**Tami Saves Mei-lin**  
by donnylaja  
  
**Part 1**  
  
Tami ascended another step, feeling the disgusting grit of tracked-in slush and mud under her bare feet, and steeled herself to be stared at once again. Having her roommate Terri on the step above her, and her other roommate Jen on the step below, was some comfort, but not much. She knew every step in this stairway leading to the dining hall level and she particularly hated this one, the one that brought her bare breasts up into view of anyone who cared to look in her direction.  
  
She looked down miserably at her mud-stained toes next to Terri's big hiking boots and Jen's exquisite velvet Doc Martens. She exhaled and looked up at the hundred or so students having supper on this dark February evening. She was determined to appear unashamed. She resisted the urge to cross her arms over her chest, an urge so intense that in frustration she beat the wall behind her with her fists. The Dean had spies everywhere who would report any sign of modesty.  
  
This was Tami Smithers of Providence, R.I., the first of her family to go to college, in fact to the prestigious Campbell-Frank College up here in Vermont, on a scholarship of course because otherwise there was no way her parents could afford to pay the sky-high tuition here (or indeed afford to send her to any college at all). Caught streaking on a sorority dare the first week, faced with expulsion and a life of disgrace, she frantically offered the excuse to Dean Jorgon that nudity was her religion. The college couldn't expel her; that would be violating her First Amendment rights and it was wary of any civil rights lawsuits. But they were convinced that her "religion" claim was bogus. So she had to stay naked and look like she meant it.  
  
Worst of all, her dorm supervisor Wanda was put in charge of "monitoring" compliance with her religion. Wanda had taken away all her clothes and even her bedsheets and footwear. Tami was convinced she and the Dean were orchestrating a campaign to subject her to more and more humiliating experiences so as to get her to "crack". And it was Wanda who had led that sorority dare!! There were six girls, and Wanda herself, running around the gym building naked, and only Tami had gotten caught. It was so unfair. She wanted so badly to tell Wanda off, to cry out to the world the injustice that had been done to her, but that would be to give away her secret. The result: expulsion.  
  
So all through last semester, and through the first month of this one, she had had to sleep naked, go to classes naked, and scurry across campus naked even through the Vermont snow. Amazingly her health had not suffered; in fact she was the only one in her dorm wing who had never gotten so much as a sniffle all year, while the others were getting colds and flus. Her body had gotten toughened to the elements, at least a little. If only her mind could get tough too! But her conservative Catholic upbringing had instilled a strong sense of modesty which would not go away. She hated every minute of being naked -- her mouth went dry looking at the heavy clothing everyone else enjoyed, their warm sweaters, warm socks with snug warm boots.  
  
Fortunately she had attracted a group of true friends, and a cute boyfriend. Though she could never let on the truth, she felt loved. Though the fact that they admired her for her religion made it worse. She felt such a phony. . . lying to her true friends.  
  
Now the line moved up and Tami went up to the other step she hated, the one where everyone could see her pubic hair. It had grown fluffy and abundant in the open air. Jen, who was gay, worshipped it, kissed it every chance she got. She wanted Tami to have it colored! Tami supposed she should be flattered but it was only another reminder of her nudity.  
  
Relax, she told herself. I'm going up to eat dinner with my friends. Not undergoing those humiliations Wanda and the Dean had maneuvered her into agreeing to. Not spreading her legs as a model for "sexual health" workshops in the dorm lounge, right in front of her friends. Not doing figure drawing modeling for Professor Brignon's class in that freezing studio in the art building. Not having orgasms in front of leering men at the Chalfont Institute as part of some kind of "sexual research" . . . oh God . . . that was the worst . . .  
  
She cleared her throat, reminding herself that she was doing something mundane now. As they gave Mrs. Magnuson their meal cards Terri looked out at the tables. "There's Rebecca."  
  
"Who's that girl with her?" Jen said. Rebecca, ultrasmart divinity student and a Vermont native, was sitting in her usual flannel shirt and jeans next to a tiny Asian girl in a white blouse and sweatpants.  
  
"That's Mei-lin," Tami said. "She's in my Advanced Yoga class." Tami's scholarship was in gymnastics; with her flexibility it was easy to do those yoga contortions. But Mei-lin was expert. She could do even more positions than Tami.  
  
"I don't think I've seen her before," Terry said.  
  
"She's an exchange student," Tami said. "I heard Varsha mention it once." Varsha was the yoga teacher, Professor Choudhury, who liked to be called by her first name. "She just got here this semester. From Japan, I think."  
  
"Mei-lin is a Chinese name," Jen pointed out. Jen, daughter of a wealth lawyer, had traveled widely and knew such things.  
  
"Oh, sorry." Tami blushed. "Sorry," she said again.  
  
"Don't worry, I'm the same way," Terri said. "We Americans can't tell Asians apart."  
  
They got their food -- Tami, as usual, piled her plate high with protein; in this cold weather she had a huge appetite -- and made toward the table.  
  
"Hello -- " No sooner had the three girls sat down across from Rebecca and Mei-lin, and Terri tried to say hi to the new girl, than the Chinese girl abruptly took her tray and stationed herself at an empty table halfway across the room.  
  
Terri was not happy. "What the -- ?!"  
  
They all watched, or in Terri's case glared, as Mei-lin resumed eating her yogurt, resolutely staring out the window, though there was nothing to see out there. This time of year in Vermont, it gets dark early.  
  
In a distracted state they started picking at their food. Nobody said anything but they had an idea why the girl had run away. Finally Rebecca said, "She comes from a very conservative culture."  
  
Tami felt miserable, once again ashamed. She couldn't blame the Chinese girl for being offended by her nudity. Maybe if, in her former life as a normal clothed person, a naked girl came to sit next to her, she would have moved away too. Tami had lost her appetite but, aware of the calories she needed to survive the winter without clothing, forced herself to eat. She occasionally glanced over at Mei-lin. Terri and Jen were clearly pissed, and Rebecca, who normally had a calm center, was visibly uncomfortable. Tami went from miserable to curious to ashamed to sympathetic. And then back to ashamed. And it was a situation she couldn't avoid. She would see Mei-lin tomorrow morning in yoga class.  
  
  
**Part 2**  
  
Tami was early that morning. Advanced Yoga began at 11 a.m. and she was there at 10:45. It was easy for her to slip in; unlike the other girls in the class (there were no guys in it) she had no need to change in the locker room. In fact she had never been in the locker room.  
  
The class was in the Dance Building, next to the art building. On the way in Tami saw the window to that accursed studio where she had been cajoled into modeling for figure drawing class. Nude, of course. Professor Brignon had called her into her office via intracampus email, and proposed it in a way she really couldn't refuse.  
  
"Miss Smithers," she had said in her thick French accent, "we are in the need most high for models. The pay is most acceptable, twenty dollars an hour. You are the natural choice for our 8 a.m. class and I see that it is a space vacant in your schedule." How did she know about Tami's schedule? Tami was sure the Dean had set this up.  
  
"You want me to model naked?"  
  
"Well how else would Tami Smithers to do it?"  
  
It was an awkward moment. Tami had no choice but to agree. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays Tami had to do whatever poses the good professor wanted. Which seemed to always involve spreading her legs. Sixty dollars a week was a lot to someone like Tami, but it really wasn't worth it.  
  
Fortunately the yoga class was in a room they kept nice and warm. Tami pulled a mat from the little pile and sat on it cross-legged. She couldn't be clothed or covered but at least she was allowed the soft mat under her bare skin. She found herself thankful for the littlest things these days.  
  
Now Debbie came in, and her friend Vonda. Tami thought fast. She was determined to sit next to Mei-lin. She wasn't sure why, whether it was because she wanted to get Mei-lin to know her better, or just to put her nudity into the Chinese girl's face like Terri suggested last night . . . Normally Tami placed her mat at the far end, next to the mirrored wall. It was a pitiful attempt to "cover herself", staying "out of sight", far away from the door so that people passing by wouldn't see her, though the mirror tended to defeat that purpose. Glancing to the side she could always see her stark nudity contrasting with the tunics and pants of everyone else. The only thing they had in common was their bare feet.  
  
Mei-lin tended to station herself near the middle. Tami picked up her mat and put it there, as nonchalantly as she could. Now Maria and Esther came in, chatting constantly as always. More girls padded in, careful to leave their shoes and socks at the door. Nobody was supposed to wear shoes on these studio floors. Now Mei-lin came in. She must have been surprised to see Tami in her usual place but didn't show it. Unfortunately there was still enough empty space so that when the class began Tami was three mats away from her.  
  
Varsha arrived, a tall and very slender Indian woman who looked about fifty years old. She gave her usual little speech, the effectiveness of which varied among the girls.  
  
"Yoga is a spiritual journey. As you go through the poses remember where you came from and where you are going. Translate that into the terms of whatever religion you belong to. Too often in our modern world we ignore our spiritual selves, the unseen, the unknowable, what we are like just before we go to sleep and just as we wake up, before the quotidian world takes over our brains.  
  
"We have here a religious nudist," she continued. Tami dreaded when she singled her out. It was the third time this semester. "Her religion is visible of course. For the rest of you it is not, but it can be just as real. OK, let's start."  
  
Varsha put the girls through the warmups, basic lotus poses, now on to the more advanced, the peacock, the scorpion . . . most of the girls eventually had to resort to modified versions. By the end of the class only Tami and Mei-lin were keeping up with Varsha. The last pose was bird of paradise, where you stand and pull your knee up behind your back. Tami could feel her lower lips separate. Anyone looking from her left could see up into her womanly cave. Down the hall someone closed a door and five seconds later the naked girl could feel a waft of air glancing against her cervix. Being naked made Tami sensitive to everything. Now, to the girls' surprise, a tall, older man walked in. He watched dispassionately in his stocking feet, being rather careful not to look at the girl who was unclothed.  
  
The workout ended ten minutes early. Varsha said, "Sit lotus, girls." After they had arranged themselves on their mats she said, "As you know, the annual ArtVermont exhibition is in two weeks, and one of the installations involves yoga. This is Seth Murchison, whose multimedia work will be set in the lobby of this building. Tell them, Seth." The older man started describing his work. He had a very thick Irish accent. He talked about the use of moving lights, mirrors, blocks of wood . . . it was hard to understand him. He seemed be rambling. Varsha laughed. "Get to the point, Seth!"  
  
"Oh right . . . The work has twelve stages, what I call plinths, and on the center one will be a woman in a specially colored jumpsuit, and sneakers and socks, doing some yoga positions. The poses will illustrate the, uh, concatenation of objects extending from one plinth to another, what are called catenaries." Tami, straight-A math major, tried not to roll her eyes. Catenaries are curves traced by hyperbolic functions. This artist guy was throwing the word around and probably didn't know what it meant.  
  
Varsha said, "Seth asked me for a recommendation, and I'm glad all you girls are doing well in this class, but he wanted our most advanced student, so I recommended Mei-lin for the performance. I spoke to her about it and she agreed. Her name will be on the program. Take a bow!"  
  
The Chinese girl blushed as she uncrossed her legs and stood up. The class clapped. Esther, always outspoken, said, "You're a star, Mei-lin!" Which seemed to cause a deeper blush.  
  
The class ended and the room emptied out, everyone going back to the locker room except Tami, who stayed in the studio texting Jen and Terry about their trip to Montreal this weekend. Whenever she could, she would stay in class a few minutes, until the hallways cleared and there were fewer people to see her. She crept out and was almost out of the building when she got curious about the locker room. What was it like? She had a few extra minutes. Nobody would see her; the girls from the class would be all out of there by now. Maybe she wanted to be in a place designed for people with clothes. Being naked in a locker room, she could pretend she was a normal clothed person who was in the middle of dressing or undressing, if only for a few seconds. She turned down the hall and, hearing the slapping of her feet on the cold tile, stopped. Wait. I'm supposed to be a religious nudist. This is pitiful, going into a place she had no reason to be in, except to catch some aura of the world of the clothed. I should just tough it out like I always do.  
  
Her curiosity got the best of her and she approached the women's locker room. She wondered what college locker rooms were like. Everything at Campbell-Frank was more elegant than her high school, which (she was beginning to realize such things) was in a working-class neighborhood and was pretty run down.  
  
There was no door; she just walked in. The lockers were big and old-looking, but not cheap. Certainly not like the beat-up lockers in her high school, half of which didn't close properly due to damaged hinges. The tiling was colorful, with complicated designs on the floor that she recognized as "Penrose pentangles" from her Geometric Topology class. On some of the lockers were plaques with names of people who had donated money to the college. The names were all English-sounding. Arthur Edgington. Joyce Featherstone. Richard Farquhar.  
  
She thought the place was empty but now she heard sniffling. At first it sounded like someone had a cold. The sound echoed off the porcelain surfaces. Tami turned the corner and there was Mei-lin, back in her street clothes. She was sitting on the floor, leaning against a locker, and crying.  
  
  
**Part 3**  
  
Seeing Mei-lin crunched up in a ball, hiding from the world in the locker room, crying -- Tami saw herself, not too long ago, cringing in a bathroom during that Black Formal, having seen everyone else in their best party clothes, while she herself was miserably naked, her bare butt and back against the cold gritty tile, begging God for the chance to wear something. Of course there was a difference; Mei-lin here was fully clothed. But Tami recognized the emotion.  
  
The Chinese exchange student saw the campus "nudist" emerging from around the corner and turned her head away. Tami came closer. "What's wrong?" Mei-lin clumsily got up, twisted her body to avoid the naked girl, tried to sling her bookbag over her shoulder, it fell off, then she tried again, and hustled out of view, the bookbag awkwardly wrapped around her arm.  
  
This old locker room had narrow aisles. Tami was determined. She quickly backtracked around the corner, breasts bouncing, feet slapping against the Penrose pentangles, and intercepted Mei-lin, preventing the girl from leaving by stretching herself out into an "X', her hands pressed against the tops of the lockers on each side, her toes pushed against the bottoms. In her mind she suppressed her shame at exposing her spread-out nakedness.  
  
Mei-lin bent and shielded her eyes as if to block out the bright sun. "P - please," she said, "I - I'm not like you. . . I have shame."  
  
Tami wanted to say, "I have shame too! You have no idea!!" Instead she said, "I want you to talk to me. Or talk to someone!"  
  
"I . . . can't. I have no one here."  
  
Tami's face went slack. Suddenly she realized that Mei-lin always seemed to be alone. There were no other Chinese exchange students on campus. The girl always walked to classes by herself. Maybe she always ate by herself too, which is why Rebecca, good Christian that she was, ventured to sit next to her in the dining hall yesterday.  
  
"Not even your roommate? . . . Who is your roommate?"  
  
"Her name is Heather Blincoe." Damn, Tami thought. One of Wanda's sorority friends, who took delight in torturing and teasing Tami about being naked and freezing in the winter cold. Not as bad as Wanda, or Lorinda and the bio major crowd, but not someone exactly welcoming of outsiders. She probably treats Mei-lin like dirt. Tami thought: this poor girl really is lonely.  
  
"Let's talk about it," Tami offered. "Do you have a class now? Come to my room."  
  
"N - no, I can't go to . . . the naked girl's room."  
  
"Let me come to your room then," Tami said, without thinking. Then she realized: I don't want strut around naked in front of Heather. Tami had learned to plan her days to minimize exposure and teasing, and this was not a good plan. "Or maybe . . . some time when Heather's not there."  
  
"She's gone for the week, went home, to the Philadelphia place."  
  
"Let's go back to your room then."  
  
"I can't . . . be seen with a naked girl. I lose face."  
  
Like many young people from working-class neighborhoods, Tami's horizons were greatly expanded by what she learned in her college classes. She remembered something from her Intro to Anthropology course last semester, about Far Eastern cultures being conservative, worshipping ancestors, and the importance of the appearance of respectability, not "losing face". That would explain where this lonely Chinese girl was coming from. Then she remembered that Heather lived in her dorm, Pilgrim Hall, and suddenly hatched a plan.  
  
She played dumb so as to get the room number. "What dorm are you in?"  
  
"Pilgrim Hall, Room 114."  
  
  
**Part 4**  
  
That night Mei-lin, snuggled in her bed in Room 114 with her tablet, escaping into her Biochemistry textbook, grateful for having the room to herself, was jolted by a clicking sound on the window pane. She thought it might be grains of snow -- she was from Guangzhou, a tropical area, and the sounds of snow were new to her -- then was shocked to see that it was the toenails of Tami Smithers, tapping against the glass to get her attention. The naked girl, ghostly in the reflected light from Mei-lin's lamp, partly hidden by curtains, was almost as spread out as she had been in the locker room, her hands grabbing the outer window casings on top, her snow-encrusted feet planted on the outer sill.  
  
With the reflex of a rescuer Mei-lin slid open the big pane and took Tami by the hand, helping her in, all the while looking away from the flushed bare skin. "Tami -- how could you -- how could anyone -- aren't you cold?"  
  
"You might say that -- zhhhh!" Tami said. She watched as Mei-lin got a towel from her dresser so that Tami could wipe the grains of snow off her feet, off her nipples, and dry herself off as the snow melted on her. "Your room is just below mine. I climbed down from outside." It had taken some planning, finding all the right places to place her hands and feet on the way down. But this afternoon when she looked at the old building on the way back from her Calculus class, pretending to chat with Jen, she saw that the quirky Victorian brickface design provided lots of little outcroppings for fingers and toes to grab onto. It was a situation she would take advantage of again in the future, though always at night when no one could see the nude doing this very unusual type of rock climbing.  
  
"I don't see how any girl -- how anyone could -- in the snow without clothes!" Mei-lin was amazed at Tami's resistance. Tami handed the towel back to Mei-lin, who was still looking down.  
  
Thinking quickly, Tami maneuvered behind Heather's desk and planted her newly-dried butt into her chair, with a little sly satisfaction . . . when Heather comes back next week and sits down, if someone could only tell her my bare butt had been here!  
  
Heather had a big picture on her window will, a photo of the sorority, the sorority Tami had tried to get into that fateful night by Wanda's streaking dare. Tami pulled it onto the desk so that it hid her breasts. "There . . . you can't see me now, right? Just my head."  
  
Mei-lin gingerly looked up and finally met Tami's eyes. Then she said, "Can I get you some tea? You must still be cold."  
  
"Of course I am. But it was worth it."  
  
Tami sat while Mei-lin turned on a hotpot, and saw the reflection of her bare breasts on the glass of the sorority photo. Superimposed on the girls, she smirked as she noticed that one of her nipples was right on Heather's face, the other on Wanda's. Within a minute she heard the boiling of water. She accepted the tea and the two girls sipped in silence, one bundled up in long-sleeved pajamas, socks and fluffy slippers, the other nude. Finally Tami thought it was time to speak. "Why were you crying? Are you lonely?"  
  
"No . . . it's because of that . . . art exhibit I'm supposed to be in."  
  
"You should be proud. I hear it's a big deal." Tami's knowledge of art mostly consisted of being a reluctant nude model for Brignon's classes. The experience hadn't exactly made her curious about anything artistic. But after what Varsha said about "ArtVermont" this morning, she had looked it up online. ArtVermont was apparently a big event; it was the state's largest art exhibition, going for 30 years now. As for that artist guy, Seth Murchison, he had his own web page with photos of his exhibits around the Northeast. The exhibits -- he called them "Placements" -- were actually pretty interesting. The arrangements were geometric, and Tami being a math major, recognized the shapes of isosceles triangles, parabolas, and actual catenaries. She took back what she thought about his knowledge of math. When he mentioned catenaries this morning he knew what he was talking about.  
  
The "Placements" were usually in big lobbies or gymnasiums. There was a plan for an outdoor one this summer in Altoona, Pennsylvania. A typical Placement was centered around a live performer doing some kind of dance, or posing. The performer was always wearing a jumpsuit and sneakers, of the same color. Seth Murchison had a blog that he wrote in almost every day. His latest post was about the difficulty of finding work outside the Northeast. The man was ambitious, clearly. Tami was relieved to see that none of his work involved nude models! In fact the jumpsuits were his own design, with a link to the pattern which he had copyrighted.  
  
"Yes I know," Mei-lin said sorrowfully. "I should be proud that I was selected. Varsha made me a good compliment. But I feel like shame, doing yoga poses in front of everyone."  
  
Tami was puzzled. "But . . . you'll be wearing a jumpsuit."  
  
"I know . . . but . . . to pose like that in front of people . . . It's not like in class, where there are other girls around me and no one watching. . . Oh Tami . . . I just can't do it!!" She put her head down in her arms, burying her wet eyes in the flannel of her pajamas.  
  
They were talking about jumpsuits, and the girl was all covered up in flannel. But for once Tami wasn't consumed with envy at the fabric the rest of the world enjoyed. She wanted to come over and hug the conflicted lonely girl. But she knew that would mean presenting her with her bare breasts. "Maybe Varsha can get someone else to do it."  
  
"But I already told her yes. . . To change my mind would be to lose face."  
  
"I think she'll understand."  
  
"No . . . I can't do that."  
  
Tami was beginning to think this "losing face" business was an idea the Chinese would do well to get rid of. But she dare not say that. She waited until Mei-lin had recovered herself a bit, sipping the tea and looking out into the dark campus. She decided to change the subject. "How do you like the United States?"  
  
"It's . . . so many things out in the open, where in China they are closed. My parents are proud that I was selected to come here though. I talk to them every day online. . . I am the first in my family to go to college."  
  
"Me too," Tami said. "What do your parents do?"  
  
"My father is a mason, he builds for the government. My mother makes clothes. She's good at children's clothes, repairing holes, things like that."  
  
"Oh . . . do you come from a big family?"  
  
"In China they only allow two children." Tami could have kicked herself for not thinking of that. "But my family is happy. My brother is still in what you call high school." In a lower voice, as if she was afraid of being overheard, she said, "It was not always happy."  
  
Whereupon Mei-lin brought out a photo album from her desk. "This is my grandfather. We don't know what happened to him." And then began her story. Mei-lin held up the album pages so that Tami could see them without having to come from behind that sorority photo. Her grandfather, a writer, had been arrested in 1967 during the Cultural Revolution. He had been sent to a "reeducation camp" in Xinjiang and they never heard from him again. Her grandmother, also under suspicion, was confined to her house. It was in that restrictive environment that her mother had been raised. Shy and quiet as Mei-lin normally was, she was expansive and passionate when talking about this sorrowful history.  
  
It was not like Tami had learned in that class. This was not blind ancestor worship; it was real pride. "My grandparents, they suffered much for what they believed. I admire them." She spoke of them as if they were still alive. Then, looking Tami in the eye, she said, "I see why so many here admire you too. You suffer for your belief. You believe you must always be naked, even in winter, even climbing on that outside wall which has snow on it. That must be a kind of suffering, exposing your body to the winter like that. And all those girls who make fun of you, like Heather, I see that all the time. Yet you endure it. When I think of it that way, being naked is not so much a shame."  
  
Tami supposed she felt complimented but once again felt miserable. She was such a fraud. Her friends admired her for being naked, when in fact she hated every minute of it. Her "religion" was a lie. She thought of Mei-lin's grandparents, who truly were believers, not fakers, and who truly did suffer. She did not deserve to be mentioned in the same sentence as them.  
  
Tami sipped tea and watched Mei-lin carefully put away her photo album. She could guess the Chinese girl had not put the photos on her tablet, which was probably issued by the Chinese government. Tami said, "I admire your grandparents too." Her mind returned to the problem of getting Mei-lin out of that Murchison "Placement". It was the least she could do.  
  
  
**Part 5**  
  
Tami hated waiting out in the hall like this. Her total nudity could not be hid but on a day to day basis it could be managed. Spreading her legs for art students in that freezing studio at 8 a.m. was unavoidable. But she had more control the rest of the day. In her classes she sat to the side, away from the door, out of eyeshot of people passing by. Between classes she scurried between buildings as quickly as possible.  
  
This was different. She was stuck here outside Varsha's office, waiting for the professor to get done with another student. And it was right next to the lobby, with people always passing by, students and professors. Fortunately they were all dance majors, familiar with the human body, and they seemed more tolerant of her nudity. No gawking guys, and Wanda and Lorinda and Heather & Co. had no reason to come into this building. Still . . . she could not be seen to be covering herself in any way. There were spies everywhere. So she stood bolt erect, breasts stuck out as if proudly. She glanced down, past the always-erect nipples, the pubic hair which had gotten fluffy with exposure to the open air, and made sure that her tough bare feet were exactly twenty inches apart.  
  
Finally after an eternity the professor's door opened. It was Vonda, from the yoga class, in her yoga clothes under an overcoat. With a quick hi she was gone.  
  
Varsha's office was very comfortable, dimly lit with a whiff of incense. Tami had never been there before and it was a delight to her poor abused senses. The soft fluffy rug under her bare soles, the soft sofa under her bare butt, the yarn comforter behind her bare back . . . She wished she could hide here all day. But she was on a mission.  
  
She started awkwardly. "Professor . . . Varsha . . . " The professor, in her stocking feet, sat cross-legged on her chair. To Tami's relief she was looking at her face and not lower down. "About Mr. Murchison and his 'Placement'."  
  
"Yes, that's what he calls them. You must have visited his web site."  
  
"Um, yes. You picked Mei-lin to be the centerpiece."  
  
"Yes -- ?"  
  
"Well . . . she doesn't really want to do it."  
  
Varsha knitted her eyebrows. "Shouldn't she be the one to tell me that?"  
  
"She's too shy to come to you herself. In fact that's the reason she doesn't want to do the Placement thing. She's bashful about her body being on display, even with a jumpsuit on. Very conservative . . . Chinese."  
  
Varsha's gaze absently wandered down to Tami's knee. "I know she's shy, but I thought the spiritual element of Seth's work would appeal to her. Of all the students in my classes, she's the one who is most centered in traditional yoga meditation."  
  
"I didn't know that. She doesn't talk much."  
  
"At the beginning of the semester I took her to Tung Hing, and we had a long, slow lunch." Tung Hing was a Chinese restaurant in town. "That was why I thought she would be the ideal choice for the centerpiece. That, and also her ability. She's the best in the class. Of course," Varsha smiled, "you're a close second. We all admire how comfortable you are with your body."  
  
Tami suppressed another pang of shame at her hypocrisy. "Um . . . she has a sad family history."  
  
"Yes I know," Varsha said, without surprise.  
  
"Maybe that's part of it but . . . "  
  
"Look Tami, I know you're intervening with good intentions, but I have to hear this from Mei-lin directly. Besides, if she can't do it . . . the only other person in the class who can go through all those positions is you, and obviously . . . Seth tells me the jumpsuit is as important to the Placement as the performer's yoga positions."  
  
Tami's throat went dry as she thought of wearing a jumpsuit and sneakers, being covered all over. She forced the words out. "Yes, clearly . . . I couldn't be the one."  
  
"Maybe if I call her," Varsha said.  
  
"Yes -- thanks."  
  
Tami miserably left the office, thinking of that jumpsuit, then saw that it was starting to snow. It was only February; up here in northern Vermont she had to survive maybe two more months of this. She shuffled outside, watching her toes knife through the freezing white stuff, flakes sticking to her pubic hair . . . thinking of jumpsuits and sneakers, and spirituality, and yoga, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and lonely and scared Mei-lin . . . but mostly of jumpsuits and sneakers, as the wind kicked up and the icy grains assaulted her bare butt like little needles and her feet once again got reddish, painful and then numb. Now the distant voice of Lorinda -- "Hey Tami -- are you insane?? Why don't you put on some clothes!!" -- and vicious giggling. Tami was still just a teenager and such teasing still hurt deeply. The naked girl's pretty green eyes got wet and then overflowed. She raised her head up, so that people going past would assume the tears running down her cheeks were caused by the stiff wind.  
  
  
**Part 6**  
  
Tami felt no less miserable as she headed out Friday morning for yoga class. It was already a bad, bad morning. Professor Brignon had put her into another series of embarrassing poses. In one of them, her butt was stuck out in everyone's face, one leg spread out on a metal stand that felt like ice under her bare foot. She was sure everyone had a clear view of her butthole. Her anal sphincter puckered up as cold air hit it, coming in from that always half-opened window. She was sure everyone could see that too.  
  
Then there was the email from Dr. Harridance at the Chalfont Institute. That awful "orgasm research" was going to be expanded. Now she was going to have to look into the eyes of those men as she crested into orgasm, so that they could measure the dilation of her pupils. Of course they were going to take pictures. Dr. Harridance was a nice guy but she wasn't so sure about some of the others. And it was mentioned that the Dean and that creepy college lawyer, Mr. Ross, might stop in! And she couldn't object! Admitting to any sign of modesty would get her expelled! Life ruined! Going back to Providence in disgrace! Might as well go into waitressing, or have babies and go on welfare, like too many of the girls from her high school.  
  
She couldn't take any more of this -- the intensifying shame, over and over. There was no way out! She was going to go crazy! She felt very close to the end of something, somehow. The end of her sanity??  
  
She walked into the dance building. It was good at least to do something normal, taking yoga class with the other girls, even if she was the only one doing it naked. She was the last one to arrive, right behind Vonda and Debbie, who were chatting endlessly like always. They were starting the first lotus position when she realized that, for the first time, Mei-lin was absent.  
  
After class Varsha called Tami in to her office. Once again the warm, soft surroundings enveloped the grateful naked girl like a big fluffy blanket. On the shelf was a little Buddha with a stick of incense. Tami had been raised Catholic, and all this yoga and spirituality and meditation business seemed strange but also fascinating and comforting.  
  
"Tami, I did speak to Mei-lin. You're right. I can't ask her to be the centerpiece, with that intense sense of modesty and shame she has. But she feels even worse about backing out, 'losing face' as she might say. I don't know what we're going to do. The exhibit is tomorrow."  
  
Tami's eyes wandered to the professor's desk. She cleared her throat to get the words out to hide her quivering thirst for covering. "Is -- that the jumpsuit."  
  
"Yes," Varsha said. It was in a clear plastic bag, along with the sneakers and socks. She took the jumpsuit out and unfolded it, extending one of the arms out to Tami. "Very nice material, really. I know clothing isn't your 'thing' but even you could appreciate it."  
  
Did something inside Tami snap? Was it a flash of inspiration? Desperation? Her brain being bypassed by some impulsive instinct?  
  
"Professor . . . I will be the centerpiece. And I will wear the jumpsuit."  
  
Varsha's wide brown eyes opened even wider and her mouth opened. "Tami! . . . I can't make you go back on your religion!"  
  
"No . . . it's . . . I've been thinking about . . . spirituality . . . and yoga . . . I've been, uh, modifying my beliefs. I've decided the jumpsuit would be acceptable."  
  
"Tami! . . . Gee, I don't know." Varsha looked at the naked girl up and down, then at the jumpsuit. "It's your religion that you must never wear clothes or shoes. We all got the letter from Mr. Ross that we are not to dissuade you from it. Though you clearly believe in it very deeply, especially seeing you walking naked through the snow. I think it's very inspiring, and I'm not the only one."  
  
Tami cleared her throat again, quivering this time not with longing for clothes but with nervousness as to what she was risking. "No . . . I mean it. It's ok with me to wear the jumpsuit."  
  
Then Tami's heart stopped when Varsha said, "I will have to clear this with the Dean."  
  
  
**Part 7**  
  
The email came in later that day. It was from Varsha, but the Dean had been copied on it and it sounded like the Dean had written it:  
  
"Tami, The Dean has accepted your decision as to any modifications to your religion. He wishes you all the best and is glad that the college effectively protected your First Amendment rights during this time."  
  
Later, Varsha sent another email:  
  
"The jumpsuit etc. will be in my office for you to pick up tonight from 7 to 9. I have to be in town so I'll leave it unlocked. Tami, THANK YOU THANK YOU very much for your help! Yours, Varsha Choudhury."  
  
. . . .  
  
It all happened so fast. As Tami walked into the dance building, through the darkened halls this Friday evening, and approached Varsha's office, she prayed thankfulness to God, or to Buddha, or whoever it was who finally granted her most fervent wish. That email was not limited to just the jumpsuit -- it allowed "modification" of her religion. Once her religion was "modified", she could say once again that she experienced modesty.  
  
It was the end. Finally! No more shame. No more taunting and teasing from Wanda and Lorinda and Heather and their friends. No more freezing her butt off walking through a Vermont winter. No more spreading her legs for art students. The Chalfont experiments would have to stop. And she could go on wearing clothes all the time!  
  
She hadn't told Jen or Rebecca or her other friends, or Rod. She was going to surprise them, walking back into Pilgrim Hall -- clothed! She could imagine the reaction around campus. There's Tami -- in clothes!  
  
She opened the door . . . unfolded the jumpsuit . . . gave a thankful bow to the Buddha . . . Maybe it was the incense, but she felt like she was part of a bigger world, a bigger situation somehow, a world that was coming to an end at this moment. She raised her quivering toes to slide into one of the pant legs.

**Part 8**  
  
The weak February sun shone on the main quad of Campbell - Frank College, and on the latest "Placement" by noted Irish performance artist Seth Murchison. Students, faculty, particularly the art faculty, and the many who came from around the state to see this and the other ArtVermont exhibits around campus . . . They milled around the pillars arranged in catenary curves, the recorded voices and music, the lighting displays around the perimeter, and read the poems on the pillars.  
  
And on the center pillar, a little higher than the rest, the live performer was doing the yoga pose known as "bear". Or maybe it should be "bare". Because that was what Tami Smithers was, utterly, her legs spread up and out at a 90-degree angle, fingers intertwined with her widely-extended toes. With her flexibility as a trained gymnast it was no strain at all to keep her back straight, eyes fixed on a point above and beyond, as it happened just past the top floor of Rossland Hall, the administration building.  
  
"Yes, it is an adjustment very good," Professor Brignon said. Tami's crotch was at their eye level but they were careful to look up at her torso, her taut, blank expression, and then down at the bare breasts, reddened and tight with the cold, and the brownish-red pebbles of her hardened nipples.  
  
"Isn't she cold?" The vaguely Eastern European cadence came from the man next to the professor, a shortish fellow in a beret, overcoat and gloves.  
  
"She has developed resistance," said Professor Yevtushenko. "I would not worry."  
  
"Remarkable young woman," said the tall man in a thick Irish accent, stereotypically wearing a tartan jacket over jeans and a flannel shirt and thick boots. And now a change in music, and Tami, with slow, measured motions, untwined her bare feet from her fingers, crossed her legs and began a partial headstand. Her hands braced alongside her head, her crossed legs raising high up above her straightened back.  
  
"Congratulations, Mr. Murchison, for making the adjustment so quickly," Dean Jorgon said, adjusting the coat over his usual business suit with the trademark maroon tie. "It seems to have worked out well."  
  
"Yes, and thanks to your last-minute suggestion, with the unexpectedly pleasant weather -- what is it now, about 13 degrees? Not sure what that is in Fahrenheit -- we could move the entire installation outside. And it turned out the jumpsuit actually could be dispensed with. The sneakers also. I suppose yoga poses are more easily done in the nude anyway. I have never used nude models because of the spectacle aspect . . . I remember well Tom Wesselman's 'Bedroom Tit Box', sorry, but that was the title of it . . . But this is a breakthrough for me, from an artistic standpoint." He turned to the Dean. "It was a surprise getting that call from you this morning," the Irish man said.  
  
"Yes, I wish I could say what happened wasn't partly my fault," the Dean said. "It was almost a disaster. Thank goodness Mr. Ross warned me about the lack of proof, and I could alert the security people in time." Henry Ross, the campus attorney, took his gaze away from Tami's now upside-down vulva and smiled modestly.  
  
At a puzzled look from the man in the beret, the Dean went on: "Henry made clear that an unsworn second-hand statement would not be adequate proof that Miss Smithers was no longer following her, uh, religion. Fortunately the security people found her in Professor Choudhury's office at the very last possible moment. Miss Smithers was quaking with what must have been fear and revulsion, I imagine, literally half a second away from putting on clothes, her hands shaking as she was about to slip the jumpsuit on. In a few seconds she would have been entirely covered up with that jumpsuit, and with socks and sneakers on her feet. Obviously she had been pressured into agreeing to put on clothes, which would be utterly repugnant to the religion which the college has tried so hard to protect.  
  
"I knew we had done the right thing based on what they told me about her reaction. She cried out, 'No, no!', and in her distracted state she actually tried to grab the jumpsuit back! Fortunately there were two officers, in full uniform of course, and after a violent struggle that unfortunately knocked over a few things in Professor Choudhury's office, they managed to win that bizarre tug-of-war so her nudity was preserved. The jumpsuit got ripped but that's a moot question now of course. Then she ran to the locker room, her bare feet slapping down the hallway, and was heard crying, and then wailing, banging on the lockers with her fists. Her screams of 'no! no! no!' resounded through the empty corridors. She was clearly traumatized by what she was almost forced into doing. I'm glad it was late, classes were over, and there was no one around to hear.  
  
"Of course Professor Choudhury has been strictly admonished as to what she tried to get Miss Smithers to do. We have referred the matter to the Faculty Disciplinary Committee." In a quieter voice, he looked up at the upside-down nude and said, "Per the advice of Mr. Ross, if Miss Smithers ever wishes to, uh, modify her religion, we will have to have her questioned under oath, to make sure it is a free and uncoerced choice on her part. This necessarily involves going into matters back to . . . her first week at school, the cirstuffstances under which she declared her religion. We will also have to find all relevant witnesses. It sounds very legalistic, I know, but we have to make sure her First Amendment rights are protected."  
  
The man with the beret, clearly impressed, looked up at the upside-down face. "Miss Smithers, I admire you greatly." She did not respond. Seth Murchison said, "I'm sure she appreciates the compliment, but she is not supposed to break character." "Oh, sorry."  
  
The six of them -- the Dean, Henry Ross, Professor Brignon, Seth Murchison, Professor Yevtushenko, and the man in the beret -- circled around the central pillar, taking in the exquisite nudity from every angle. The music changed and, as they came around to once  
again face the posing nude, Tami brought her legs down, extended them out until they were almost in a split, and ducked her head underneath.  
  
Murchison said, "I believe Miss Smithers's nudity complements the work more than the jumpsuit would have. Notice the flushed color of her skin, due to the temperature. It actually suits the work more than the jumpsuit would have. Also the rest of her body, outdoors on a day like this, presents an interesting mosaic." These comments gave the other heavily clothed adults permission to look at every bit of her. "The brownish red nipples, hardened from the cold. The red blotches on the buttocks. The redness in the toes, and the fingers. One can even see in this pose, her vaginal lips parted, the redness within offsetting the pinkish character of her inner thighs. These are all variations of the color red, which as you can tell was the theme of the central pillar." They took turns drawing their heads close to Tami's crotch to understand what the artist was talking about.  
  
The man in the beret said, "Her anus is well on display, and even it seems a little reddish in addition to brown." The others agreed.  
  
"And of course the red hair," Murchison said. "And by that I mean not only the hair on her head, but her pubic hair." The men examined the latter a lot more closely than the former. It fluffed slightly as a breeze blew by.  
  
Henry Ross looked at the Dean. The Dean then turned to Murchison and said, "Perhaps a comparison with the jumpsuit . . . ?"  
  
"Yes, thanks for reminding me," Murchison said. "I have the, well, remains of it here," he said with a little chuckle. He fished out of his bag the ripped-up coverall, the coverall that had come within a few seconds of finally enveloping Tami in soft warmth, and protection from the world's constant probing gaze. With the help of the man in the beret, they stretched it out so that it lay full length next to Tami's stretched-out nudity. It came within an inch of touching her. The posing nude quivered and quaked. Her eyes blinked but stayed resolutely fixed on some distant point.  
  
"You see that the uniform color of the jumpsuit, actually this is a pale shade of vermilion, does not make the exhibit come alive as does human nudity." He brought the jumpsuit down and the human nudity stopped quivering.  
  
"Also the socks." He stretched one out next to Tami's bare foot. Actually too close; part of it glanced ever so slightly against Tami's little toe, causing another quiver. "Oh I'm sorry Miss Smithers, I realize it is offensive to your religion to have clothing touching you . . . Anyway, the sock is not as interesting as the various shades of red we see here in a bare foot."  
  
"I agree, remarkable," Henry Ross said. A bit more loudly he said, "My, it's getting colder." With an exaggerated gesture he pulled his overcoat together under his chin and stuffed his hands in the pockets. They contemplated the nude, spread-out body of Tami Smithers for another moment, the many effects that cold air has on the skin of a white girl; then Murchison led them to the other pillars. As they drifted off, one could hear him say, "This is a wonderful crowd. More than I expected." "Yes, indeed," the man in the beret said. "I think this Placement will give you some much needed exposure." "Yes, any artist has to be glad to get exposure."  
  
"Wow! Tami you are incredible!" It was the enthusiastic chirping of Jen, dressed as always stylishly, in a blue peacoat, fake-fur cap, black jeans and heeled boots. "Look at that beautiful woman-land! I want to plunge my tongue right into it! And that cute butthole!"  
  
"Oh Jen," Marisol said, adjusting the huge breasts under her sweatshirt. "Shhh . . . this is supposed to be an art exhibit of some kind. Calmate!" she added in Spanish.  
  
"Babe, you are amazing!" Rod said. "I love you more every time I see you."  
  
"I know you're not supposed to react to us, Tami," Rebecca said. "But let me say, your faith inspires me with every passing day."  
  
"I wish we were allowed to take pictures," Jen whispered. Rebecca, remembering the sign at the roped-off entrance, shook her head. The four of them contemplated their nudist friend, then said goodbye, on the way to another exhibit across campus. They would see her at the dining hall for supper, where her afternoon performance would no doubt be discussed and enthused over.  
  
The spectators seemed to be moving around in groups. They read the poems, enjoyed the drawings and projected images, went from pillar to pillar, but naturally the central exhibit was the cynosure. Tami's bare body was soon surrounded and observed by friends from her dorm, then professors from her math classes, then art students who had already seen her pose in many positions, even groups from local churches. The Dean and Henry Ross returned, watching her intently and minutely for a full two minutes as if on a timer, then left, whispering to each other.  
  
Now Wanda, Heather, Lorinda, and a couple of other girls from the sorority.  
  
"The great, naked Tami Smithers!" Lorinda cackled, as if about to stick her finger into Tami's anus. "Butt naked . . . and I mean . . . BUTT naked!"  
  
The music changed, and Tami, remembering the sequence, slowly brought her legs together, sat up, turned around, then stretched herself out again, shifted her butt, leaned back at a certain angle . . . and with the help of her hands drew one foot way back behind her head, then the other. Steadying herself on her elbows, she faced forward, looking over her breasts, her crotch now split open in front, coming up almost as high as her head, her knees around her ears, her crossed feet behind her, toes spread outward.  
  
"Oh . . . my . . . God!!" Heather said. They did not know the term but Tami was now in a position called "sleeping yogi".  
  
Wanda shielded her eyes. "Tami I know you have no modesty but do you really have to shove your butthole in our faces!"  
  
"This is gross," one of the girls said. The brown wrinkled asterisk seemed to wink at them in the sun, as a chill breeze blew over it.  
  
"Wow look," Lorinda said, her eyes going a bit higher. "Her woo-woo's opened up."  
  
"Tami!" Heather said. "Do you know we can see right up inside you?" Of course Tami did not respond, her eyes fixed on that spot somewhere, up over there.  
  
One of the girls, sipping a soda, had a mischievous smile. Wanda guessed what she was thinking. "No don't!" she said, half as warning, half as joking encouragement. Her friend fished out a little piece of ice and stuffed it into the straw. They all watched to make sure the coast was clear. Then, with childish expertise, she took aim. She found her mark deep within the naked girl. Ice hitting cervix registered only as a little jolt of the pelvis, and a wiggle of the toes. Tami's eyes blinked but continued their steadfast gaze.  
  
As it happened Tami's vagina was exactly at their eye level. The curious heads leaned closer. Heather said, "I see it! The sunlight hits it just so."  
  
"The sign said no pictures . . . " Lorinda said this with heavy slowness. Her friend got the perfect angle. A photo, passed around on her smart phone, caught in one shot Tami's face, her nipples, her wide-open crotch, the sunlight illuminating the red cave within, and the pretty little anus below.  
  
Wanda said, "Tam, I imagine you won't mind if we send this to your parents, or your friends from high school. They would be so proud."  
  
They looked up and saw a tear fall from each pretty green eye.  
  
"It's the wind, I see," Wanda explained. "Notice it's getting colder."  
  
"Yeah, that happens to me too, when I look into the wind and it's cold," Heather said. "Your eyes get wet. It's almost as bad as slicing onions."  
  
This got them on the topic of the cooking show they watched last night in the dorm. Off they went. Now some other friends from Pilgrim Hall stopped by, trying not to look at the vagina and anus Tami was thrusting at the world, but unable to control their frequent glances.  
  
Now a short Chinese girl stopped by, shielding her face from the nudity. With her was an equally tiny older Chinese woman, also with her head averted. They were wearing traditional Chinese coats, the ones with the clasps down the front.  
  
"Tami, I know you're supposed to as they say, stay in character," Mei-lin said, speaking to the ground, hand over her eyes. "But thank you for stepping in for me. . . This is my mother, visiting on a visa. I wanted to introduce her to my friend who I admire very much."  
  
"Yes." Her mother's English was surprisingly good: "My parents were brave, and you are brave. Thank you for what you did for my daughter."  
  
Mei-lin added, "You rescued me from a terrible situation. You made it possible for me to save face." Then she and her mother looked at each other. Coordinating carefully, they stood before the nude on the pillar, as if facing a shrine. Then they bowed, deeply, respectfully.  
  
"Sleeping yogi", as the name indicates, is a resting position, which one can maintain for quite long periods.  
  
"So this is how Tami Smithers finishes up on the Academy of Stripping Naked Story Board." It was Indian Outlaw, bundled up now that the sun was disappearing. They looked up at the goose pimples, the slight shivering. In a breach of her instructions, Tami wiggled the toes behind her head, since they were getting stiff with the cold. A little gust of cold air into her opened vagina made her anus twitch.  
  
"She's been written about for almost the entire life of the board. I created her in 1999," TrackJim said.  
  
"As far as sheer volume of writing, probably the most written about character, among the many ASN creations," IO said.  
  
"I'm kind of glad she will never meet me in real life," donnylaja said. "She'd probably tear my balls off."  
  
"Probably poop on me," Jack Straw said.  
  
"She'd kick me in the head with her rock hard heels and push me down a ravine," Peter (Leviticus) said.  
  
"I thought you died!" Katie said.  
  
"Well . . . " Peter said.  
  
"Even Zack and Liz had their doubts," donnylaja pointed out, "I'm glad his site survives though."  
  
Indian Outlaw said, "Even as to my many authors, it's better if we don't meet in real life. It's a fantasy life. But I'm proud to have sponsored so many fantasies for so long."  
  
They watched as SliceReality knelt in front of the pillar with his palette, preparing his next image, which as usual would take weeks to complete.  
  
"IO, most of us never wrote erotica until we were inspired by your board," donnylaja said.  
  
BareLin, Molly, daican, Seahawk, JB Goode, and RJ Tayler (whose caps lock feature finally got fixed) nodded in agreement. There were others, too numerous to name, crowding around the pillar. Iionly looked on in expectation.  
  
Katie said, "Tami, we will always love you. We love you because you're good and true and loyal and honest and brave."  
  
They all bowed to the suffering but much-loved naked shrine.  
  
[end]