**The Cure**

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This happened back in college. I had a reputation as the crazy girl of our group. If there was something no one would try, I'd try it. One of the things we talked about a lot was exhibitionist adventures -- streaking and that kind of thing - but it wasn't really a fad on our campus anymore, so none of us had actually done it. I kept telling the other girls I'd do it if one of them would do it with me, but nobody took me up on it. I called them all a bunch of chickens and gloated about how I was the only one in the group free enough to get a little wild. Maybe I pushed it a little too hard. Maybe they'd heard enough of my brave talk.

It was a Wednesday night. We were at a party at one of the jock frats, drinking like fish. I saw my roommates, Andrea and Katie, talking together in the corner and watching me, but by that time I was too far gone to notice the obvious signs of conspiracy. Somehow, my glass just seemed to stay full. I'd take a drink, then turn around and the glass would be full again. I'd drink, and it would taste a little stronger, but the level never seemed to go down. I was a little puzzled at first, but it started to seem very funny and I just laughed it off.

I remember being on the dance floor, bouncing around like a puppet on rubber strings. I think I fell down eventually, and some people picked me up and took me somewhere. It's all pretty fuzzy, and I can't really remember much of anything beyond that until I woke up the next morning.

You can probably imagine how bad I felt. When I opened my eyes, they hurt like hell and my head felt like someone had left their axe in the middle of it. I couldn't make any sense out of what I was seeing. There was a block of dark wood just in front of my eyes and a scratchy surface under my cheek. A dull gray light was seeping into the room, and I didn't want any part of it. I closed my eyes and slipped gratefully back into oblivion.

The next time I woke up, there was full daylight in the room. I didn't feel much better, but at least I was sober enough to figure out what I was looking at and where I was. The block of wood was the leg of a desk, and the scratchy surface was an oriental rug. Suddenly, I realized that scratchy feeling went all down my body. I bent my head suddenly and looked down at my naked body.

Two things hit me at once. My head felt like it had suddenly been hit with a bolt of lightning, and I realized I was stark naked in a strange place. I closed my eyes and lay there for a minute hoping the pain in my head would ease, hoping I would see some different reality when I opened them again. But the reality was the same, and it just added to the pain.

Then I heard the sounds of people nearby. That cut through the curtain of self-pity and got me going. I might have talked big, but I'd never been nude in front of random strangers. I had terrified visions of a bunch of people coming into the room and finding me nude, hungover and helpless. I pushed myself into a sitting position, leaned back against the desk, and looked around. Thankfully there was nobody in the room.

It seemed like some kind of office, a pretty fancy one, too. There were bookshelves along one wall with a lot of hardback books in them. A long conference table with chairs around it took up one end of the big room. There were plaques on another wall, and the desk seemed big enough to hold a dance on. When I stood up - very shaky -- I saw some papers on the desk, memos addressed to Dean \_\_\_\_\_, the Dean of Students at the college.

Then I heard the voices again. This time, they were very nearby, probably in the hall right outside the door of the dean's office. I scampered around the desk as best I could scamper with a head full of broken glass. Then I realized I was standing right next to one of the windows in full view of the outside world. I dropped down below the sill and looked out. There were kids all over the place. It was mid-morning on a school day. They were bustling to and from class and I was stuck in the dean's office in the middle of campus, without a stitch of clothing.

I looked around the office to find something to cover myself. There was no closet, but there were file drawers, lots of paper, but no cloth, and nothing bigger than regular letter size sheets. There had to be something I could use to put them together into some kind of covering. It would be better than nothing, but I couldn't find a damn thing - no tape, no stapler, no glue. I started to panic. There had to be something, but the dean was so damn neat, there wasn't.

Then my blood froze. "I'll see if he left any notes for the meeting," a female voice said, just outside the door of the office.

The doorknob turned and I dove behind the desk. My heart was racing a mile a minute and I was holding my breath. I had this crazy feeling I was about to explode I was so scared.

Feet came into the room and walked right up to the desk. I didn't think she could see me from where she was, but there was nothing I could do if she walked around the desk. While I was dying of fear and shame, not to mention a monumental hangover, she was humming a little tune as she checked the papers on the desk to see if they were what she was looking for. Then she walked over to the conference table.

"Hey Sue," another female voice called from outside the office, "what time are the city councilors supposed to show up for their meeting with Dean \_\_\_\_\_? I got to set up the coffee and rolls."

"Well, you better get to it," Sue shouted back, "they should be here in about 10 minutes."

"Yikes, I thought I had another half hour."

Sue finished whatever she was doing at the conference table and walked out of the office but left the door open. Another set of feet came in and started rattling dishes and moving things around over near the conference table -- setting up the coffee and rolls, I guess.

I was in shock. I was about to be the surprise naked guest at a meeting between the dean and the city council. My brain buzzed, searching for a way out but coming up blank. All I could see was me, arrested and led away in handcuffs, my nude picture appearing on the front page of the local paper. Between the fear of humiliation and the hangover, I was half crazy.

The woman finished setting out refreshments for the meeting and left the room. This time, she closed the door. My brain was in a fog. All I knew was I had to do something quickly -- but what?

I looked out the window again and saw hundreds of kids walking across the quad or sitting on the grass, studying. No way I wanted to run through that crowd naked, but then I noticed two other windows that looked out to the side of the building. I crawled around the conference table to look out there, and it did look better. It would be partly visible to the kids on the quad, but there was no path, no people, just lawn and trees and bushes.

The only problem was getting down there. The Dean's office was on the second floor. It looked like about 20 feet down to the ground. If I jumped from the window, I'd probably break a leg or something and I wouldn't even be able to run. I started looking around the office for a rope or anything I could use to lower myself at least halfway down to where I could drop the rest of the way.

I didn't see anything, but I didn't have much time to look before I heard the doorknob turn. There wasn't time to run back behind the desk. The only hiding place I could get to was the conference table. I crawled under it just as the door opened and someone came in.

"Just show them in when they arrive," I heard the Dean say from the doorway.

Then I saw his feet walk over to his desk and heard the rustling of papers. When he had whatever he was looking for, he came over and sat down at the head of the table. From where I crouched, underneath it, I could see his legs and the lower half of his red and blue striped tie. There was more rustling of paper that I guessed was him going over what he wanted to say in the meeting with the city council.

I was trapped. There was no way I could come out from under the table without the dean seeing me, and the city council would be showing up any minute to take their places around my totally inadequate hiding place. My brain spun uselessly, looking for a way out that didn't exist. I was paralyzed with fear and humiliation.

After a couple minutes, the dean got up and walked over to the sideboard where the rolls and coffee were laid out. While he stood there filling his cup from the big urn, I realized he was visible almost up to his shoulders, which meant my naked ass might be visible to him if he happened to look in my direction. I silently moved a little further back, which put me up against one of the swivel chairs pulled up to the far side of the table. I was pretty sure he couldn't see me there without ducking down and looking under the table. I was hidden for the moment, but it wasn't going to work when a city councilor was sitting in the chair.

The dean went back to his place at the head of the table and sat down. Almost immediately, the first councilor showed up.

"Hello, Bill," the dean said, as the councilor's feet approached the table.

The dean stood to shake his hand and then they both sat down and started talking about some proposal the dean was putting before the council. I didn't pay much attention to what they were talking about, but at one point, I had to stifle hysterics when the dean said something about wanting to "expose our students to the civic leaders here in town." There I was, naked under his table, trying to figure out a way to avoid exactly that.

Over the next five minutes, the other councilors came in and sat down. Feet kept poking into my space, but miraculously, none of them looked under the table. When there were ten sets of feet -- only two of which belonged to women -- the dean started the meeting with a long-winded speech about relations between the college and the town.

I was stuck in a narrow space under the middle of the table, with twenty feet shifting ominously around me, wondering if I could possibly escape discovery through this whole meeting, when the answer came from above - literally. One of the councilors dropped a pen on the floor that bounced and came to rest within a foot of my naked butt. In one second, I realized what that meant, and in the next, I saw a startled man looking at me from about 5 feet away. His eyes opened wide, and his head jerked up, banging the bottom of the table with a resounding "thunk." I was busted.

Instantly, with what seemed like superhuman strength, I shoved aside one of the chairs, councilor and all, and made enough space to burst out from under the table. The office went into an uproar as I bolted to the door and out through the secretary's space into the main hall. There were people everywhere and all of them turned to stare open-mouthed at the naked girl running in panic.

I flew to the head of the stairs and down to the main doors. When I stepped out, in full view of the quad, heads started to turn my way. Kids pointed and a few even began to run toward me. I took off across the lush green lawn of the quad. I was completely exposed to all those hundreds of eyes, but it was the quickest way back to my apartment, and I couldn't think of anywhere else to go. Some of those awful kids whipped out their phones to take pictures and videos of my naked run. Our apartment was two blocks off campus, so I was not only exposed to the view of the kids from my school, but also to the decidedly less tolerant view of people in town.

I don't think I had ever run that fast or that I ever will again, but it still seemed like it took forever to reach the funky old row house where Katie and Andrea and I lived. Of course, I was passed by many cars, and a couple of them honked their appreciation. There must have been a dozen or more of my neighbors out on the sidewalks, and every one of them turned to watch me come down the street. Suddenly a cold wave of fear coursed through me as I sprinted up the front steps. I realized I didn't have a key. Now what do I do? Desperately, I tried the door and found it unlocked.

Andrea and Katie were sitting in the front room, which I had to run through to get to the stairs. As I bounded up the stairs to my room, I heard them break into wild laughter, and I knew this was all their doing. I flopped on my bed, gasping, my mind so full of raw images and emotion it was a meaningless swirl.

It took twenty minutes for me to calm down enough to form a coherent thought. The first thing that came to mind was anger and a thirst for revenge. Andrea and Katie had betrayed me. They had held me up to the ridicule of the whole school. I wanted to make them pay, but I couldn't think of anything I could do that would even the score. Everything I came up with just proved how much they had humiliated me. That was the last thing I wanted. The more I calmed down and relived the whole thing in my head, the more I thought about it, the more I realized what I really wanted.

An hour later, I was dressed, and I had a plan. Andrea and Katie were still in the front room. They looked up when I came down the stairs. Both wore guilty smiles. I plopped down on the couch next to Katie with a satisfied sigh.

"Um," Andrea began hesitantly, "what was that about? Why were you naked?"

"Oh, come on Andrea," I laughed. "You know better than anyone why I was out there naked. You two got me passed out drunk. Then you took me to the dean's office and took all my clothes. Maybe you had some help, but it was your idea."

Andrea was about to protest, but Katie stopped her.

"Hey, you're always talking so big about streaking and all," she challenged. "We just gave you the chance to prove you could really do it."

I laughed. "I wouldn't say you gave me the chance. You forced me, but that's okay. As it turns out, I really have to thank you. It was amazing."

"What?" They were shocked.

"You can't imagine how exciting it was."

They were silent for a moment. "It was good?" Katie asked. "You liked it? What happened? How'd you get back here?"

So I told them everything, just the way I told you. I wanted them to feel how it felt, to at least get a small shot of that major adrenaline rush I got. I know telling it got me excited all over again, but it must have worked on them too, because Katie and Andrea sat up and stared at me with wide, bright eyes and open mouths.

"Oh my god," said Katie. "That was so intense, I can't even imagine."

"That's okay," I said. "You don't have to imagine. Next time, you're doing it with me."

"Next time?" Andrea asked softly.

I let them think about it while I went out to the kitchen and made a sandwich. When I came back out to the front room with my sandwich, they were still there, but this time they weren't gloating. I sat down and took a big bite out of the sandwich. I was hungry.

Andrea asked tentatively, "So, it was really fun?"

"Better than I even thought it would be."

"And you're doing it again?" Katie asked doubtfully.

"Absolutely, but this time, we're all doing it together."

"Well ..." They looked at each other, and Katie shrugged. "We might be up for it, but it's got to be at night, okay? I don't think we could do what you did."

"You're probably right." I savored the unconscious respect in her voice. "Might be better to start you off slow."

"Um, how would we do it?" Andrea asked.

I could sense their interest and uncertainty as I finished my sandwich and laid out my plans. They were scared, but they could see how much I loved it, and they wanted to try it, too. In the end, they agreed to go out for a night time streak the following week. By the time we worked out the details, we were all pretty excited, but Katie had a question.

"How can you eat? Aren't you hungover from last night?"

I looked down at the plate, where only a few crumbs remained.

"Huh," I said, surprised. "I guess I found the cure."