default role as expert, from a single experience.  
  
"My feet won't always be nude," said Carla. "Even if the beach is all nice sand, it'll get hot. I'll wear my sandals when I need them. So there!"  
  
"Lots of guys have a thing for footwear," I said, glad that Carla was having a little fun.  
  
"The whole idea," said Judy, "Is showing face and body at the same time. You could cover your face when you're nude, so people won't know it's you. But that's a disconnect within yourself. How many identities does a person have? One for the mind, another for the body? The exposed face expresses what's going on in the mind. It's what other people recognize in you. Their minds, engaging with your mind. When other people see your body, even in swimwear, they engage with your body, maybe adding some judgment or commentary. An exposed body is an expression of libido, sensed by the libido of others."  
  
Neither Carla nor I had anything to say to that.  
  
Into our silence Judy said, "What, I'm not allowed to do some deep thinking?"  
  
Carla, stifling a chuckle, said, "Did you and Jeff talk about this in the cove?"  
  
Which cracked us all up for a couple minutes.  
  
But as we got closer to the lake, I got nervous. "If I expose myself," I said, "I become a potential fantasy object. Someone who sees a naked body might decide that the exposure is an invitation. A guy might take advantage, thinking that I've already given consent, and that nobody could blame him."  
  
I was surprised by how that sounded, way heavier than my mood was.  
  
Before I could walk it back, Carla put in, "What she said."  
  
"In the words of my father," said Judy, "I could turn this car around right now."  
  
"Judy, no, I trust you about today," I insisted. "Even if my silly little body gets shown all over the internet."  
  
"Yeah, that too," said Carla glumly.  
  
"Look, clothing optional, okay?" said Judy, exasperated. "When we get there, you can decide what to take off."  
  
And when we got there, in the relative privacy of the women's locker room, we all took off everything.  
  
It wasn't a big deal, stripping along with Judy and Carla. We did that at the gym, after our workouts and the games in our league, before showering.  
  
There's something I haven't said yet. What our sport is.  
  
"Okay, I guess this is it," I said, picking up my bag for the beach. As I did, I wanted to hide behind it.  
  
"Not yet," said Judy. "Let's talk ourselves past this first."  
  
"Huh?" said Carla.  
  
"I hate how I look," said Judy. "I know I shouldn't, but I've spent my whole life suffering by comparison every time I look at a fashion magazine. I'll never be model-hot, but maybe I can be more confident. Let's each of us say first what we don't like about how we look, then build each other up."  
  
"So each of us vent?" I asked.  
  
"Not just yourself." Judy's eyes flicked nervously. "Say what you think is substandard about me and Carla, too." She looked quickly at Carla, and back at me as she went on. "I'm fond of both of you, and there are things about you I wish I had. But if I tell you what a stranger might think about you, it might help you face up to what all the people out there won't say out loud." She waved her hands. "Okay, look, it's my weird idea, I'll go first, then you rip into me. We don't have to finish if this bothers you."  
  
Carla said, "Go ahead," before I could, so I nodded.  
  
Judy stood up straight and put her hands behind her back. "I have narrow, bony shoulders," she said, which to my eye wasn't all that true, or noticeable, "and my breasts tend down towards the sides. My legs show veins I wish weren't visible. There are creases under my jaw that don't belong on a 29-year-old. The good news is that my horsey face won't get so much attention today." She glanced at each of us. "Your turn."  
  
I flicked eyes at Carla. She didn't start, so I did. "Um...your skin isn't perfect, I guess. The dark spots. There aren't enough to be freckles, and there are too many to be beauty marks."  
  
"Fair," said Judy with a nod.  
  
Carla looked at me and said, "You took mine." She looked again at Judy. "I don't know, your feet look kinda big."  
  
"Who wants to go next?" said Judy, I think relieved.  
  
"I'll do it," said Carla with a sigh. "Too much below the ribs. If I got every carb out of my body, I'd still be pear-shaped. I sweat too easily." She then held a hand out to each of us.  
  
Judy said, "Big dark nipples. They make the downward trend of your bust more obvious."  
  
"Your posture," I said quickly, seeing it for the first time. "Slumping makes that downward trend worse."  
  
"Really?" said Carla. She stood straighter, and started to look like the Birth of Venus.  
  
"I'm short," I said, "Way shorter than I'd like, especially in the legs. I have almost no lips. Bicycling tones my thighs, but gives me too much of an ass, and my tummy stays round." And when I stopped, I was suddenly terrified of what my friends would say.  
  
"Limp hair," said Judy. "Light brown, barely noticeable. Keeping it short makes it look like a skull cap."  
  
Carla looked at the ceiling. "You! Took! Mine!" She looked at me. "Your nipples are, I guess, innies."  
  
Okay, I thought, could have been worse.  
  
"Now build me up," said Judy. "In this round you don't say anything about yourself."  
  
"You have a great butt," said Carla, enviously.  
  
"The shag is a good choice for your hair," I said. "Red benefits from swaying and bouncing. You seem energetic even when you aren't."  
  
"Cool," said Judy, looking pleased. "Carla, my hair has nothing on yours. You could grow it all the way to your ass, it's like sable fur, shining like that."  
  
"Your eyes are beautiful," I said, now the envious one. "Big and wide-set. If you actually want positive attention, take your glasses off now and then."  
  
"Ooooh!" said Carla, almost giggling.  
  
"And Cynthia, my dear friend," said Judy, "You're cuter than ten buttons. A sweet face you'll probably still have when you're eighty. Stick your B-cups out, so men will know you're legal."  
  
"Even if they are innies," said Carla. "And I don't know if the biking does this, but your back is sleek, and curvy."  
  
"Thanks," I said, never knowing what to say when I hear praise. "So now you think we're ready?" I asked Judy.  
  
"One more thing," she said, gathering us closer. "Keep in the front of your mind what we are."  
  
"Which is?" prompted Carla.  
  
"Naked women."  
  
Which got us outdoors on a laugh. As the sun touched and warmed our skin, skin everyplace, we leaned into it and strutted. I was excited, but not sexually. At least I didn't think so, but how could I tell? I mean, my vulva was out there, feeling the sun. The breeze went where it never had before, moving my pubic hair around. Okay, I guess it was sexual, or maybe sensual, but I don't think it made me horny. It was a new experience, stimulating, and I was enjoying it for that.  
  
The beach where nudity was allowed wasn't very crowded, but the people I saw were all in the buff. Judy aimed us towards a big tree rooted where the grass gave way to the sand, offering some shade. We spread out our towels and anchored them with our bags. We lay down, propped up by the grass around the roots, and spent a few minutes just taking in the scene.  
  
"There's...so many, um..." said Carla.  
  
Judy lowered her sunglasses theatrically, and leaned at her. "So many what?"  
  
Carla waved her hand vaguely, then murmured, "Penises."  
  
Judy grinned. "I figured we should just sit and watch a while. To get accustomed."  
  
We looked at men, couples, and more men, of various ages and body types, as they strolled by. Nobody was erect, but still...  
  
"They're just there, right out in front. Pointing the way." Carla may have been appalled, fascinated, or both. Her glasses had transitioned to shades, making her even harder to read. "It's like...the men are being led around by them."  
  
"They always are," said Judy drily. "It's just more obvious now."  
  
I laughed so hard I was afraid I'd pee. Carla almost doubled over. Judy, deadpan, reached into her bag and got out one of the magazines that damage her self-image.  
  
This whole time, we were aware of what was down the beach to our left. A volleyball net, surrounded by people roughly our age. As we calmed down, we watched them, off and on.  
  
I leaned across Carla at Judy, and pointed at the net. "This is why you wanted all three of us, right?"  
  
She remained deadpan. "Oh...you want to, um, participate?"  
  
Carla said, "You expect us to go over there and barge in?"  
  
Judy looked at the net. "They seem to have trouble getting a game up. We could help them out."  
  
"We are not betting," I declared. But I got up, doffed my hat, and stepped out of my flip-flops.  
  
"Could pay for a nice dinner," Judy grumbled, but didn't push further.  
  
Our gym has a big sand arena. We're in a three-on-three volleyball league. Making best use of our skills, we've worked out that I'm the digger, Carla is the setter, and Judy is the striker. Hey, I'm closer to the ground than they are. Carla has deft hands and good peripheral vision, beyond the range of her glasses. Judy is 5' 9" with a good vertical leap.  
  
Our team ranks in the middle of our women's league. We're not all that good. But we play together a whole lot, and I didn't think that was true of this nonchalant group we approached. Maybe ten men and six women in the group as a whole. Only three guys near the net, everyone else mingling around a beer keg.

"Hi, want to play?" said a tall guy to us, smiling and not obviously ogling, holding the ball between his arm and his side.  
  
"Sure," said Judy, beaming.  
  
"Tell you what," said the guy, "One girl with two guys, two girls with one guy, and the two-girl side starts with ten points."  
  
Exaaaactly what we expected.  
  
Judy got kittenish. "I think all of us would rather watch all of you. Why not boys against girls?"  
  
The guy shrugged. "Okay, just for fun then." He looked back at his buds, one of whom smirked, probably liking the idea of watching all of us. The other guy, short and with a full beard, nodded. Tall guy asked Judy, "Would you like to serve?"  
  
"Go ahead, you've got the ball. First to ten points wins?"  
  
"Sure," he chuckled. Looking back, he flipped the ball to the bearded guy and said, "Do it, Kyle."  
  
The bearded guy nodded again, and stepped back behind the rope resting on the sand. The other two stood casually, and either didn't notice that Carla and Judy eased up to the net while I moved to the backline between them, or didn't care.  
  
And in that moment my brain babbled, These guys are looking at MY BOOBS AND CROTCH, and OMG their junk is right out there and they're okay with that, and they're young and kinda hot and I'm showing them everything, this is insane—  
  
Then the bearded guy tossed up the ball and slapped it towards us. And I became a volleyball player.  
  
The ball was slow, on a high arc. I got to its path easily, with enough time to see Carla turn and face me. I two-wristed the ball upward in her direction. Judy turned sideways to face Carla, who soft-handed the ball into a parabola to the side. Judy jumped, wristed the ball, and drove it to splash sand in front of the feet of the tall guy, who basically hadn't moved.  
  
The three of them continued not moving. I think they all blinked.  
  
Judy smirked and said, "Now it's our serve."  
  
The tall guy smirked, picked up the ball, and tossed it over the net.  
  
Here's a weak spot in our game: None of us is an ace server, not even Judy. So, since we have to accept that all we can do is get the ball over the net, I serve, because I'm on the back line anyway.  
  
I took a few steps behind the rope, held up the ball, trotted up in the direction of one corner of the net, and slapped the ball towards the other corner. Two guys had leaned where I was heading. Only the bearded guy had a chance, and his lurching swing sent the ball under the net.  
  
Carla picked up the ball, said "I guess we keep serving," and tossed it back to me.  
  
So there was a tall guy, a short guy (with the beard), and one in between (with tattoos, some in places he could only show off today). Tall and short looked amused, the guy with tats not so much.  
  
As I said, we're not that good, and after we got the next point we misfired on a return and had to volley, and whichever of us could get to the ball sent it back. I couldn't keep it in bounds, so our lead slipped to 3-1.  
  
By this time, most of their group drifted from the keg to the sidelines. Tats guy grinned, but the bearded server, Kyle, looked to be taking us seriously, and sent a harder serve our way. It headed for a back corner. Carla ducked to give me a clear line. I went horizontal and got the dig less than a foot off the sand. I couldn't get it high, and Carla had to crouch a bit to get fully under it. Tall and Tats scurried to where they might block Judy's spike. Sensing that, Carla flipped the ball back over her head and the net, to land on open sand.  
  
I had skidded prone onto the boundary rope, and was fist-pumping and cheering Carla's move. I didn't notice right away that the bearded guy was halfway under the net, looking at me.  
  
"Are you okay?" he asked urgently.  
  
"Um...yeah, why?" I returned, getting my legs under me.  
  
He looked blank, then seemed to get his bearings. "You play all the time, right?"  
  
"Uh huh," I said, smiling. "I land like that a lot." Then I had to laugh. "But then, I'm wearing something."  
  
He laughed, straightening up. "Just making sure."  
  
"Kyle, right?" I said. I held out a hand. "I'm Cyndi."  
  
He took the hand and shook. "It's very humiliating to meet you, Cyndi."  
  
The spectators laughed. I beamed, and not just from what he said. I noticed his lean, cut build, especially the abs. His shortness (maybe 5' 7") might lead him to believe that I was in his league. The women in his group seemed to be near his height, or taller.  
  
Now, I don't like how height factors in to the attention men pay to me, and I to them, but I'm accustomed to it. Tall men can impress me, but don't especially attract me. I seem to get along best with guys in my part of the atmosphere, and I try to look past their defensiveness, excessive gratitude, and all the rest of it. Right then, I was enjoying the way Kyle kept eye contact, and didn't glance at the sand stuck to my sweaty skin.  
  
The tall guy, maybe trying to get alpha attention, said, "Five points, let's change sides."  
  
We crossed over, with Judy saying, "Will that put the sun in our eyes? Ahhh, no."  
  
I couldn't do this completely out of sight, but in the transition I got some sand out of Certain Places. It helped a little that Carla drew attention by shaking out her hair and adjusting the band that held her glasses stems in place.  
  
When we were up 6-1, the men got a point on a volley we couldn't handle cleanly. Tats appeared to have worked up a macho lather. He insisted on serving. He leaped high and slammed the ball. We leaned away as its near-horizontal trajectory took it about four feet out of bounds. The spectators hooted at him mercilessly. Tats started to yell at them, and Tall and Kyle had to calm him down.  
  
Carla murmured to us, "Maybe we ease up on them?"  
  
Judy shook her head. "It'd be suspicious. And they'd look even worse."  
  
I served, and Kyle got to a good spot and returned it. We did a quick Cyndi-to-Carla-to-Judy, and while it wasn't a fearsome spike, Kyle and Tats collided trying to get to it. As the ball rolled away, I couldn't resist leaning under the net and saying to Kyle, "Are you okay?"  
  
Kyle got to his feet quickly, laughing and nodding, while Tats pounded a fist on the sand. With a quick look at Tall, Kyle declared, "We concede!" Tats lurched to his feet, but as he did a woman stepped to his side and handed him a red cup. I think Tall had made eye contact with her before I served, but I wasn't sure. Anyway, it appeared that further ill will had been averted.  
  
Tall and Kyle crossed the net to high-five us. It was only then I noticed how hyped and hard-breathing Judy and Carla were. And I was.  
  
Judy, seeing a super-hot brunette approach Tall, yelled, "Winners to the water!" and took off. Carla and I dashed after.  
  
In water up to my neck and Judy's nipples, we hugged and cheered and scrubbed off. With Carla doing more of that than the rest of us. Especially the hugging. Even with water splashing against her darkened glasses, she looked ecstatic.  
  
Then she kissed us.  
  
Since our coffee talk, I had been wondering about this, and how to respond to it.  
  
Judy seemed to want out of the group hug, but I held us together and said to Carla, "We definitely don't hate you."  
  
Still smiling, Carla said, "But this isn't who you are, I know that. Thanks for letting me be who I am."  
  
"Yes, you be you," said Judy, clearly way off guard.  
  
"You can talk to us about anything," I said, expecting Carla would have a long road ahead.  
  
"Yeah," said Judy, nodding quickly as she got loose. "Talk."  
  
We returned to our towels and bags and hats, now in somewhat more shade. Judy and Carla settled in. It looked like they were now content to be nude in repose on a beautiful summer day. Judy had messed with some men, and Carla had kissed two women. As far as adventure was concerned, they seemed to be done.  
  
And I...wasn't.  
  
Thanks to the beard, it was always easy for me to find Kyle, even at a distance. I stayed with my friends, sometimes reading a paperback, but once in a while...okay, pretty often...I looked Kyle's way. If he seemed to look my way, I smiled. I wasn't sure that was noticeable under my hat, so I started parting my lips on the smiles, and showing teeth.  
  
Once, he smiled back. And waved.  
  
I waved too.  
  
He returned his attention to what his friends were doing.  
  
I returned my attention to the paperback, no longer smiling.  
  
A few minutes later, though, he trotted over and addressed all of us. "Hi. Just to show there's no hard feelings, would you care to join us? We've got the grill going."  
  
Carla looked ready to stand, but Judy put a hand on her arm while answering, "Oh, not me thanks, I've got plenty." Then quickly she sent one look at Carla and a different look at me.  
  
Carla glanced at me before looking at Kyle and saying. "Yeah me too, but thanks."  
  
I suppressed a grin, helped by my hat. "I'd be glad to," I said, standing.  
  
After a few steps side by side, he asked, "So, do you three hang out all the time?"  
  
"No, we only know each other from the gym," I said, smiling pleasantly, while thinking, Thanks, Carla, he saw us in the water getting all Sapphic. I tried to recover with, "So these are all friends of yours?"  
  
"We hang out at a bar. Got this event together on a dare."  
  
"Looks like you're having a good time."  
  
"Until you three showed up," he said with a grin. Then, in a rush, "Look I'll just say this, they're only friends. I'm not involved with anyone right now. If, uh, that's what you were, uh..."  
  
I nodded, looking away. "I was." Then, facing him: "I never want to barge in to anything, or waste anyone's time."  
  
"So, are you—"  
  
"Carla got really excited," I said. "We're friends, only. And no, I'm not seeing anyone right now. Well, I'm 'seeing' you, and a whole lot of you, um..." I was in too deep, and we both looked straight ahead.  
  
Kyle introduced me to people whose names I wouldn't remember, and as a group we talked about what it was like being nude in public. I welcomed a bratwurst with brown mustard on a hard roll, but declined beer.  
  
And then Kyle and I were sitting next to each other on a couple of towels, with his friends appearing to make a point of giving us space.  
  
We munched and made small talk, with some get-acquainted stuff about work, and an exchange of last names. I became aware that I was sitting next to a naked man, while putting a tube of meat in my mouth. Maybe I was getting used to this, because that didn't seem disturbing or hilarious.  
  
His beard wasn't long, but it was thick. I didn't necessarily find it attractive, but it kept drawing my eye. It was a medium brown like his scalp hair, so it showed a lot of texture in the sunlight, with color variations, and moved a little in the breeze. It wasn't a neglect beard. His neck was shaved, and his lips were visible.  
  
His eye-corners tended to crinkle when he smiled. I resisted liking that. Guys shouldn't be that kind of cute, bad enough that I was.  
  
He said, "I don't know, there's just something about you. In the game, and after, your happiness is so...big. I wished I could be a part of your happiness."  
  
That got to me. My heart thumped. But instead of responding in the same spirit, I succumbed to my usual reflex of dodging praise. "Uh, thanks," I said quietly.  
  
"I could just move on, if you want," he said, now subdued. "It's my first time doing this nude thing, and I don't want to crowd you."  
  
I looked away, as I had done maybe twenty times by now. Cripes, the sheen of sweat on his shoulder was enough to addle my brain. Finding that my eyes now trained on my own crotch didn't make things any better. I got impatient with myself, and him. I had already thrown my body around in pursuit of a volleyball, legs flying, breasts jiggling. All while he'd watched.  
  
And I liked the idea of bringing him into my happiness.  
  
I said, "Why don't we just stare at our bodies, and get it over with? We give each other permission to look at what we're showing freely to hundreds of strangers." I stood up, and indicated for him to do the same. "Then maybe we can act like normal people to each other. And if eyes still aim at non-public parts, well, we've given each other permission."  
  
He got to his feet, looking self-conscious. Then he explained why. "I hope I don't, uh, react to this."  
  
"It's okay," I said, too quickly, and maybe not truthfully. "But if you'd be embarrassed, then forget it, we don't have to do this."  
  
He stood straight, looked me in the eyes, and took a slow deep breath. "No, go ahead. As long as you won't be offended or, uh, feel threatened."  
  
Which recalled to me my harsh statement in the car. Kyle, it seemed, wasn't assuming that I gave him a free pass because I was naked.  
  
I took off my hat and stood just as straight as he did, and set my feet apart a little. From seeing myself in the mirror in this pose, I knew that I showed labia, behind sparse hairs. There was no demure front-leg-across. No hiding. I worked very hard to keep calm as I said, "If nature takes its course, I'll decide that you're a healthy young male."  
  
He chuckled. Then he put his hands behind his back, and also set his feet apart a little. His cock was relaxed, and stayed that way. It seemed...ordinary, neither huge nor tiny. Behind it, his sac seemed proportionate, healthy...ordinary.  
  
I saw that he was circumcised. I had already seen that. Several times. Shame on me.  
  
Kyle continued to breathe slow and deep, and (not helping at all) I now wanted to see him get erect. First just for the visual, and then (worse!) to see if the sight of my nude body could make that happen. Where were my high-minded concerns?  
  
I made myself look at his face, and saw that he was scanning my body. The damn beard prevented me from getting a clear idea of what was going on in his head. So I went back to doing the same to him, getting now to those nice abs. Never really cared about a man's abs before. Maybe I didn't now, either, but they were his, and he'd clearly gone to some effort to get them to look like that.  
  
I imagined his abs being just above my pelvis. And forced myself to stay still.  
  
"Would you please turn around?" He said, surprising me. He was smiling, but I didn't detect ridicule.  
  
I gave him a crooked smile and said, "If you like." As I stepped to rotate 180 degrees, I thought, Is he an ass man? Will my sorry biking butt be a deal-breaker? At first I held the same pose as before. Then I put my hands on my hips and looked over my shoulder at him. I resisted the urge to pop a hip to one side.  
  
"Thank you," he said, smiling more, I think because I was being playful and, maybe, too damn cute for my own good.  
  
"Now you," I told him, facing front and gesturing rotation with an index finger.  
  
He presented those sculpted buttocks, first in a plain pose, then looking over his shoulder and folding his arms, a much more masculine posture than what I'd shown him.  
  
"Thank you," I said. I took a step towards him. Then, suddenly worried that I couldn't trust my hands, I said, "I'd like to go in for a swim," and angled my head with what I hoped was an inviting smile. I was already trotting towards the water when I heard him say "Me too." And I got a tiny thrill from taking the initiative. (And being chased?)  
  
Once in enough depth, I did some fast crawl strokes, enjoying being enclosed by the water. I realized that while we surveyed our skins, I wasn't being touched, and I felt the lack. I swam for clear water, naked people always visible somewhere. I couldn't even see Kyle at that moment, but I knew he was following, probably gaining because of longer arms, and in a wild flash I wanted him to catch me and hold me and take me right there. I thought, So nudists are calm and platonic, is that the claim?. Not Judy last year. Not Carla after the game. Not me. I'm nude and men are nude and I'm in a froth. So much for getting used to this. If I can't calm down, I should never do Nude Day again.  
  
Instead of catching me, Kyle swam past on my left, then turned to stand and block my way. He held out his arms, grinning. I laughed, stopping, and grabbed his hands.  
  
I was flat-footed on smooth sand, head and shoulders above the water. He was immersed to about the middle of his chest. There was nobody very close to us. I trembled, but the water wasn't cold.  
  
I let go his hands and drifted closer, a few inches away from him. "I think you're a nice guy." I said, low-toned.  
  
"I try to be," he said firmly, not ingratiating.  
  
I swept stringy hair off my forehead. "Do you think I'm an awful person?"  
  
He frowned. "Definitely not."  
  
"You may want to revise your opinion in a moment," I said, and now had to take a slow deep breath. My crotch was warming. "You did fine, before, not reacting physically while you looked at me." Another breath. His look wasn't completely innocent, but not lecherous either. "But I'd like to know if, when you look at me, you can react that way."  
  
His lips compressed, which had the effect of merging the mustache with the beard. "I think you're nice, and I hope you're honest," he said. "A few times, when, um, things went way beyond flirting, it wasn't honest."  
  
I cussed at myself for screwing this up, and put a hand on his shoulder. "Oh no. I'm sorry, Kyle. I really like you, and I thought maybe, in the water, you wouldn't be embarrassed, or worried about what people would think."  
  
He put a hand on my hand. "I have to tell you that it was all I could do to stay calm, before. I had to imagine myself skiing, in freezing cold."  
  
That made me smile. "Maybe I should be satisfied with that."  
  
"Do you really want to see me...that way?"  
  
"Yes, but only if you—"  
  
"I do, Cyndi," he said clearly.  
  
My heart resumed thumping. Several red flags tried to get my attention. They didn't stop me from taking his hand in mine, and moving it below the water line. "If it helps," I said, in what couldn't get above a whisper, "I'd like to encourage you."  
  
I pressed his hand on my breast.  
  
He exhaled sharply. Then he took the invitation and fondled me, a fingertip caressing the nipple, which at that moment was definitely not an innie.  
  
A yelp tried to escape me, but I squeezed shut my mouth and eyes, and breathed slowly despite shuddering. I thought, Is this honest enough for you, Beard Boy?  
  
I opened my eyes, and glanced down. I saw nothing but choppy water against his chest hair. "I can't see very well," I said, almost laughing. "May I investigate another way?"  
  
"Yes," he whispered, "but please be careful."  
  
I let a hand slide down his abs, fingers then tracing the flatness across his pelvis, finding hair, and then—  
  
"Hhhuuuuh!" he said, as I curled my hand around a firm, ovoid cylinder that I knew I would like just fine.  
  
And I woke up to the fact that I wanted, needed, release! The red flags sneered that they had told me so.  
  
Worse, I was at risk of giving blue balls to a near-total stranger.  
  
But I wanted nothing more than to barge ahead! With—something.  
  
"Kyle," I gasped, "I want you to be a big part of my happiness! Is it okay if I jerk you off?"  
  
"Wh-whaaaat?" Kyle squinted at me, but quickly recovered. "Y-yeah! If you like, uh, yeah. And should I—"  
  
"Finger fuck me and keep squeezing that boob," I said, still gasping. "And kiss me, so it looks like that's all we're doing." I lifted the only one of our arms that wouldn't be busy below the water line, and put it around his shoulder. With the other hand I started yanking him, fast, the way I'd talked, somehow thinking that if I stayed at that speed everything would be fine and not as insane as I was afraid it was. Especially saying 'finger fuck me' in public to a man I'd just met.  
  
He might have been flummoxed, but the hand he put on my crotch was steady, with two fingers smoothly sliding behind the labia and his thumb stroking the clit against its hood. That, and a firm squeeze of my breast, and me standing up, and being nude, and in water, combined for a sensation like none I'd ever had, nerves flaring wildly. A huge rush twitched much of my body and I had to replant my feet to keep a good hold on his prick. Could he even enjoy this, surrounded by water?

And also, we were kissing, which gave me another rush, and I almost wished that we were doing that only, so we could concentrate on it, and then I didn't want that because his fingers found a place that started a bigger rush that kept on, and bloomed.  
  
I swirled fingers helically around his shaft, getting slight contact to his balls, exploring the semen duct and the glans, all rapidly. Between kisses he was now fast-talking at me: "Oh-god-Cyndi-you're-amazing, if-this-is-just-today-that's-great, but-I'd-love-to-see-you-agAAIIINN—" I kissed to shut him up as I firmed my grip on his spasming cock. His gunk warmed my hand many times, then washed away.  
  
Despite his bursts, he kept pleasuring me, and he abandoned my breast to get an arm around me, which was okay because both breasts compressed on his ribs, while buoyancy and his grip lifted me off the sand, and I was then into a full-on orgasm, maybe mangling his hand with my tightening thighs, but if it was on the G spot it should stay there, and I said "Kyle-yeah-that's-it, you-can-suck-at-volleyball, cause-you-made-me-cum, yeah-don't-stop-I'm-still-cumming, you-got-anything-else, you'd-rather-do-with-that-hand?"  
  
Then he kissed me deep, for the sake of kissing. And I held him close, because now the kiss was doing more for me than the orgasm. Well, almost as much. The kiss was like the other actions he had taken, calm and purposeful, despite my weird requests. I dared to think that the kiss was also tender, and passionate, and showed how he felt about me.  
  
My eyes had been closed for a while. Finally I ramped down, and opened them. I relaxed my legs, slid away from his hand, and gave him a smile. "Yes, you definitely can see me again," I said, running fingers through his wet beard, rearranging it for my amusement. "Although I'll be fully dressed."  
  
He mock-pouted. "All the time?"  
  
"We'll see. I do have more to learn about this handle of yours." Messing with his beard with one hand, I let a couple fingers of the other hand slide along what still felt like an erection.  
  
He looked away.  
  
"Oh Kyle, was this too much?" Now, now, I was paying attention to my better judgment. "Really, I've never done anything like this before, are you okay?"  
  
He smiled my way sheepishly. "Am I okay?" he said, mocking both of us from during the game. "Yeah. I'm just catching up. I'm so glad we did that."  
  
"Especially the kiss at the end," I whispered, even though nobody was within thirty feet of us. That may not have been completely true at first, but I meant it more when I was done saying it. I gazed at him in a way I never have at a man, as if he'd be what I see every day when I first open my eyes, and now I feared that things were happening too fast. I took a breath and said, "So, uh, I can see you again?"  
  
He drew himself up in mock haughtiness. "Fully dressed."  
  
I was relieved to find that fun broke the spell, or maybe delayed it a while. "That's better than waiting a whole year to see you nude again." Then I grabbed two fistfuls of beard and we kissed silly, and then finally we headed for shore, holding hands.  
  
When we were in water shallow enough for my breasts to emerge, he asked, "Can I have your number?"  
  
"Sure," I said. "Let me...oh..." And that was the problem with going nude! My phone was in the locker. We could go get our electronics, but that might spoil the spontaneous joy of what we'd done.  
  
He may have thought that also. "I think I could memorize it, if you repeat it a few times."  
  
I faced him. "Okay. You go first."  
  
He recited his number, and I learned that we had different area codes, so I'd have to master ten digits. I recited mine, and he learned the same. Back and forth we repeated. Then I said, "Now tell me mine." I arched my back and ran my hands through my hair to the back of my head, elevating my boobs, bringing the nipples straight out to say hello. I bounced them.  
  
He made it through four digits before cracking up.  
  
I mock-scowled, covered my bosom with my hands, and said, "Now concentrate," and repeated my number again.  
  
He recited it back correctly.  
  
"And now?" I asked, again presenting my mammaries.  
  
He let his jaw drop and said "Uhhhh—what?"  
  
We laughed, it was all loads of fun, but I thought, Yes, please set aside your rational brain when I come on to you!  
  
We resumed the shoreward walk, continuing to recite and firm up our memories. When we were at thigh-depth, he faced me, with sunlight on his dangling prick, and said, "What's my number?"  
  
I was expecting that. I took a step closer to him and put on bedroom eyes. Slowly, breathily, I recited one digit at a time, now and then gnawing on my lower lip. His eyes widened, and his penis twitched. "Shit!" he hissed, and quickly dropped to his knees with a splash, looking around.  
  
I knelt, leaned, kissed him, and said, "See? I am an awful person."  
  
He whispered, "Now I know what to send you." Then he recited my number.  
  
"I give you permission," I said. I stopped being awful and let him go flaccid. Then, this tumbled out: "I hate whoever wasn't honest with you."  
  
He smiled, and now, damnit, I liked the eye-crinkling.  
  
We stood and resumed our walk, again holding hands. Which I kept us doing after I saw Judy and Carla watching us.  
  
We parted company with a wave, no more kissing today. Or diddling.  
  
I was glad that the female anatomy does not have an obvious indicator that this just orgasmed, but the spring in my step might have given it away. I didn't care.  
  
I flopped down onto my towel.  
  
"Holding hands," said Judy with mock concern, "Now that's serious."  
  
"It is," said Carla, quite serious, to Judy.  
  
"He just wants free volleyball lessons," I said blithely.  
  
They both let it drop. I went in search of my hat, which the wind had carried in the direction of our base camp. The rest of the day passed with all of us in post-adventure bliss.  
  
On the trip home, Judy and Carla glanced at me a few times. Searchingly. I Mona-Lisa-smiled, and said nothing.  
  
During the ride, I sent Kyle a text, and got one from him. Nothing naughty, just confirmed memorization. Yet these few typed words from him got me tingly behind the shorts I now wore.  
  
I then realized that Kyle and I might have to deal with a health downside to such intimate contact with lake water.  
  
Despite that, I started thinking about next year.  
  
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One year later, I was stuck at home, feeling a pang of regret.  
  
Yet, as I stood and faced the glass door, and looked out beyond the balcony, I felt thick hairs tickle the back of my neck. I grinned and reached behind me, even as a hand gently surrounded my right breast. Not quite so gently, I twiddled my fingers among a phallus and testicles.  
  
"Robe first," he said, extending a bundle of white terry cloth into my line of vision. "Until we see if the coast is clear."  
  
I donned my robe as he closed and belted his. I slid open the door, and we stepped onto the balcony. There's always a breeze this high up, but the sun was warm.  
  
We scanned the buildings nearby, also with balconies, and saw only a few people out, apparently not nude. None looked our way.  
  
I heaved a sigh. "This year, I wanted to get you to a part of the beach I've heard about, where we could do a lot more than we did in the water."  
  
He said, "We'll just have to do it here."  
  
We faced each other.  
  
We opened the robes.  
  
We brought together our lips and bodies.  
  
Fabric still covered our arms and backs, but we were nude enough.