**The Third Kind of Nudist**

by deanosaur

**One**

Marion was washing a few plates in the kitchen when she caught sight of her friend and neighbour Linda in the window opposite. Taking care not to raise her hand too high Marion gave her a cheery wave. A mere five yards away across the garden Linda waved back and then shook her hand to indicate drinking a cup of tea. Marion nodded vigorously and held up her hand with fingers and thumbs splayed to indicate five minutes. She finished her washing up and peeled off her rubber gloves. As Marion retreated carefully towards the hall her whole being was flooded by a familiar feeling of excitement and elation. With a just a hint of sadness Marion dressed, picked up her keys and made her way across the driveway to the house next door. Despite her warm jacket she shivered in the brisk winter breeze that carried a hint of rain.

“Come in Marion” Linda shouted “the door’s open”

Marion pushed open the dark blue door and stepped into the warm hallway, her heels clattered on the Victorian tiles sending echoes resonating through the house. Linda was waiting for her in the kitchen, two steaming cups already on the table. Marion took off her thick green coat and draped it on the back of a chair. She glanced out of the window towards her own identical kitchen and smiled, her security measures were perfect. There was no way that Linda could have seen her.

“Aren’t you cold in that top?” asked Linda

“No, why?” replied Marion, in what she hoped was a nonchalant manner.

“Well it is the middle of winter. When I saw you in the kitchen it looked like you were naked” said Linda, laughing at her own joke. Marion laughed along; after all that was the reason she had put that pink strapless top on. Not for the first time Marion considered telling her friend her secret, but wiser council held sway.

“As if” she replied scornfully.

Later when she had returned home Marion looked at herself in the full length mirror hanging in her hallway. She had to admit that Linda had a point. The blouse truly belonged to a bright sunlit summer’s day. And, of course, Marion would have appeared to be naked if all you could see through a window partially obscured by a large chopping board were her bare shoulders. “An easy mistake to make” said Marion to herself as she pulled the top over her head. Her large breasts fell loose. She examined them critically, pulling them to one side before letting them fall. She squeezed them together and watched them bounce, once, twice, three times before they halted. She sighed; there had been a time when they would have stopped on the count of one. Marion hung her top next to her coat, quickly removed the rest of her clothes and went and made herself some lunch.

As she ate her cheese and pickle sandwich Marion contemplated her journey over the last few months. Her adventure began, as most adventures do, by chance. One hot summer’s night when her husband Brian was away on business and her daughter Isla had chained herself to the railings of the nearby power station as one of her many protests about the state of the planet, Marion had found herself unable to sleep. The night was hot and humid without a breath of air and, in a fit of rebellion, which for Marion was as daring as her daughter’s, she removed her nightdress and lay naked under the sheets. Even so she was still unable to sleep, but now it was not the heat of the night that was keeping her awake, but the thrill of being nude, the feeling of the sheets against her bare skin. Inside the intimacy of this moment she felt pulled, as if by magnetism, to the window. Marion peeked through the window, should anyone see her it would be just her face, but would they suspect her to be naked behind the curtains? She smiled a secret smile as looked down into her garden; the shadows of the trees were deep and dark under the starry sky. And then an impulse took her, three times she went to the bedroom door and three times common sense prevailed and she drew back. But the call of the wild was too strong, it refused go away, and so, on the fourth of asking the chains of morality broke and for the first time in her life Marion walked naked though her home. She revelled in the freedom, the recklessness of the deed, the knowledge that she alone knew what she had done. And then, suddenly, there she was standing at the door to the garden.

“I’ll just open the door” she promised herself “I won’t go out. I won’t” But she knew that for the lie it was, for as soon as she had opened the door, and felt the humid air move against her skin, all caution was gone. Lost in the moment she was out in the heavy summer scented breeze, feeling the cool grass against her bare feet. The rustle of an animal in the bushes brought Marion suddenly to her senses; she quickly crouched, scanning the windows of the neighbouring houses, as a soldier looks for snipers. She was safe; the curtained windows looked down blindly. Stepping quickly to the left Marion blocked her neighbours’ view of her bare body with a large Vibernum. Slowly she worked her way back to the door to the house using the cover of several large shrubs. Marion hardly slept all that night, her mind racing with the thrill of her adventure balanced with the fear of having been seen.

The next day was torture, Marion waited for a neighbour to call or make some casual remark about her nocturnal venture. When her husband returned that evening she seriously considered confiding in him before someone told of her shameful display. She held her tongue and, as time passed Marion knew she had got away with it. “Never again” she told herself, but she knew she was lying. A week later on a hot afternoon she was walking in the garden, checking the sightlines, working out a path to follow where she couldn’t be seen. Three weeks later she was back again walking barefoot, bareback, bare everything through the bushes while her husband Brain slumbered sweetly on lost in a land of dreams. From there it was but a small step to living nude during the day, listening for the warning note from the engine of Brian’s car. A siren to send her scurrying for her clothes.

**Two**

Three o’clock on a bitter winter’s morning, the ebb tide of the soul. As Belvoir Avenue lay sleeping, tightly wrapped in warm duvets a cold wind whistled through Marion’s pubic hair and stiffened her nipples to the point of pain. Slipping silently through the frosty garden she was close to ecstasy. Marion had halted her nude forays at the end of the summer for fear of the cold, and this was her first experience of a sharp winter’s night. Overhead the sky fizzled with stars as she followed her secret path towards the back gate. Here she paused and considered a brisk walk along the lane that led to the street. “No” she thought to herself as her breath steamed in the freezing air, “I’ll just see if the coast is clear, but I won’t go” Carefully so as not to disturb the nearby sleepers she opened the gate a sliver and peeked through. Marion quivered at the thought of her neighbours soundly snoring in their beds whilst she stood naked just outside their windows. If only they knew, safe staid Marion Shaw, never known to wear short skirts or revealing tops, a veritable nun of the community, liked to roam the streets at night wearing just her sensible shoes. She was pushing her luck; she knew this, and she knew with utter certainty that one day she would be caught. “Go back now” she told herself, but it was no use, the lane was clear and there was nothing between her and the silent street.

Brian Shaw woke with a start. Languidly he stretched out his hand to gain comfort from the warmth of wife; but she was not there and the bed was cold. All of the fatigue gone now, his mind began to race, ‘surely she isn’t out tonight’ he thought, ‘not in this weather.’ He climbed out of bed, shivered in the cold and groped for his dressing gown. Very carefully, so as not to warn his wife, he parted the curtains a smidgeon, just enough to look out with one eye. There she was, a pale glow at the edge of the garden. Brian sighed, and not for the first time wished that Marion would spend some quality time with him in the nude. What drove his wife to wander naked around the garden in the middle of the night was a mystery to him. Not once in their twenty years of marriage had she shown any exhibitionist tendencies. Even now, when it was perfectly obvious to Brian that Marion loved to bare all, she hid herself away under her staid clothes. She was careful he had to admit, and it had been just by chance that he had caught her, one night in early autumn when she had stepped out from under the deep shade of the apple tree near his prize bed of chrysanthemums. Since that time Brain had tried to breach the subject of nudity with his wife, but somehow the opportunity never quite arose. He watched her naked skin glowing in the starlight as she moved towards the back gate. She wouldn’t dare? But she would; the gate creaked open and for the first time he glimpsed her whole, as she looked out in the lane. Even at the age of forty she had a fine figure, he admired her straight back and well rounded backside in the faint glow. A sudden panic gripped him as Marion turned and looked straight him. He held the curtains very still; for even now Brian couldn’t let his wife know he had seen her, he just wished she could find it in herself to tell him.

Funnily enough this was exactly what his stark naked wife was contemplating in the gloom of that freezing midwinter’s night when the light in her bedroom snapped on. Swearing quietly to herself she ran in zigzags across the garden for the door. Knowing that silence was more important than speed, Marion closed the kitchen door behind her and slipped into her dressing gown and slippers which she had left conveniently, arms spread wide by on the kitchen table. Picking up the glass of milk she had poured before going out Marion sat down and waited.

Brian gave his wife enough time to get into the house and cover her bare body before he started to go downstairs. He found her in the kitchen drinking a glass of milk. Sadly she wasn’t nude.

“Sorry” said Marion “did I wake you” She tried to sound calm although her heart was pounding like a drum.

“No, I just wondered where you were”

“I couldn’t sleep so I came down for a drink.” She finished the milk and said “I’m coming back to bed now”

“Oh right,” said Brian, trying not to look at his wife’s muddy feet.

At the top of the stairs Marion turned to her husband. “I think I’ll just have a quick shower to warm me up”

Fifteen minutes later she slipped into bed, he felt her warm naked body brush against him, her skin so smooth and fragrant. He reached out and gently, as soft as a feather touched his wife’s breast. Her whole body arched in ecstasy and Brian knew he wasn’t going to get much sleep from now on.

Brian woke with the alarm as usual. His mind drifted through the rollercoaster of last night, if that was how Marion was going to respond after a naked walk he decided he would encourage her to do it more often. His wife was already gone, up showered and dressed for the new day. She greeted as if the previous night had just been a mid winters night dream.

“You’re late darling. Hurry up and eat your breakfast.”

Before he knew it he was out of the front door and into the car. As soon a Marion heard her husband’s engine fade in the distance she removed all her clothing and went back to the crossword she had half finished.

That evening Brian lay awake in bed forcing himself to keep his eyes open. He felt like a small boy trying to catch a glimpse of Santa on Christmas Eve. Instead of a jolly man in a red suit sneaking into his room in the middle of the night, he was looking forward to a surreptitious glance of his wife in her birthday suit sneaking out of the room and into the silent, frosty garden. In impatient expectation Brain tossed and turned, while his wife slept soundly, never moving from the bed until he was long gone to work on this dim winter morning. Of course if Brian had known what was going to happen he would never have slept at all that during that year’s Christmas Eve.

**Three**

Brian and Marion Shaw had one daughter they had christened Isla. She had been conceived on their honeymoon when they had both been young and careless. Although they had never thought of having a child so young, and in many ways it had been a struggle, now they found it to be a blessing. Friends of their own age were always complaining as they grappled with the angst caused by their teenage children. They were free of Isla who was away at university.

Well, most of the time, Brain mused, that fateful Christmas morning as he lay in bed. Marion was already up and preparing the turkey dinner. If he listened carefully he could hear her singing carols in the kitchen. She greeted him with a warm Christmas kiss when he finally got up. Isla was nowhere to be seen. This was fortunate as both her parents were feeling a little piqued at her zeal for saving the environment. One bright September day they had bade a tearful farewell to a normal self centred materialistic teenager. Eighteen months on, and a green warrior had taken her place. Last evening they had been lectured for at least three hours on the evils of consumerism. Finally, having consumed a fair amount of wine, Brian and Marion were able to break free and retire with their guilty consciences

“Come on Isla, get up. We want to open our presents” shouted her mother.

“Enemy of the planet” came the reply.

Eventually a tousled haired teenager appeared in the lounge.

“You could at least have dressed” said Brian as Isla lowered herself into the armchair clad only on her dressing gown and slippers.

“I thought you were in a hurry” Isla replied tartly.

“Oh for goodness sake, let’s get on with it” her mother interrupted sharply.

Marion had spent a considerable amount of time, and money, choosing a tasteful and quite trendy dress for her daughter’s present. She waited with eager anticipation as Isla opened it. The first comment her daughter made regarded the waste of precious resources that had gone into the wrapping. She held the dress up against her small frame and then looked at the label. “Dry clean. High energy wastage and dangerous chemicals” commented Isla.

“The least you could say is thank you” snapped Marion.

“It’s a nice gesture, mum, but we need to think of the Earth’s resources. They are running out and so much is wasted on items we don’t need”

“Really Isla, your mother spent a great deal of time choosing that”

“I’m sure she did Dad, and I’m grateful, but we have to look at ourselves and change our lifestyles. We can’t afford to go on wasting precious resources on trinkets”

“Hrrumph” exclaimed Marion as she flicked her Father Christmas earrings.

“I suppose these are a waste?”

“Well yes” said Isla

“Right” exclaimed Marion between clenched teeth, removing the earrings and dropping them on the table. “And my dress, that’s an uneconomic use of resources, no doubt made by small children in sweat shops” she continued. Marion stood up.

“There’s no need to take on like that, stay and finish opening your presents” pleaded Brian trying to defuse the situation.

“Oh no” continued Marion “we can’t have any more wasteful possessions, can we” and without further ado, she unzipped her dress and stepped out of it. “There miss green warrior, does that suit your principles”

Brian looked at Marion with utter astonishment while Isla studied her fluffy slippers.

“I’m sorry Mum, I didn’t mean” But Marion had the bit between her teeth now.

“Wait a moment, my bra, it’s made of nylon. Oh that’s from oil, very bad” and without further ado she removed that too. Brian knew that she would go on now. “And the knickers, all the detergent used to wash them will be poisoning the waterways. There, happy now”

And with a flourish, she pulled them down and strode stark naked from the room.

Isla turned her ashen face to her father “I…I… didn’t mean”

“I’ll talk to her” said Brian getting wearily to his feet.

In the kitchen a very nude Marion was extremely pleased with herself. That had gone much better than she had expected. She wondered how much of the day she could spend naked in a mood of outraged indignity. She quickly wiped the smile from her face as the door opened and Brain entered.

“Well I hope she’s satisfied now” she stormed, “little sanctimonious madam”

“Marion you’re naked” said Brain trying to sound calm

“Well spotted dear” she replied sarcastically.

“Will you put some clothes on please?”

“Not until she apologises”

“Marion, it’s Christmas, what has come over you?” But Brian was beginning to realise what had come over his wife, this was her big outing.

“I’ll go and talk to Isla” he said

He left and began to go upstairs to Isla’s room

“I’m still in here dad” she called as he passed the lounge door.

He turned and went into speak to his daughter. His jaw dropped, for there, sitting quietly in the armchair next to the Christmas tree, was his nineteen year old daughter. She sat comfortably, legs crossed, hands clasped together in her lap. She was still wearing her fluffy pink slippers, but that was all she had on, her dressing gown was folded primly on the coffee table next to her mother’s discarded clothes.

In the kitchen Marion became aware of a high pitched whine. She tracked the mournful sound to the lounge where she found her husband standing looking out of the window. It was clear that he was the source of the wail, and sitting calmly on the chair was the cause.

“Why are you naked Isla?” Marion asked

“For the same reason you are Mum” she replied calmly.

Marion paused briefly, she rather doubted that that was the case, but she wasn’t going to illuminate her family.

“Brian, will you stop that”

“Look what you have done” he shouted at the window.

“Yes” said Marion turning to her daughter, “look what you have done”

“Me” she countered pointing towards her mother’s bare chest. “You started it”

“Well it’s gone far enough” Brian interrupted “both of you can get dressed now, you have made your point”

But Marion had not made her point by a long way; she had planned on sitting down to lunch naked.

“I’ll get dressed when Isla promises to stop lecturing me”

“I’m sorry Mum, but I feel so strongly on this”

“Fine” she said simply, turned on her bare and flounced out.

Brain groaned and followed her.

“How long is this going to carry on?” he asked his wife.

“That’s up to Isla”

Brian sighed and then called “Isla, will you come into the kitchen?”

**Four**

He had half hoped she would have covered up, but there she was, fluffy pink slippers, shiny vagina, and bare breasts with pink nipples pointing accusingly at him. Brain winced, and Marion grimaced before turning back to preparing the vegetables for lunch.

Isla offered an olive branch “Do you want a hand Mum?”

“That would be nice, dear”

Brian couldn’t believe his eyes; there they were, both stark naked peeling potatoes. Shaking his head he sloughed off to the lounge. The room was a littered with torn wrapping paper and his wife’s discarded clothes. Not having the will to tidy the room he sat disconsolately on the sofa as forlorn as Aenaes amongst the ruins of windy Troy. This was without out a doubt the best and worse Christmas ever. The best because his wife was stark naked in the kitchen preparing dinner. The worst because his nineteen year old daughter was also stark naked in the kitchen preparing dinner.

Suddenly his brain caught like the waterlogged engine of an old car. It spluttered and coughed and then, as the fuel began to flow, it roared into life.

“The Jenkins’ are invited to tea” he shouted at his wife’s bare behind.

“I’m sure they’ll understand, dear” replied Marion.

“What, you mean; you are going to stay naked?”

“You heard what I said, Brain.” She turned to her equally naked daughter. “Are you going to give up this environmental nonsense?”

“It’s not nonsense” replied Isla vehemently.

“Very well, then the clothes stay off”

“What am I going to tell Howard and Jill?” asked Brian desperately.

“I always find the truth refreshingly innovative”

“What” he screamed, “What?” He paused for breath. “You want me to cancel them because you refuse to put some clothes on?”

“Who said anything about cancelling them” replied Marion evenly. “I’m sure they will understand, and I don’t think I have got anything either of them hasn’t seen before”

“Nor me” added Isla.

Brain slapped his forehead with his hand and stormed out of the room.

Marion continued to prepare the sprouts while her daughter carefully peeled potatoes. Neither spoke. Isla was just about coming to terms with her predicament. She had been on the longest rollercoaster ride of her life. The dull climb of a family argument had taken a sudden sickening drop into a naked void as her mother shed her clothes. This had been followed by a several savage twists and turns; another sinking drop when she felt the compelling gravity of obligation to bare all. Now Isla’s car was gliding serenely into the disembarkation hall where she found herself chatting nonchalantly with her equally naked mother about the state of the turkey in the oven. Slowly the enormity of what she had done rose over her like a harvest moon in the September sky. She had let her father see her, all of her, breasts, bottom and worst of all her vagina, freshly shaved of all pubic hair that very morning. Nobody had mentioned that yet, eerily nobody had mentioned her naked body at all. Slowly and surreptitiously Isla looked at her mother. The last time she had seen her naked was as a child in the swimming pool changing rooms. Her mother was much as she recalled, heavy breasts and the same thick bush of pubic hair that had so fascinated her then. It came to Isla as a sudden flash that for her mother, Isla’s body had changed little. Her breasts were there, but rather small, and of course she had meticulously removed all signs of maturity with a fresh razor just a few short hours ago.

Just as Isla’s storm tossed ship nosed quietly into safe harbour Marion was beginning to wonder if she may have gone a bit too far. She had planned an outing this holiday and she had cynically used her daughter’s sincere beliefs as an excuse to bare all. She hadn’t expected her Isla to join her, and a nude family for Christmas was never part of her plan. Now she was trapped in her own web, staring at a naked dinner with her daughter, followed by a big surprise for some of her oldest friends.

“Mum” Isla’s voice broke into her thoughts “what are we doing?”

Resisting the urge to reply “making Christmas lunch dear” Marion sighed and turned to her daughter “I don’t know” she said with a hint of despair, “it just got a bit out of hand”

“I’ll put the kettle on” said Isla, the typical response to any crisis.

Marion watched her daughter as she made the tea. Not an ounce of spare flesh spoiled the outline of her body. Marion sighed to herself as she recalled how she had once been that slim. Not for the first time she wished she had discovered the joys of being naked when she was younger and had a figure to flaunt.

“Mum” began Isla in a quiet voice “you’re not going to stay like this for the rest of the day are you?”

Marion gave out a sigh. “No dear” Isla misinterpreted her mother’s reply as remorse for her situation. Marion’s disappointment actually lay in her decision not to spend the rest of the day naked. She had shocked Brian, but it was very clear that he would cancel before allowing their friends to see them naked.

“So shall we get dressed then?” Isla enquired.

“Oh not just yet” replied her mother, “I’m just beginning to feel comfortable. You can get dressed if you like”

“No, I’ll wait for you” Isla paused before admitting “it is quite nice isn’t it”

“You know” said Marion “I think your father is missing out on something.”

“Mum you wouldn’t”

But Marion was gone.

Brian stared up at the door as it opened to reveal his still naked wife.

“For God’s sake Marion” he began.

“I’ll ring Jill and explain the situation, I’m sure it will be fine”

“Please Marion” he begged.

“Oh come on Brian, we’re old friends, I don’t mind them seeing me in the nude”

“Neither do I” said Isla entering the room.

“You don’t mind them seeing your mother naked either, is that what you’re saying?” Brian asked, hoping that was what she meant.

“No dad, I don’t mind them seeing me in the altogether” This is what Brain feared she meant.

He groaned and held his head in his hands. He wasn’t sure whether his daughter was serious but he was sure that Marion would be there wearing just a smile as she offered around the mince pies and mulled wine. After all to anyone who was prepared to trip down the back lane stark naked on an ice cold winter’s night was capable of anything.

“Tell you what sweetie” said Marion “We’ll do you a deal”

Brian looked up from the chair. There they stood two little buff peas in a pod, all shiny and gleaming in the glow of the Christmas tree lights.

“We’ll have dinner in the nuddy and then get dressed for Howard and Jill”

Brain leant back and sighed. He’d much rather they both got dressed straight away, but at least there would be no awkward situations.

“So what do you say Dad?”

“Ok, that would be acceptable”

“Right” said Marian brightly “get you kit off”

**Five**

Brian felt like he had been hit in the solar plexus. If he hadn’t already been sitting down he’d have collapsed. His mind was in turmoil, a thousand thoughts flashing this way and that like a shoal of fish that had just caught sight of the shadow of a shark.

“What me?”

“That’s the deal” replied his wife “or Jill and Howard get the biggest Christmas surprise since they were six”

“I’ll just go upstairs” said Brian, a defeated man adrift on the ocean with no hope of rescue.

“No” said Marion” you’ll spend half an hour pacing around worrying, looking the mirror tying to suck your stomach in”

Isla giggled.

“Treat it like a swim in the cold sea, it’s easier to dive straight in rather than wade out into the freezing waves”

Brian looked nonplussed. Where her husband wavered, Marion was resolute.

“Strip” she ordered. “Isla, go and get your father a sherry, I think he is going to need one after this”

Their daughter dutifully left, bare buttocks swaying as she walked.

“Right, quick” Marion told her husband, “I’ve done you a favour, get ‘em off while she’s out of the room”

With an impressive turn of speed, Brian was out of his clothes quicker than a teenager at an orgy.

“Woo Dad” Isla exclaimed when she returned, “looking good” As she handed him his sherry Brian gave a rueful smile. His first encounter with a naked waitress and it was his own daughter. Brian sat in the chair while his wife busied herself with clearing away all the clothes. Suddenly she was gone leaving Brain alone with no clothes and his very naked daughter. Fortunately he did not have to think of any topics for polite conversation as Isla had plenty to say.

“I have to admit, I quite like being naked” she was saying.

‘It must run in the family’ Brian thought to himself

“Give yourself half an hour and you’ll be right as rain, you won’t even notice you’re nude” she continued. Brian was noticing very much that his daughter was very nude, especially her shaven vagina which looked like for all the world like a small slot on a vending machine. Not without venom he hoped that no unsuitable boy had been allowed to pop his coins in there. Totally oblivious to his scrutiny Isla continued to prattle on about her favourite subject, the environment. There was a project called econudes that had cropped up once in a websearch.

“After dinner I shall investigate this fully” she told him authoritatively

Quite understandably given the circumstances Brian didn’t pay much attention to his daughter’s invective. An understandable moment of inattention, but a lapse he was later to regret.

**Six**

It had been the best of Christmastimes and the worst of Christmastimes reflected Brain as he dressed thankfully. The best because his wife had been thoroughly naked throughout, the worst because his daughter had also been nude. Total purgatory had been confirmed when he had been forced to disrobe himself. He had managed to preserve some dignity by careful use of the red paper napkin covered in silver stars that had been placed on the carefully laid table. He could have used all three as neither Marion nor Isla made use of theirs. “No clothes to protect dear” his wife had told him as she pulled his cracker. So they had sat there as the afternoon waned and the long dusk drew in, their sole attire being the novelty paper hats from the crackers.

Still it was over now, or so he hoped. Giving the excuse that the Jenkins’ were coming soon, he had scurried upstairs as soon as he had bolted the last of his meal. His wife and daughter didn’t follow his lead, but he had felt confident at the time they would. Now he was not so sure. He picked up his Christmas book and began to read. A good thirty minutes passed during which time he read and re read the first chapter several times. He still had no idea what it was about. At last, with something approaching great relief, he heard footsteps on the stairs. He waited for the door to open, but the footsteps went past the door. Isla going to her bedroom. This was the chance he had been waiting for. He had to speak to Marion alone. Brian hoped she had dressed but somehow he knew this would be an unfulfilled wish.

**Seven**

Marion was comfortably slouched in an armchair in the lounge. The television was on but she was pinching the fat over her stomach. There was still a fair amount left although it was significantly reduced from the summer, in fact she had lost eight pounds in a month. This had been achieved without a single visit to the gym. I’ve invented a new diet, she thought, nudity in a cold climate.

Her reverie was interrupted by her husband who stole into the room as a thief into the night. Many a man, finding his wife sitting naked in her lounge would be aroused in passion, lust even, but Brian’s face was etched with despair.

“For God’s sake Marion, will you put some clothes on, the Jenkins’ will be here in a moment”

“You know perfectly well they won’t arrive for another hour. Besides” she gestured towards her clothes folded neatly in the corner of the room “I can get dressed in a trice” Brian sighed, he had a strong suspicion she was well practiced at getting dressed in hurry.

“I hope this will not carry on all holiday”

“What dear”

“You, naked” he replied sharply

“And what’s wrong with my body. Too fat; too ugly; keep it covered at all costs”

“There’s nothing wrong with your….. in fact it’s….” Brian felt he was a small toy train that was about to come off the rails. Marion was at the controls and she had the voltage on high. As much as he tried to express his hopes, his fears, his brain was befuddled and his tongue severely twisted as his wife reclined, breasts spread across her chest, idly curling her pubic hair in her fingers

Marion decided to change the subject. “I was thinking of shaving it off, like Isla.”

Brain was totally confused now “What?”

Marion smiled. “My pubes dear” She smiled as her husband blushed bright red.

Oddly enough, in the seclusion of her bedroom, their daughter was coming to the opposite conclusion and resolved to grow her pubes back. She was shocked at that thought, for there was no point in letting her pubic hair grow if her parents would not see the result. Even more startling was the odd thought that spending the remainder of her holiday in a state of casual nudity would be fun. She had been about to get dressed and return to the lounge, but decided not to bother. So Isla went downstairs as she had come up, stark naked. As she entered the lounge and sat opposite her mother her father clapped his forehead in despair and stalked form the room.

“I think he’s finding it hard to adjust” Marion told her daughter.

“Frankly I’m not surprised” Isla replied “Why are you doing this Mum”

“I quite like being in the nude” she replied honestly.

“Mm, I can see the appeal. Do you think we are naturists?”

“You may be dear, but I’m a nudist”

**Eight**

Henri Dalcroix, nothing French but the name, sat in the small committee room of the students’ union of the University of Canterbury staring at the wall. The whole building was of a functional sixties design, the only hint of comfort being the paint covering the breeze blocks. This was the first meeting of the inner committee of Greensoc, the University undergraduate environmental society, ‘emphasis on the mental’ he thought. He’d been here an hour now and he was bored, very bored indeed.

Chairman Louis Holding was true to his name, he was keeping a firm grasp on the talking stick and literally beating the committee to death with it. He was an earnest middle class boy from Marlborough. Henri suspected his parents rode with the local hunt and this was Louis’ way of assuaging his family guilt. Next to Louis sat Susan Blackwell, a pretty girl with a fine figure. Henri didn’t think she was aware of her sex appeal, that was almost, but not quite, hidden underneath a grey shapeless jumper and bulky fatigues. Susie had a passionate belief that all humans were destroying the planet and was prepared to do anything to save it. He smiled, Susie’s resolve was about to be tested. Henri had no real interest in the environment either way. He had joined Greensoc for one reason, to get into Isla Shaw’s pants. This had taken a few weeks of protest marches and writing mass e mails, but success came eventually and, just as Isla’s father had feared, he had been making regular deposits into his daughter’s slot long before the Christmas break.

Louis had finally finished speaking and called for any other business. Here we go thought Henri, the rollercoaster is at the top of the climb and I’m in the front looking down at the drop.

“Yes” began Isla in a very business like way “Over Christmas I have been researching new avenues of protest and this seems a way of making our message heard” She dug Henri in the ribs and he dutifully handed around Isla’s version of econudes. The look on Louis’ face was priceless. The half dozen or so of the committee began to shift uneasily in their seats as the full portent of Isla’s vision began to strike home. In times of crises, however, true class will always triumph.

“Well Isla” began Susie “I’m not too sure of some of these claims, I doubt the energy saved on laundering clothes would compensate for the extra heating required to live au natural”

The committee began to settle, it’s most ardent activist, was cutting straight into the heart of Isla’s plans.

“However,” she continued “I do think that when summer comes we have a strong case for nudity. There are times when many people are changing clothing daily because it has been stained by sweat, and some people shower two to three times a day!” There was some uncomfortable shuffling of feet as Susie’s points hit home. “However the main target for us should be air conditioning. It’s as expensive as heating, and frankly our bodies are designed for the heat” The committee were as stunned as a fish suddenly confronted by a moray eel. “I’d like to propose we devote the next meeting to devising an action plan for a series of naked protests this summer”

Greensoc was silent, their own personal Galahad had seen the Holy Grail and there was no option but to join her on the quest.

**Nine**

Late winter, and a night as cold and as dark as the grave. The worst of the weather was over, but spring had limited itself to shoving up a few snowdrops. The temperature was above freezing but it was still nipple stretching cold. Marion shivered in the bitter wind as she locked the back door and hid the key beneath her usual flowerpot. There was no thought of returning to the warmth of her bed where Brain slept peacefully. She was confident he would remain so until well into morning as she had spent the evening carefully filling him with single malt. There were to be no more close calls.

The lane behind their garden was an untidy rubbish strewn mess, but at three o’clock in the morning, when all but the owl slept, it was paradise for a middle aged naked woman. With every sense fully alive Marion slipped along the lane drifting from one shadow to the next. Her destination was the nearby wood with no name. One obstacle stood between her and the trees, and that was the blind street. It was named thus as it led to nowhere. Sixty years ago a small housing estate had been planned but bankruptcy followed by the war had put construction on hold, and then along came the Green Belt legislation which killed the project forever. All that remained was the beginnings of a street flanked by the blind sides of two houses. No one would see her as she slipped across the road. And if they did, who would recognise her, after all who would be looking at her face?

Marion reached the end of the lane and stopped. She was as vigilant as a bird, alive to every sound and movement in the shadows. Something wasn’t right. She felt in through the soles of her running shoes. Standing very, very still in deep shadow she checked behind and then ever so carefully she poked her head into the light to inspect the road. She caught a brief glimpse of a shambling figure before she jerked her head back into the safety of the dark alley. Again she checked the lane behind. The sensible course of action was retreat, slip back through the dark areas and the calculated path through the garden. But something held her there, something inside her that felt the risk and fed off the danger of being caught. Marion held her breath and listened to the beating of her heart and waited. Nothing came past the end of the alley; he should have been there within seconds. Perhaps the interloper into Marion’s adventure had taken a wrong turn and returned to street. The staggering gait had suggested he was drunk. She had come so far now that she didn’t want to go back. So carefully, ever so carefully she manoeuvred her head so one eye so she could see the road. What she saw caused her to curse under her breath; the man had collapsed and was lying twitching on the ground, a dark heap spread across the line of amber light drawn by the street lamp on Belvoir Avenue beyond. Somehow Marion knew he was not drunk. She shivered in the cold of the dark late winter night as the realisation dawned that he would not survive if she left him.

With hindsight it was all so simple. She should have returned home, and telephoned for an ambulance. She could have told them that she had heard something in the street, and when she looked there was a man clearly in some distress. Then she could have donned a long warm coat to become his Florence Nightingale. But the light of hindsight is always blinding and strong, and instead of being comforted by a Samaritan ,Tomas O’Sullivan was looking at an angel. He knew she was an angel because who else would be standing over him in the middle of a freezing night on a street to nowhere. He had been told all angels were naked and this woman certainly filled the bill, although he dimly recollected that angels were supposed to be hermaphrodite and this one was most certainly female. If he was going to be picky he would have chosen a younger, less plump angel to escort him to St Peter’s Gates, but she had decent sized breasts and a good figure and frankly he was in no position to complain.

Tomas O’Sullivan had suffered a mild stroke as he left the restaurant where he worked as a chef. This had confused him to the extent that he had caught the wrong bus. When he had realised his mistake he was far from the city centre and heading away from home. Having been assured by the bus driver that another bus was due in the opposite direction he had disembarked at the end of Belvoir Avenue. The shock of the cold air had triggered a second stroke, and blind in one eye, and very greatly confused he had staggered drunkenly along the avenue to the dead end street where his naked angel witnessed his third and almost fatal stoke. He smiled as she stroked his head, her long dark hair covering her face, he wanted to tell her his soul was prepared but stalled as she began to speak. Tomas expected a voice of sublime purity that would usher him towards the heavens Instead a low gruff voice told him he needed an ambulance and asked if he had a mobile phone on him.

Stunned at the earthliness of his angel he asked a stupid question “Don’t you have one?”

“How could I carry a mobile phone?” asked Marion in her own voice. Suddenly she realised she was squatting in front of him, his head level with her crotch. “Don’t answer that” she said quickly. By way of reply Thomas moved his on good hand weakly towards his jacket pocket. His naked angel understood. “What’s your name” she asked as she pulled the phone from his pocket. Surely she should know, an angel sent to bring him to join the heavenly chorus? Perhaps it was a test? “Tomas O’Sullivan” he mumbled, hoping that his name was on her list.

Marion took the phone from his pocket and wondered what she should do next. The man was clearly very ill, but how could she stay with him. She retreated against the wall of the street very conscious that the light from the phone’s keyboard would illuminate her bare body. Quickly, before she had time to change her mind she dialled for an ambulance.

“Emenrgency.What is the problem, sir?” She smiled; her gruff voice had fooled them.

“I think I’ve had a stroke”

“What symptoms do you have?”

Marion reeled off what Tomas had complained of, and told them where she was and that her name was Tomas O’Sullivan. She finished with a low moan that she hoped would be interpreted as another stroke and, leaving the line open returned to the prone chef. She carefully wiped off her fingerprints using his tie, and laid the phone on the pavement. The plaintive pleas of the operator for more information, followed by the blessed announcement that the ambulance was on it’s way sounded like the public announcer at a main line station in the quiet dark street.

“You’ll stay with me until the end?” Tomas asked weakly.

Marion smiled and assured him in a warm voice that she would stay until they came. She gripped his hand which was even colder than hers. This was not good, she was stark naked, and he fully clothed with a coat. To Marion it seemed like an age, although in reality it was but a few short minutes, before the walls of the houses reflected the blue light of the emergency vehicle, and with it came the unlikely dawn of hope. Marion laid her hand gently on Tomas head and whispered into his ear. “They are coming now, I must leave now,” and with a final “good luck” Tomas’ naked angel sprinted for the alley way. She reached the haven of its shadow just as the lights of the ambulance swung into the road, picking up the mound that was Tomas. Whatever happened now it was out of her hands, she had done all she could. Marion’s main priority was the race for home before any of her neighbours were woken and poked their nosey heads through the curtains.

At least the run had warmed her up she thought as she kicked off her trainers and put on the robe she had left waiting by the door. Quickly, but quietly, Marion climbed the stairs and went into Isla’s vacant bedroom where she opened the curtains just a chink and looked into the avenue, just in time to see the ambulance speed past, blue lights flashing. That must be good news she thought to herself, they wouldn’t rush if Tomas had died. There was even better news when she returned to bed, Brian was still fast asleep, that meant he would have no suspicions.

**Ten**

Brian was not amused. He was sitting at a plastic table, in the plastic interior of an ersatz American diner with two of his work colleagues. John, a happily married philanderer and Jan, an unhappily married ditherer who was the latest objective of his raging libido. Jan had invited Brian along as a chaperone, and then proceeded to ignore him throughout the lunch.

“Did you hear about the naked angel?” John asked of Jan. Brian decided it was time to leave. He knew John’s modus operandus and this was as tactful as it got. “Here Brain you might know something about this. It was in your area” A cold hand gripped Brain’s heart. “Apparently some chef was wandering around and had a stroke. Then a naked woman appeared to gave him the kiss of life.” Brian looked at John through narrowed eyes, but John only had eyes for Jan.

“Is that what it’s like where you live Brian?” he asked, eyes firmly locked on Jan “all the women wandering around in the nuddy.” Jan licked her lips and smiled, “perhaps I should move there?” she suggested. John laughed, Brian was in no mood for foreplay, he broke in sharply “And where did you get this information from?” This broke the spell.

“All over the Mercury, you get the local rag?” asked John.

“Yes, Marion reads it, but I never……. Look I need to get back” Brain rose hastily to his feet and gave John some money. “If that’s not enough let me know” he said as he left in hurry.

Jan turned to John, “What’s into him, do you think it’s true, people walk around starkers in his neck of the woods?”

John snorted, “It’s strictly Stepford around there, I doubt his wife takes her clothes off to have a bath.”

Even though he knew there would be one at home Brian couldn’t wait and went to the nearest newsagent where for the exorbitant price of eighty cents bought another copy of ‘The Nelson Mercury’. Hiding it under his coat like a schoolboy with a dirty magazine he scurried back to his office. The naked angel had made page seven. It was clearly the work of a new girl who had been given the graveyard shift. She had taken a phrase muttered by an incoherent and very ill man and proceeded to turn it into a half page spread.

‘Who is the naked angel of Nelson?’ the banner headline screamed. The foundation of the article appeared to be the delirious ramblings of a chef who had been found lying in the street suffering from a massive stroke. During a casual chat with the ambulance crew she had learned he had been muttering about being saved by a naked angel. The crew had told her the man was hallucinating, but that had only spurred the journalist on to quizzing the staff at the emergency call centre. Despite being told that the patient himself had dialled for an ambulance, Julie Lewis had perused her story. The police were completely non committal when asked about the legality of a naked woman roaming the streets, pointing out that they had no reports of such a thing happening in the area, ever. The only man who had seen the naked angel was now lying in a coma in a hospital bed. Faced with such robust denial and the flimsiest of evidence the editor of the Mercury did what all newspapermen would do under such circumstances. He published it. Normally Brian would have dismissed the article out of hand but for one minor fact, the man had been struck down thirty yards from his house, and, unlike the police, Brain did know of a woman who roamed the neighbourhood in her birthday suit.

He stuffed the paper in his drawer and tried to get some work done, but it was no use, he couldn’t concentrate and as soon as it was politic to do so Brian sloped off home. When he arrived their copy of the local paper had arrived. Marion had not. He laid the paper on the hall table and went to make himself some tea. A few moments later he heard the key in the lock.

“You’re home early, dear” called his wife. She breezed into the kitchen and gave him a peck on the cheek

“I’d love a cup of tea” she told him, “I’ve had such a busy day. I can’t tell you the trouble I had sorting out that advertising company’s books” She kicked her shoes off. “That feels good” she said with relief as she placed them in the utility room. “It was so hot there, and the room was so stuffy” she complained as she unbuttoned her blouse. She stuffed that straight into the washing machine and proceeded to take off her skirt which she sniffed suspiciously, “Hrrmph that will have to be dry cleaned” she muttered draping it on the back of a chair. Brian finished pouring his wife’s tea while she continued her striptease. She dumped her underwear into the washing machine and sat down gratefully at the kitchen table. “Not joining me darling?”

“I’ve got a cup thanks” he told her.

“In the nude” she chastised.

“Trifle chilly for me” he told her. He rarely shed his cardigan, let alone his underpants. Now and again Marion would get sulky and start to pout and tell him he was an old stick in the mud and he should join her. So to keep the peace and, more importantly, keep his wife naked around the house he would reluctantly bare all for an “in the all together evening”. On the whole Marion didn’t seem to mind him being fully clothed while she wandered the house as nature intended. Which was just fine by Brian.

Brain watched his wife carefully as she scanned the local paper. Not a flicker of acknowledgement crossed her face as she passed over the story of the naked angel. Nor did she remark on its closeness to home. Marion was able to pass nervelessly across the story because she had already read it. Someone had pointed it out to her at work.

“Don’t you live near Belvoir Avenue, Marion?” one of the two partners who ran the company had asked her. He pushed the paper towards her. Panic rose inside her as she saw the headline. Mustering all the self control possible under the circumstances, Marion read the article. When she had got to the end she nearly collapsed with a mixture of concern and relief. Concern that the story of the nude rescuer was in the paper at all, and relief that Tomas was still alive. Better still he had not given a description of his personal angel.

“It’s all a bit flimsy” she stated noncommittally.

“Oh I don’t know” Dave continued in a mischievous voice, “We’ve all heard those stories about suburbia, a den of iniquity behind those net curtains”

Marion looked him straight in the eyes and replied coolly “Well I’ve never seen any naked women wandering the streets” emphasising the point with a nod. What was more, it was also the truth.

“Maybe,” Dave continued, “that is because you are the nude angel.” He winked. Marion felt her heart surge and a warmth in her cheeks as she blushed bright red.

“Only joking, Marion” Dave put in quickly. He liked to tease Marion, who he saw as overtly prim and proper, but perhaps, he thought to himself, he taken it a bit too far this time. Marion smiled weakly at him, Dave misinterpreted this gesture of relief as an acceptance of his apology.

She was therefore steeled for Brian’s scrutiny, and had answers prepared for any comments he might make about the article. That he made none brought forth a long held concern that her husband knew of her night time adventures. Not for the first time she considered telling him about her forays, because (and this sudden realisation shocked her) her recent close shave had only left her craving for more.

Before he could mention the article, the doorbell rang. Neither of them moved. Brian looked Marion, and she just sat at the table cup held in both hands, breasts brushing against her arms. “Shall I answer it?” she said, putting down the cup.

This stirred Brian, “Aren’t you going to put something on?”

“It’s probably Isla, she said she would be coming home for a few days, got a reading week.”

Brian shot his wife a suspicious look, ‘why had she not told him this before?’ he thought as he got up and went into the hall.

He opened the door to a pretty young woman with long curly hair. She introduced herself as Julie Lewis. Brain’s memory whirred and found an answer, the journalist who had written that story, surely she had not tracked Marion down?

“I’m just following up on my story of the naked angel, are you aware of it?” Brian nodded “I suppose you didn’t see or hear anything last Thursday?”

“Oh no, nothing at all” he replied guardedly.

Julie Lewis nodded, “Do you know of anybody who saw or heard anything?”

Brian looked at her, she was in her early twenties, had a nice smile, and he could have made her day by asking her in to meet the naked angel, who was sitting on her bare bottom in the kitchen.

“No neither of us saw anything and none of our neighbours have spoken of it. In fact the first I heard of the story was in the paper”

“So what is your opinion of a naked woman roaming around in this area?”

“Well, um, as I read your report, there’s not a lot of evidence beyond the ramblings of a very ill man, unless of course you have some other witness.”

Brian was fishing now, this was dangerous. If she did have a witness it could arouse suspicions. She smiled

“No, not really, I’m just trying to get a flavour of the locality until Mr O Sullivan wakes up” She paused, “if he wakes up. Anyway thanks for your time.”

Marion was washing the tea cups when he returned to the kitchen. “Who was that dear?”

“Some reporter wanting to ask about a man who collapsed in the street last Thursday”

“Not the one who claimed he was rescued by a naked angel?”

“Yes, lucky I didn’t invite her in. She might have met one”

Marion gave him a withering look “You wouldn’t do that to me, would you darling?”

“But what if it was somebody else, like Linda next door, she would have just walked straight past me into here, and then she would have had a shock”

“Oh well” began Marion, “it’s bound to happen sometime, I’m fed up with scurrying for some clothes every time she comes around. I think it’s time she knew we were nudists”

Brian was stunned. It is not as if he hadn’t been expecting it, but it still came as a knee in the solar plexus shock, Marion had used the n word.

“What did you say?”

“We’re nudists Brian, or would you prefer the term naturist?”

No he wouldn’t actually, and come to think of it he rather objected to being called a nudist.

“So, does that mean you want to join a club?” he asked, heart somewhere around the soles of his shoes.

Marion gave it some thought, before replying. “No, I don’t think that is me really, but if that’s what you want I happy to go along with you”

His blood began to boil, do that! He was standing there in his business suit, not his birthday suit. She was the nudist not him.

“But I do think we should spend more time in the nude together, perhaps when the weather is nicer we could try being naked outdoors, I’ve heard that is nice, or maybe we could find a nice quiet beach somewhere.”

Brain could barely believe his ears, he was about to explode, and the last thing he needed to hear was the sound of a key in latch and a cheery hello from his daughter.

“In here, dear” called Marion completely unaware of her husband’s distress.

“Hi dad” she greeted her father with a peck on the cheek. “Hi mum looking good, I like the outfit”

Marion kissed her daughter and smiled, “Bag full of washing?” she asked.

“Not much” she replied. Brian missed this; it was a portent of things to come.

**Eleven**

Nipples to the left of him, nipples to right. By all rights Brain should have been as happy as a pig wallowing in pure gravy. Here he sat at the dinner table book ended between two naked women. The left breast to the right of him belonged to his wife while the smaller, perter, right breast to his left was his daughter’s. Moreover he was still dressed. Soon after complementing her mother on her outfit Isla had joined her by sporting her own version which was smaller, better fitting and, it had to be said, properly ironed. Brian had escaped having to bare all with the flimsy excuse of being cold. He was unhappy because Marion had brought up the n word again.

Isla had agreed with her mother “I think we are nudists, I mean just look at us”

“Well apart from your father”

“And how many of my friends have seen their father naked?”

Brian winced, this was not a good evening. Unfortunately for Brain this was the best part of the evening, he had no idea how much worse it was going to get. He tried to retrieve some sanity.

“Well, I asked your Mother if she wanted to join a nudist club and she said no”

“Oh there’s more to nudism that joining a club, we all like being nude at home, which makes us nudists”

Marion upped the stakes “That’s exactly what I told your father, and it’s time we stopped hiding the fact from our friends. I’m sick and tired of running for my clothes every time Linda calls”

“Oh come on Marion” Brain was getting heated now, “you know how attitudes are in this country, we’ll end up a laughing stock”

“Oh I don’t know dad, people are more fair minded than the tabloid press. I think you may be pleasantly surprised. Anyway if she disapproves then just tell her you’ll get dressed when she calls around”

Brian didn’t like the way things were going, it was time to play his ace.

“If you bring it up now. She’ll think you are the naked angel”

This stopped the conservation dead. Isla looked at both of them. Marion explained the newspaper article.

“Oh come on Dad” exclaimed Isla “Nobody is going to walk about stark naked in the middle of a freezing night” she paused before adding the final Jenga brick onto Brian’s tottering pile but “it could be a good way to casually bring up the conversation with Linda”

He may not have won the trump, but he had outplayed his wife whose weakness lay in the knowledge that Linda may just have been looking at the wrong time.

“We’ll see what tomorrow brings” she replied enigmatically before changing the subject, “How’s uni then Isla? I see you have let hair grow, and not just on the top of your head.”

“Well there is something I need to tell you guys”

OhmyGodshespregnant was the only thought that raced through Marion’s mind. The same thought had simultaneously taken prime of place in Brian’s consciousness. After Isla had laid their mind to rest in that respect she outlined her plans.

“I felt it only fair to bring you guys up to speed on out econude protests. I wouldn’t want you to find out by reading all about me in the paper”

‘Unlike your mother’ thought Brian. By the time Isla had outlined her summer project both her parents were beginning to come round to the idea that pregnancy would have been preferable. They also knew there was no way in hell that Isla could be persuaded to change her mind. All Brian and Marion could do was grin while Isla bared it.

**Twelve**

A week later, armed with her parents’ consent, (well resignation to the inevitable) Ilsa, with Henri in tow made a discreet entrance to an extraordinary meeting of Greensoc. For once Herni was keen to attend, for what was on the agenda today came under the heading of ‘never in my wildest dreams’. The econude protest was going ahead. Susie had made up her mind and the meeting had been called to plan direct action against companies that provided air conditioning in the summer. There were going to be many facts and figures, and carbon footprints would be stamped upon his brain until it shrieked in pain, but for once he could cope with that. Oh yes he thought as he rubbed his hands together in anticipation.

“You cold or something” demanded Isla

“No, why”

“You’re rubbing your hands together. It had better not be cold in there” she continued.

“I’m sure it’ll be fine babe”

“It’s all very well for you to say that, you’ve got a jumper to keep you warm”

“Not my choice, babe, you know I’d be happy to join in your protest”

“Mm, I do think Susie is bit over zealous on this”

So did Henri but he saw no reason to object. As usual they were the last in.

“Make sure the door is locked Henri” Lois Holding told him.

“Sure, Louis, you can rely on me”

He took his place next to Isla. Across the table sat Susie. This was the first time he had seen her in a dress, albeit a long and shapeless effort beneath a large bulky woollen pullover. Next to Susie was her would be boyfriend, Pete Atkins. Would be if she noticed him, which she didn’t. There were a couple of other male crusties present, earnest types who never washed and would release the lions from the zoo if they could find a way of doing it without being eaten. They were of no interest to Henri. Usually the whole committee was of no interest to Henri, but today was going to be different, today the plan for nude protest would be presented and voted on. Henri knew which way he was going to vote, even if it meant the rest of the world seeing Isla in all of her glory.

“This extraordinary meeting has been called by Isla and Susie to discuss their proposal for naked action in the summer” began Louis to the rapt attention of all. He droned on about the carbon footprints of washing, laundering and air conditioning. This gave Henri the opportunity to give the other two female members of the committee the once over. Julie Langstone was small, vivacious and pretty and pencil thin. When she turned sideways she vanished. The opposite was true of Catherine Sanders. She must have huge carbon footprint given her size. For without a doubt Cat was the fattest vegetarian Henri had ever seen. His reverie was broken by Isla who had dug him in the ribs.

“Check the door again Henri” This he dutifully did while Susie outlined the planned protest. It wasn’t rocket science, all they would do is target a store or office, or anywhere they could gain entry, strip off and chant “Air con bad” There was a snappy slogan in there somewhere but nobody had quite come up with it yet. Henri sat down and gave Susie his full attention as she was getting to the juicy bits.

“After due consideration with the other girls we have decided that this will be a female only protest as you boys may be perceived as threatening and are more likely to be arrested. And as most security guards are male they can’t touch us with out being accused of indecent assault. They’ll rugby tackle you boys before you have got your pants over your shoes. Also given the nature of society a girls only protest will garner more publicity for the cause and the cause is predominant here”

The room was as silent at the gulfs between the stars

“So, as a way of affirming our intent, I propose we continue the meeting naked”

There was utter silence, the two crusties looked alarmed, Henri suspected that this was probably a concern over their personal hygiene rather than prudery.

“When I say we, I mean those of us who will actively protest.”

Louis interrupted “We’ll have to vote on this Susie”

“We already have. It was unanimous”

Lois was puzzled now.

“I don’t understand”

“It’s only us girls who are going to strip, Louis” said Catherine softly.

“But really, I do think we should show our support” Lois blustered. Henri looked around the male members, he didn’t see much support in their eyes, just a hunger for the coming show. A sharp dig in the ribs brought Henri to attention. Isla had told him about Susie’s conviction that only the girls should bare all. She knew she would never convince Susie to change her mind but that didn’t mean Isla was prepared to0 down without a fight.

“You know why, don’t you?” she had told Henri as they lay in bed the previous evening. Henri recognised a reciprocal question when he heard one. “She’s frightened of seeing an unleashed penis” she said, idly stroking Henri’s “She’s worrying there may be an erection on show” Henri’s penis duly responded to Isla’s stimulation, “She thinks you men can’t control; yourself” she continued rubbing the top of his swelling member between two fingers. She suddenly let go and stared intently at his fully erect penis with all the astonishment of an amateur conjuror performing a successful rope trick for the first time. “And she’s right”

Henri sighed. He was just beginning to enjoy Isla’s attention. One thing was certain, he wasn’t going to get any more. “I can control myself around naked women as long as they don’t start playing with me” he told her.

“Ah, but that’s not what little miss perfect thinks, oh no. She thinks that one glimpse of her bare body will send a man into uncontrollable lust. In her inexperienced little mind they’ll be saluting her faster than a guardsman meeting the Queen”

“So what do you want me to do? Strip off at the same time as you. I don’t mind but what about Loius and the crusties, will they strip? I bet Pete will be out of his pants as fast as a Parisian whore, but then he has trouble controlling himself when Susie is dressed. He nearly has an orgasm when she speaks to him”

“No sweetie, I don’t want you to strip, just put up a bit of a show, OK.” She reached again for his flaccid penis, “now where were we?”

So Henri did as Isla asked and steamed in to support Louis, but it was all to no avail. Susie was determined, the crusties were glued into their clothes and poor old Pete was bent double trying to control a raging erection clearly visible in his stiff jeans

The committee room was long and rectangular. It naturally divided into two parts, the meeting area with a large round table and a small kitchen area where the students could break off from their arduous negotiations and relax with tea and sandwiches. As Louis once again made a pitch for one off all off, Susie cut him off mid flow by standing and walking into the middle of this area. Without a word the other three girls followed. They turned to face the silent men. A deep silence fell within the committee room. Henri suddenly became aware of the rapid beat of his heart. The muffled sounds of the student union going about its normal business crept under the locked door.

It was Isla who took the lead and quickly pulled her long dress over her head, draped it on a chair and stood still, arms by her side showing no sign of embarrassment. This surprised all, but Henri, who had had much time to reflect upon his girlfriend’s sudden conversion to casual nudity since the Christmas holidays. He would dearly like to know why Isla, who had gone home a normal student, who would happily strip for sex, but that was all; had somehow turned into a rampant nudist who had to be reminded to dress when company was expected. He dared not ask Isla in case she interpreted the questions as a rebuke and started to dress normally again. A prospect Henri viewed with some horror.

Susie was caught unaware and raced to catch up, almost tripping over the hem of her dress in her haste to show the slavering boys her body. What a body it was too, thought Henri, as his eyes devoured Susie’s bare flesh. He started at the only part of her left clothed, and moved upwards along firm thighs, through a small forest of blonde pubic hair, across a flat, pale stomach to firm, perfectly proportioned breasts with pertly protruding nipples. From there it was but a small journey over her bare shoulders to the familiar territory of her face that shone red in embarrassment. When his eyes met hers he stopped. Susie smiled at him, a message of triumph, and regret for what could have been. Isla was right, Susie had insisted on the boys remaining clothed because she didn’t want to see them naked, she didn’t want their unleashed penises showing their lust for her, especially as she had no interest in any of them, except that was for Henri. He could have been hers, but for the painful fact he was Isla’s This she regretted bitterly, but the die was cast. Susie would never betray her friend; this was against all her principles. So she held his eyes as she stood naked before him and smiled a rueful smile for what might have been. Henri had no such scruples and he would have happily two timed Isla with not the slightest twinge to his conscience. All that stopped him was bitter experience. He had dated two girls at school, and when they found out he learnt a telling lesson. Not only did they both dump him, but they proceeded to spread such vicious invective around the small town he lived in, that no girl would even speak to him. No, it was one at a time for Henri now, and although Isla’s bare body was a small candle next to the stellar beauty of Susie, it’s not just looks, it’s how you use it that counts and Isla may not have had the bodywork of a Rolls Royce, but she had the engine of a Ferrari and Henri was well satisfied with the ride.

That left Julie and Cat standing side by side in their long dresses. Clearly the girls had chosen this form of attire fro the ease of undressing. Julie swallowed hard, smiled at no body in particular, nudged Cat who shrugged and said “Oh well, what the hell,” In unison they began to disrobe. Cat wiggled sensually as she squeezed her large body out of her clothes, while the tiny Julie merely pulled the straps from her shoulders and let the blue patterned summer dress fall to the ground, she stepped out of it and smiled at the boys, who stared silently eyes and pants bulging.

Cat was astonishing, Henri had never seen such flesh, and it was all as solid as a rock, her thighs bulged, her midriff swelled as if pregnant. Many a time had heard of woman’s breasts being referred to as melons, but he never once thought that they came that big. He wondered how she managed to stand upright.

That left Julie, thin Julie with tiny breasts that were like small mounds, each one tipped by an exquisite cherry nipple. Her long dark hair caressed her shoulders, but the rest of her body was hair free, her long pink vagina visible for all to see least anyone doubt her femininity. That brought a stray thought back into Henri’s mind, why had Isla grown hers again. She had gone home in December fashionably bald, by the time she returned there was considerable regrowth, which she made no attempt to rein in. More and more Henri wanted to know what had happened over Christmas, and why had she gone home over the weekend?

Susie broke into his reverie. “Shall we resume our seats?”

The girls returned to their chairs, they had chosen to sit next to each other with an empty space between Susie and Louis, and Isla on the other end next to Henri who was more than used to his girlfriend in the nude.

“Well I think the disrobing went well and should achieve the effect we are looking for. Once we are naked, you boys will start to chant our slogan”

“What’s that” asked Louis who had regained his composure.

“Er well, we haven’t quite got one yet, we’re looking for something catchy, you know, like ‘Meat is Murder’ and ‘I’d rather go naked than wear fur’. Has anybody got any ideas?”

Henri had a suggestion “It’s not snappy enough, but something about the con in air con, I dunno I’ll think about it”

“What about the Police?” asked Julie, finally finding her voice.

“I’ve checked that out” Susie told her “and it’s not illegal unless someone objects. They have never arrested anybody who has agreed to dress when told to”

The look on Julie’s face told Henri there would be no problem there. “What about photographs?” asked Cat.

“Well that is the whole point” responded Isla leaning back comfortably in her chair. “Publicity for the cause. You’re not thinking of backing out are you Cat?”

‘What’s she worrying about’ thought Henri, ‘Susie’s the front page model.’ His thoughts were interrupted by a knock on the door.

“Oi you sanctimonious environmental veggies, your time is up” came a loud voice. There was a rattling on the door handle, “Why’s this door locked?”

“We’re having an orgy” Isla called back to them.

“Well let us in, we’ll show you a good time”

“Fat chance” called Julie. “Shall we adjourn Louis?”

”Under the circumstances I think so”

There was a rattle at the door, and a girl’s voice”

“C’mon Isla, what are you doing?”

“I’m just getting dressed, Vicky, give me a moment”

The girls walked over to the kitchen area and to the boys great regret climbed back into their dresses.

“All decent” said Isla and without checking opened the door.

“What was all that for, man” complained an tall gangly youth with a baseball cap tilted to an angle that would be instantly recognised as not quite right by a local street gang.

The short girl with spiky red hair behind him seemed to know

“You really going through with this?”

“Mm hm” replied Isla

“With what?” demanded the youth who liked to be called Desmond.

“You’ll find out soon enough, Toby” Cat told him

**Thirteen**

The day had burnt like a furnace that had scorched the earth. The midsummer sun had passed across the sky like a flame that burnt red in the western sky before setting in a calm sea washed of all colour. But the night that brought no relief from the stifling heat. Brian woke with a start in a bed soaked in sweat. He emerged trembling from a fitful dream, a nightmare where he had walked naked through his local supermarket to the astonishment and disgust of his friends and neighbours who pointed mockingly at his exposed genitals and jeered with cruel laughter at the size of his hairy behind. He did not need a Jung to analyse this dream, he knew its source well, his headstrong daughter Isla. Tomorrow she would begin her bare all campaign against air conditioning, and there was nothing he could do to stop it, no reasoning would sway her from the path she had held unswervingly for the past four months. His distress was instantly doubled when he turned to his wife looking for comfort, only to find Marion gone. With no thought to his own nudity he dashed down the stairs, his swaying genitals slapping gently against his bare legs.

All his fears were realised when, racing into the kitchen he found the door to the garden wide open. He tip toed to the threshold and peeped out. To his relief Marion was sitting in a chair on the sun terrace. She was completely naked of course, but at least she wasn’t off down the lane like a character from a warped nursery rhyme.

“What are you doing Marion?” he hissed, so as not to wake the neighbours.

“Trying to cool down” she replied quietly.

“What if somebody sees you?”

”Don’t be stupid Brian” responded Marion with some distain, “we ate supper out here starkers while it was still light, who’s going to see us now”

Brian had to admit she had a point. Isla had deliberately grown her bush since Christmas, and so had Marion, except her bush acted as a privacy screen to save her from the neighbours prying eyes. Or was it vice versa? Brian was never quite sure. Such had been the fierce heat of the day that Brian, who usually remained clothed at all times had joined his wife for a bare all session when he had come home sweating and irritable from a sweltering day at the office, which, to his daughter’s great satisfaction used a novel form of air conditioning called windows. For once Brian appreciated his wife’s lifestyle, marvelling in the refreshing feelings of a total lack of clothing.

Confident in the efficiency of his wife’s shrubbery screen Brian slipped on his sandals and joined her in the fragrant night air. Unseen, the door swung silently closed behind him and it wasn’t until it gave out a portentous click that Brain realised his error. To his horror he had locked them both out of the house. “Oh my God” he hissed in complete panic, “we’re locked out.” Marion, who had been on her way for a midnight stroll, was prepared for such an eventuality.

“Don’t panic, Brian” she told him holding up a key that he could just make out in the light from the Milky Way high above them. Assuaged her husband sat back in the garden chair and relaxed. Silence hung between them like a thread as they drunk in the starlit sky and the faint breeze that brought a heady scent from the end of the garden.

“Smell that” Marion asked.

“Mmm” he replied with contentment.

“I wonder what it is?” And with that she was gone.

“Marion, come back” pleaded Brain. He had to stop her, and so with great care he ventured out into the garden. There was nothing to fear for Marion’s careful gardening had ensured seclusion, and safe in the knowledge that nobody could catch a glimpse of his birthday suit Brian tripped along the garden path after the fading pale blob that was his wife’s bare behind. Like a moth to a night flower he homed onto her bottom that protruded upwards from a flowerbed.

“Beautiful” she said, meaning the flower

“Yes indeed” agreed Brian, meaning his wife’s buttocks.

“Why Brian” said Marion, turning to look at him, “I do believe there is something growing in your shrubbery.” He quickly turned sideways but this merely served to emphasise the object of his wife’s attention. She reached out and stroked him gently.

“Have you ever thought of making love in the wild” she whispered in his ear.

“No” he said abruptly, but his heart was beating strong and his mind was no longer in control as Marion continued to stroke his mutinous penis.

“I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,” she whispered into his ear, her breath hot in that midsummer night, “Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,

quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine, with sweet musk-roses and with eglantine.”

“Are you talking about the wood?”

Brian had spent many hours in the nearby wood with is infant daughter. He could not think of anywhere that matched Shakespeare’s description of a fairy queen’s bed.

“Come on Brian” murmured his wife, “let’s live a little”

“This is madness, Marion” he protested, “what if someone sees us”

But all his protests were in vein as his erection grew in his wife’s hand. With a quick tug they were on their way out of the back gate and down the lane; hand in penis following their own Midsummer night’s dream.

A few score miles away, for exactly the same reasons as her father, Isla was also having trouble sleeping, and she decided on a similar remedy. She turned to Henri who lay flat on his back, fast asleep, but that was not an insurmountable problem and so, at exactly the same time as her mother reached out and grabbed her father’s penis, her daughter began to stroke life into Henri’s. Like her mother Isla was pleased with the success of her labours as Henri first stood to attention and then marched quickly out of the land of his midsummer night’s dreams. Fully aroused he rolled over right on top of Isla, fully prepared to thrust his swollen ardour into her, before a firm hand on the chest brought him up short.

“What” he exclaimed

“No you can’t” Isla told him firmly.

“Why not?”

“At ten o’clock tomorrow morning I am going to parade around the shopping mall stark naked”

They, well Susie, had decided on this time so the pictures would make the midday news bulletins.

“I know. Why is that a problem? They won’t be able to see you had sex the night before”

“They might”

“What”

“What goes up must come down” replied Isla in the manner of a school teacher talking to a backward child.

“Oh, I didn’t realise”

“No, you never end up with the sticky pants, do you?”

That wasn’t exactly true, but Henri knew when to keep his mouth shut.

“So why did you bother to wake me”

“I couldn’t sleep”

“Oh great” he replied in frustration.

Isla smiled seductively. “But……..Since you are awake you can make yourself useful”

“If you think I’m going to make a cup of tea!”

“That’s not what I had in mind at all” she replied pushing his head down under the thin sheet covering her body, “you don’t have to make a deposit to get my interest”

Henri sighed and bent his back as a slave to the night; for after all she might reciprocate later.

As Henri began to alternately kiss Isla’s small breasts, her equally naked mother was pulling her father down onto her in a shady hollow beneath a rustling oak that Marion had earmarked, more in hope than expectation, a few weeks ago. Brian was no longer hesitant and completely lost in the moment entered his wife without waiting for an invitation. Caught by surprise Marion gave out a startled gasp which her husband interpreted as an exclamation of ecstasy to which he responded with deep rhythmic thrusts.

In the privacy of her bedroom Isla was also in rapture as Henri’s experienced tongue explored her erogenous zones. She let a small moan of elation as he probed her engorged clitoris. Far to north Marion also let out a moan. This was not turning out as she had expected at all, the bracken beneath her irritated her skin and she was certain some blood sucking insect was crawling all over her back about to bite. And so, at exactly the same moment as her daughter arched her back in the pleasure of orgasm Marion arched hers in an attempt to dislodge the thrusting Brian. All this did was to trigger a massive orgasm in her husband who, when he had deposited every last drop of, what to Marion seemed, an enormous amount of semen, flopped forward and lay motionless on top of her, lost in his afterglow.

Henri was similarly disappointed, as, just like her father Isla had immediately fallen asleep post coitus. He lay there idly playing with himself and thinking about Susie’s ravishing naked body a mere nine inches away. Unfortunately that space was filled with a solid layer of breeze blocks, so Henri had to make do with the memory from the meeting and the anticipation of the day to come.

The wood which had seemed so quiet when they had entered it full of anticipation was now as noisy as a rush hour rail station. Marion was aware of every rustle of animals as they stole through the bushes, the hoot of the owl in the trees where the leaves rattled and wheezed in the breeze like an old man with a fever. Her back was itching worse than chickenpox and she was desperate to go home, but she was unable to move, pinned underneath the prone body of her husband. There was nothing for it, it had to be done. She leaned her head forward and whispered three little words that were guaranteed to get his attention.

“Darling, it’s getting light”

These cut through his post orgasmic slumber like a red hot poker through a snow bank; and without further ado, he was pulling Marion up to her feet and dragging her back towards the lane. She just managed to stop him before they reached the open ground that led to the style.

“Wait” she hissed, “we have to check no one is looking out” This stopped him soon enough. There were no lights to be seen at any of the windows, but the curtains and all the windows of the houses of Belvoir Avenue were wide open, desperately searching for a cooling breeze.

“We’ll just have to chance it” said Brian and without further ado he sprinted for the style, where he without warning he stopped dead causing Marion to career into the back of him, The slap of naked flesh on naked flesh resounded through the still night like a rifle shot. As soldiers caught in an ambush the bare couple threw themselves to the ground. Brian uttered a grunt as the solid earth forced the air from his lungs, Marion, however, landed in something rather more soft and squigy something that had an unpleasant and sadly familiar smell. “Ur” she exclaimed getting to her feet, not caring if anyone was there to see or not. “Just when I thought things couldn’t get any worse” she muttered and grabbing two handfuls of grass she miserably wiped off the cow dung that clung to her breasts as best she could. “What’s that smell” said Brain at her side, “is that you?”

“Let’s just get home” Marion pleaded. Brian tip toed to the style and peeked over. The lane was bible black, nothing stirred in the blind shadows. “Let’s go” Brian hissed urgently and without waiting for his wife’s reply he hopped over the style, his low swinging testicles avoiding a painful brush with the crumbling wood by the width of a pubic hair. He didn’t need to turn to check Marion was following as he could plainly smell the remnants the manure covering her modesty.

Silently, they stole along the crow black lane towards the street with no name, where the light from Belvoir Avenue shone as bright for them as any midday sun. Here they stopped, ears pricked, as alert as a mouse in an open field. As she stood silently behind her husband Marion grimly became aware of a warm sticky stream dribbling down the inside of her bare thigh. This night was going from bad to worse she thought, as she wiped Brian’s semen from her leg. She sniffed it experimentally just to confirm her suspicions, but she knew exactly what it was, for as her daughter had told Henri less than an hour before, what goes up must come down. She wiped her hand on Brain’s bare back glowing pale orange in front of her.

“Ugh, what’s that?” he complained as he felt the slimy fluid.

“Yours” replied Marion, who was long past caring if anyone was in the road. Without so much as glance she strode brazenly across the road and into the lane that led to their garden gate. Brian scurried after her cursing silently to himself.

Safely inside the house Marion inspected the damage in the hall mirror. The whole of her front was streaked with cow dung, her hair looked like the bracken she had been lying on, and Brain’s semen had reached the knee of her left leg and the ankle of her right. All Brain could worry about was whether they had been seen.

“I don’t think so” she told him in a voice that clearly indicated that at that moment she wouldn’t have cared if the Mayor and the whole of the town council had been taking photographs. Muttering in disgust she headed straight to shower, leaving Brain to do as he willed.

Half an hour later Marion was much refreshed and headed off to find her husband who, she felt most definitely, owed her an orgasm. She tracked him to the bedroom where, like their daughter he lay fast asleep. With a sigh Marion went to the front window to check the street. It was as empty as the main square of a French town at lunchtime and all the windows of the houses were as blind as moles.

“Ah well,” she muttered to herself, “at least there was nobody else around”

But she was wrong; for many nights now a lonely figure had waited in the shadows that lay deep upon the street with no name, in the increasingly forlorn hope of catching sight of the naked angel. Perhaps there was no such thing, perhaps the story had been, after all the ramblings of a seriously ill man. And then suddenly when all hope was nearly lost there she was, strolling across road in all her naked glory. Desperate to remain unseen the watcher drew back into the coal black shadows hardly daring to breathe. The seconds ticked silently by; when enough time had lapsed for the stranger to be sure the angel would not return, the silent figure left the dark corner and crept to the entrance of the back lane. The alley was empty, but the stranger pressed on, shying away from the patches of starlight, confident that the quarry had not gone far. A light suddenly snapped on in one of the houses and the hunter knew where she had gone to ground. Carefully the shadowy figure counted the houses back to the street with no name, before returning to Belvoir Avenue to find the house she lived in. There it was, as pretty as a picture, with flowers and a high hedge blocking the view of the windows. A winding path led to a green front door with a solid brass letterbox. It wasn’t heaven but it was the abode of an angel. Noting the address the watcher set off up the avenue and was long gone by the time Marion came out of the shower.

**Fourteen**

Brian had been living on his nerves all day. He had drunk at least five cups of coffee. The caffeine had left him agitated and unable to settle to his work. He stared at his computer screen, like an artist that had lost his muse, desperate for inspiration

“That’s the eighth time today” commented John as he left for the toilet.

The source of his worry wasn’t difficult to pin point. Firstly there was the previous night. At the time he was elated, running on adrenalin. Now in the cold light of day the magnitude of his folly gnawed at his guts like an acid. How could he have been so stupid? Running around the streets stark naked. Anyone could have been passing, coming home from the night shift, or a party. A police patrol could have come by. The list things that could have gone wrong was as endless as the Pacific and Brian could have spent all day worrying about it if he hadn’t another more pressing concern.

It was too late to hope that Isla would back out of her protest. The deed was done. A bight and breezy text message from Isla confirmed to Brian that his daughter’s bare body would soon be available to the whole world courtesy of the Internet. He was now waiting with all the fatality of a truant outside the headmaster’s office for her naked flesh to drop into John’s inbox. He had managed a snatched phone call with Marion, who didn’t seem the least worried, but given her hobby Brain could see why.

“At least she didn’t get arrested” his wife had told him.

“That’s not the point, Marion, pictures of her in the nude will be everywhere, everyone she ever meet from now will know precisely what’s under her dress ”

“You sound just like your mother.”

Brian slapped his hand on his forehead, “What the hell did you phone her for?” he demanded.

“I didn’t. Isla did”

The day was going from bad to worse. Brian was about to remonstrate further when Jan and John came back into the office.

“Got to go now” he said quickly and hung up.

Marion had been a trifle nonplussed by this, but a ring at the door stopped her pursuing that line of thought. She padded off towards the front door, just remembering to pull on a long shirt that came down to her knees before she opened it.

“Hi Marion, it’s only me” said Linda, stating the obvious, and without pausing for an invitation, stepped into the hall. “It’s so hot” she complained, I nearly went for a drive just to put the air con on”

Marion spotted an opening and went for it. “That would upset my daughter” Linda stopped, put her head on one side and gave Marion a quizzical look. This was the chance she had been hoping for. So without further preamble Marion explained Isla’s protest.

“So she was the naked angel” was Linda’s only comment.

“Couldn’t be” replied the real naked angel, “Isla was in college a the time, besides, you know there was nothing in that story”

Linda looked long and carefully at Marion and a sudden thought popped into her head.

“Marion can I ask you a personal question?”

“Of course” she replied, expecting some question on the morality of Isla’s protest.

”What have you got on under that shirt”

Caught unawares Marion answered truthfully.

“Nothing,” before qualifying herself, “well er it’s so hot I er”

“I know” continued Linda, “I’m finding this weather unbearable, and let me let you into a little secret,” she leant forward confidentially, “I’ve actually been wandering around in the buff”

Marion was speechless. This was what she was supposed to say.

“Don’t say anything” continued Linda, “I know it’s not the done thing, but … it was so hot and something just came over me.” She looked at her friend and pouted “you don’t think any less of me do you?”

“Er no, not at all” said Marion who was thinking that Linda had stolen her clothes, in a manner of speaking.

“Have you ever thought of trying it?” Linda whispered

“I….I”

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to.” Linda leaned forward and took Marion’s hand. It felt warm and claddy as she pleaded “Just, please don’t tell anybody”

Marion, the real naked angel, pulled herself together and told her friend haltingly that she’d screw her courage to the sticking post and give it a go. Linda beamed in the knowledge that her secret would be safe. Marion smiled at her friend’s naivety. Her secret would be safe until Brian came home.

Marion was about to remove the shirt she had been wearing for all of ten minutes when Linda took charge.

“I’ve set up a secluded sunbathing area in the garden, why don’t you come over?”

Marion, paused, once again wrong footed by her friend. “Well, right, I’ll just get my phone in case there’s more developments on the Isla front.”

And so wearing just a long shirt and a pair of sandals Marion followed her friend out of the front door. Amazingly she felt exposed in her knickerless state. ‘Pull yourself together Marion’ she thought ‘the last time you went for a walk outside you were stark naked’

“Cold drink?” enquired Linda as she led the way into her voluminous kitchen.

“Yes please”

“Lemonade?”

“Perfect” replied Marion as she took the proffered glass.

Linda held hers and proffered a toast. “To us”

Marion responded. “To us”

Linda put her glass down and grabbed the hem of her short summer dress.

“Ready?”

Marion laid her glass on the cool, grey, marble work surface of Linda’s kitchen, crossed her arms and took a firm grip on her shirt.

“One, two, three go” shouted Linda. And then they both stood there staring at each other’s bare body for the first time. Marion’s eyes swept over her younger friend’s small breasts with the puffiest nipples she had ever seen, the stretch marks left by her two children on an otherwise perfectly flat stomach, her wide hips and an oddly rectangular patch of well trimmed pubic hair. She suddenly remembered her manners and whipped her eyes back up to meet Linda’s. She needn’t have worried for while Marion had been inspecting her friend’s birthday suit, Linda had been giving Marion the once over, and it was with perfect timing they both brought their gaze back to eye level. In unison both women broke into wide grins which dissolved into a fit of giggles.

“Let’s go outside” Linda said picking up her glass and leading the way into the bright mid morning light.

Fifiteen

“Tally ho!”

Like a hunter who had just caught sight of a fox John announced the arrival of Isla’s bare body to a box marked public property.

“Whoo hoo, four naked fillies in a shopping mall. Would you look at that!”

He turned his screen around to show Brian. He had hoped that maybe, just maybe, but no. There she was in all her glory proudly holding a placard aloft. ‘Air con con’ was all the combined talent of the University of Canterbury was able to come up with, but it didn’t matter as nobody was looking at Isla’s slogan.

Brian had steeled himself for this moment, and instead of trying to bluff it out, went uncharacteristically onto the attack.

“I’ve seen it before” he told the enthusiastic John and the disapproving Jan. John, who was in full flow, screeched to halt.

“What?”

“She’s my daughter”

John stared closely at the screen. Jan, who up until now had been conveying silent messages of utter disgust at John’s lasciviousness, came to look too.

“My God,” said John, “it is Isla”

Jan was all sympathy, “Oh, I am so sorry Brian, how embarrassing”

Brian shrugged, “We tried to talk her out of it but she is completely committed to the cause”

“The last thing we need is a campaign against air conditioning” complained John, “it’s boiling in here”

“Well perhaps you should follow Brain’s daughter’s example” Jan told him.

“I will if you will”

Brian scrutinised John’s face very carefully. John had been trying to get inside Jan’s pants for months and Brian had a feeling he wasn’t getting anywhere near. The way he held Jan’s eyes for just a trifle longer than he would had he been familiar with his co workers’ body confirmed Brian’s suspicions.

Jan uttered the very words that were passing through Brain’s mind.

“In your dreams, mate”

Further discussion was curtailed by Marion’s phone call. Isla was on the national news at one. Not quite sure he was doing the right thing given John’s presence in the room Brian found the station’s webstream and the three of them gathered around the computer to watch his daughter and her friends parade naked through the Rockendon shopping mall.

It was a slow news day and the steaming weather was the top story. As the naked protest was related Brian only had to wait a few minutes before pictures of Isla, accompanied by a very skinny dark haired girl, and a large rotund blonde filled the screen. The camera quickly left them and zoomed in on the final member of the group.

“Will you look at that” John muttered under his breath. Even Jan gasped at the sight of Susie. Brian was ecstatic as he watched the gorgeous young woman lecturing a slavering reporter on the evils of air conditioning. He knew instantly that Isla was going to be sidelined completely. Susie was rattling off statistics faster than a demented politician defending the latest crime figures. No one was listening, there was only one figure of interest and that was the unwrapped body of Susan Blackwell. Tomorrow’s headlines had just written themselves, PHEW, WHAT A SCORCHER

“Oh my” said Linda. She and Marion were sitting naked in her kitchen watching the lunchtime news of television. “I wish I had her body” But Marion was not thinking about Susie’s perfection. Her mind was working in tandem with Brian’s, Isla was going to escape with much less exposure than she had feared. Meanwhile Linda continued to prattle on.

“She has a point, Marion, this heat so much more bearable without clothes. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could all walk around in the nude? Have you ever thought what it would be like to walk down the street naked? You should try it sometime”

Marion suddenly caught up with what her friend was saying.

“What do you mean Linda?” she asked carefully.

Linda looked at her with a hint of embarrassment.

“Can I tell you a secret?”

Marion nodded her head slowly, dreading what was coming next. “Well I’ve, sort of well.” The room felt utterly silent despite the constant commentary from the television, “I don’t want you to think any the less of me.”

“I won’t Linda” Marion told her quietly.

“Well I’ve taken to going for midnight walks, au natural, so to speak” she blurted, looking desperately to Marion for absolution. Mistaking her friend’s look of sheer terror for surprise, Linda began to apologise, “I’m so sorry. I’ve shocked you”

“Er no well, I have to admit this is all a bit sudden”

Linda breathed easily, “So my secret’s safe with you”

“Oh yes, after all, we’re both in the same club, if you see what I mean” said Marion running her eyes down Linda’s naked body to emphasise her point.

“You could say the same nudist club” replied Linda laughing heartily at her own joke.

Rule one, thought Marion, is to never ask a question you don’t know the answer to. “Were you the naked angel, Linda?”

“Oh no, but the story was my inspiration, it set me thinking, what would it be like to walk down the lane in the buff?”

“And what is it like?” asked Marion who was better placed to know.

“Absolutely wonderful, you should try it sometime, in fact I was out there last night”

Marion nearly fell off her chair. “Oh dear I am shocking you aren’t I?” said Linda mistaking her confidant’s utter panic for surprise. “It was brilliant; I went all the way to the edge of the wood.” Marion’s eyes were wide, she held her breath, as her friend continued blithely, “I was going in but I was put off by the animal noises”

Marion was desperately thinking how she should respond to this. She was supposed to be a respectable housewife, who, after being led astray by her friend, was now sitting stark naked in a strange kitchen. Linda, whom she had previously considered to be an upstanding member of the community, was now admitting she walked nude through the neighbourhood. Should she be expressing outrage, or disgust, or perhaps admiration for Linda’s daring do? In the event all that emerged from Marion’s lips was a small squeak. With all the relief of a sinner finally unburdening herself, Linda continued blithely on.

“I tell you I think there must be some wild boar living in there, what with the grunts and the squealing and panting. It made me think twice I can tell you.”

”Oh yes, I can imagine” agreed Marion, “so you came straight back?”

“Absolutely, I didn’t want to meet a wild animal, what if it had charged me? How would I explain that, being out and about in the all together”

“Quite” agreed Marion, and continued quickly “Well, I think I have to get back now as I’ve some work to be getting on with.” She picked up her shirt and pulled it over her head, before breezily telling Linda, not to bother to get dressed as she could see herself out.

“You won’t tell anyone will you?” Linda pleaded again.

“Oh no, my lips are sealed” replied Marion who had absolutely no intention of telling Brian his mating calls had been heard by their equally naked neighbour who had mistaken them both for a pair of pigs.

“Stay naked” called Linda hopefully as Marion left.

“I’ll think about it” she replied.

**Sixteen**

As soon as she closed her own front door behind her Marion peeled off her shirt and went for a sit down. After Linda’s revelations she felt she needed one. Once the shock of her close call had worn off Marion began to realise that Linda’s admission to night time nude jaunts was not the problem she had thought it was going to be. She could still continue her rambling and if she did bump into her friend in then she could claim that Linda had been her inspiration. Cheered by this thought Marion smiled and was about to start some work when the doorbell rang. Once more donning her emergency long shirt Marion opened the front door.

Every year the European cycle season stages a classic race called the Paris–Roubaix. It is known as The Hell of the North as it pitches the riders from smooth metalled surfaces onto rough cobbled tracks that jar both body and machine. Marion’s day seemed to be following just such a course, for standing on her front porch was the last person Marion wanted to see, ever.

“Good afternoon, Mrs Shaw”

She was a good head smaller than Marion, and casually dressed in a brief summer dress. She held out a pass with her photograph and the word PRESS in large red letters. Marion didn’t need to read the name, she recognised Julie Lewis by her curls. “My name is Julie Lewis; I’m a reporter for the Nelson Mercury”

Marion said nothing, she just stared, waiting for, and dreading the next line. When it came it was a pleasant surprise, “I wonder if you had any comment on your daughter’s protest in the mall down in Christchurch this morning”

“Well naturally I have to give her my support and I am very proud of her conviction and dedication for such an important cause. I’m sure we all share her concern for the environment, and if Isla’s actions have some effect then it will have all been worthwhile”

“So you are happy that pictures of your daughter’s naked body are in the public domain?”

“Well I do wish she had chosen a different way of getting her point across.”

“Did she inform you she would be making a nude protest?”

”Oh yes we knew.”

”What does her father think, is Mr Shaw at home?”

“No he is at work, but he also gives Isla his support”

“I have spoken to your husband before, Mrs Shaw, on the reports of the naked angel. Was that your daughter too?”

“Absolutely not” replied the true angel, “Isla was away at university at the time. Has that cook woken up yet?”

Marion winced, she asked that too quickly. Fortunately the reporter didn’t pick up on it.

“Yes, but he remembers nothing of the evening”

Relief flooded Marion’s body like summer returning to a frozen wasteland.

“Or so he says” Julie Lewis paused, and smiled before continuing in a more conciliatory manner. “Look, Mrs Shaw, I think we can help each other here”

Oh, how” she snapped. It was Julie’s turn to wince. Marion gave her a small smile; she was still on tenterhooks and had not meant to be so sharp.

“Well, you are going to have journalists from the national papers contacting you. I could head them off for you. If they knew we had an exclusive, they will use the Mercury as a feed.”

“I see” said Marion thoughtfully.

Encouraged by the slight thaw she continued “what I would like is an inside story of your daughter’s protest, a local angle for the paper”

“Well I don’t know, that would be up to Isla”

“Would you put it to her, after all she is doing this for the publicity, and all I’m offering is more.”

Marion thought about this, and although she viewed Julie Lewis as an enemy hunting her down, it’s usually a good ploy to keep the enemy where you can see them.

“Come in” she said, “let me contact my daughter”

Marion led Julie through the darkened hall into the kitchen. She gestured to a high chair next to the breakfast bar. Mindful of the fact she was not wearing any underwear, Marion remained standing as she enquired if her guest would like a drink.

“Oh, yes please, its baking today, your daughter picked the right time for her protest, I almost feel like joining her” She laughed nervously as Marion shot her a piercing look. There would be nothing she would like better than to see her persecutor laid bare

Isla was full of herself and quite prepared to talk to the journalist. Mainly because this was actually her first interview, all the other journalists and TV crews had swarmed like bees around the honey pot that was Susie. Marion listened in as Julie talked to her daughter.

“I’d like to publish a form of a diary”

“No just yours, you are the local girl”

“No, photographs will be head and shoulders only, but we might stretch our readers’ sensitivities to a bare bum or two.”

“If I could join you on a protest; that would be great”

She laughed nervously. “No, I don’t think I’m up to that”

“Committee meeting, well I suppose so, if they are closed, and everyone else is”

Good girl thought Marion, get her kit off.

“Tomorrow, Cathedral Square, at ten, I’ll be there”

Later as they sat on their patio in twilight’s last hot and sweaty gleaming , Brain and Marion discussed the day. They agreed it had gone better than it could have. Brian had received much sympathy at work, but to enable them to empathise with Brian’s despair everyone had to have a good look at Isla’s bare body. Julie Lewis had been good to her word; no other journalists had bothered them. After much thought, Marion had given Brian a heavily abridged account of Linda’s nudity. She kept it to the sunbathing only. Given the surprise on his face Marion could only imagine the effect the news of her wandering the neighbourhood would have on him. If Brian had found out Linda was out and about at the same time as they were last night Marion would have been called upon to make her second au natural emergency call.

“You mustn’t tell anyone about Linda” she admonished him earnestly as she eyed his big grin, “I promised her I wouldn’t tell you.” Marion paused for effect “After all, how would you like it if I told her about you?”

It took five minutes and a glass of water to cure Brian’s coughing fit.

**Seventeen**

Isla’s protests were short lived. Soon every security guard in the country had her photograph in his pocket along with strict instructions not to let her in. But that couldn’t stop the campaign against air conditioning; it spread like a wildfire across a parched prairie, as others took up the cause and ran naked with it. The shops and malls responded quickly by robustly caving into the protesters. It wasn’t much of a contest as it was in the complexes owners’ interests to turn off their expensive air conditioning. This allowed them to save large amounts of money whilst giving the outward appearance of caring for the environment. They almost fell over each other in the rush to turn off the fans. The only cloud in this clear blue sky was the faint possibility that some people out there would take the slogan; I’d rather have nothing on than have air con on, literally and turn up in the nude. They crossed their fingers, knocked on wood and hoped for rain.

Flushed with success the University of Canterbury Greensoc had one last, all naked, picnic in the summer countryside before scattering for the long summer break. Cat and Julie went hiking while Susie continued to promote the cause. She was everything that the media could have asked for, articulate, intelligent, persuasive and happy to take her clothes off. The camera loved her, clothed and unclothed. She steamed off into the limelight leaving Isla drifting miserably in the quiet backwaters.

“I think I’ll go back and see my folks” she announced to Henri as they sat quietly in the corner of a crowded beer garden. She paused and hesitated before continuing. “You wouldn’t like to come with me would you?”

To Isla’s surprise, and Henri’s utter astonishment he agreed.

“Isla’s coming home tomorrow” Marion announced to her husband, “and she’s bringing her boyfriend” That got Brian’s attention. They had both speculated about their daughter’s love life for some time; and, despite her robust denials, had long suspected Henri’s existence. “Get the loft room ready, Marion” was Brian’s reply. He didn’t care what they got up to at University, but it wasn’t happening under his roof.

“Shall I prime the tank trap dear?” enquired Marion

“Don’t be facetious” Brian continued at his most pompous, “and you can keep your clothes on for the duration of their stay”

“Aye, aye, capn” replied his naked wife giving him a mock salute. Brian watched her bare buttocks quiver as she strode out of the room to prepare the nest for the return of their wandering chick.

Marion sighed to herself as she cleaned the old attic bedroom. This time tomorrow she would be locked up in her prison clothes. She knew deep down that Brian was right, Isla’s boyfriend was an unknown quantity and it was probably for the best that his first memory of his future mother-in-law wasn’t of her naked. She interrupted her train of thought. What was she thinking of, she hadn’t even met the boy, and here she was marrying Isla off.

Brian was thinking quite the opposite, this boy was just a passing fancy, Isla would soon come to her senses and drop him for a nice quiet, sensible, medical student. He rather wished that Isla wasn’t bringing him at all. The only good thing he could think about Henri’s visit would be it would stop Marion pestering him to take his clothes off. The thought of nudity set his mind going again, worrying away, and gnawing away at the thought of his daughter’s protests and, worse still, that one mad night in the wood. Again and again he went over it in his mind, could they have been seen? It was a question he would never know the answer to, but that didn’t stop him tormenting himself.

Conversely Marion was worrying about having to wear clothes. She was smoothing the sheets on the bed as she pondered her predicament. Isla and the boyfriend wouldn’t be there all the time, so she could go nude when they were out, just keep something handy if they came back unexpectedly; and she could rely on Isla to call ahead just to give the time to dress. It would be like old times she thought warmly as she stared down at the garden from the dormer in the roof. All those months, she had sat naked in the house, listening for Brian’s return and scurrying to get dressed at the first throaty sound of the car’s engine in the drive. Unconsciously she scanned the shrubbery mapping out the hidden path to the gate. She suddenly realised what she had been doing and smiled, perhaps she could take a walk. ‘Oh yes’ she thought brightening up, her pulse quickening at the thought of the danger involved. She might even arrange to meet Linda in the lane. She warmed at the thrill of it, roaming naked, with the unsettling danger of being caught. Cheered tremendously by these thoughts she returned to the lounge where Brian was watching television.

“You’re still dressed” she scolded, “This will be our last chance for a few days to spend time together naked”

“It’s too cold” he complained

“Nonsense it’s the middle of summer, it’s far too hot for clothes. I fancy I don’t know how I will get through tomorrow…….”

Brian recognised a threat when he heard one; although he was beginning to feel there was not as much substance behind them as he once feared. As far as he was aware the only people who had seen Marion naked were Brian himself, their daughter and their neighbour Linda. The stricken man suddenly came to mind. This burst Brain’s pretty party balloon. Anyone who was prepared to walk the streets stark naked and not pass by on the other side when they meet a helpless soul would have no qualms about baring all in front of their daughter’s boyfriend. Suddenly sober, Brian quickly stood up and stripped.

Marion smiled as she contemplated the mound of bare flesh on the settee that was the spoils of her victory.

“I do think it’s a little mean putting Henri away in the attic.”

“I know I can’t control what they do in university Marion, but while they are under my roof there will be no shenanigans”

“You won’t be here al the time”

Marion paused while Brian ruminated on this,

“People do have sex in the day you know”

Brian was at his most haughty “I do hope Isla and her boyfriend will not abuse our hospitality”

“They could do it outside”

Brian shot a look at Marion, but she was staring out of the window, idly playing with he left nipple. He watched as she gave it a little squeeze. “There’s a place in the wood” she continued as she rolled her hand over her breast. Brian felt an unwanted stirring between his legs

“Do you remember the place” Marion’s voice was low and husky now. He certainly did, and so did his penis. “There’s nothing to stop them going there, after all it is so arousing, sex al fresco, don’t you think”

Brian didn’t have to think, his libido was doing all that for him. In desperation he crossed his legs and tried to stare at the picture of a stormy seashore hanging above the stone mantelpiece. It was no use, as if by magnetism his eyes were drawn towards his wife’s naked body and her left hand which was slowly, idly, and apparently unconsciously caressing her right breast. Suddenly, like a seal coming up for air, his perfidious penis burst free and poked its head out from between his legs,. Marion let go of her nipple and smiled, “There you are, I knew you remembered” Brain wasn’t sure she was talking to him.

**Eighteen**

A warm, golden summer’s afternoon. Belvoir Avenue shimmered in the hot air that rose in great swirling currents from the tarmac made soft by the unendurable heat. Henri took in the street, wide and tree lined and well kept, the epitome of middle class suburbia, from the well trimmed hedges to the blooming rose bushes which filled the air with a heady scent. Isla saw different things, this was her home, and she saw the changes. New windows in the Smythes, the council had cut down the old tree opposite the mad woman’s house, and whoever had moved into to her friend Charlotte’s old home had put up stone gates topped with lions that screamed of bad taste.

“Ouch” complained Isla as a ball hit here ankle. She turned to face two small boys

“Sorry” said the younger of the pair.

“I’ve seen you tits” the elder told her, “my dad’s got a picture of you with no clothes on”

‘I bet your mother doesn’t know that’ thought Isla.

“And did you like what you saw Arty?” she asked him. Arty screwed hid face into a scowl.

“Leave Isla alone” pleaded the other boy. Arty kicked him in the shin.

“Shut up Timmy, we shouldn’t even be talking to her; my mum says you’re a slut”

Henri, who had played Lancelot to Isla’s Guinevere with burly security guards and testosterone charged teenagers, was not prepared to let this go any further. Arty had been indulged by his parents and had assumed in his usual arrogance that nobody would dare touch him. He was suddenly surprised to find his feet were no longer on the ground. Slowly Henri pulled him up to his eye level. He then explained very carefully that he was Isla’s boyfriend and should he bother her again he would tell his mother exactly what Arty had said to her. And then he told the terrified boy he’d tell her that her son had a collection of photographs of naked women on their computer. Small bullies always recognise large bullies, and Arty realised he was in the presence of a master. He gave a small gulp followed by a gasp as Henri released him and let Isaac Newton finish the job. Picking himself off the hot soft tarmac he ran home, barely managing to hide his tears.

Despite the loss of his leader the small boy held his ground “My Mum says you’re a hero!” he told Isla

“Why thank you Timmy.” She smiled graciously “How have you been? Come and meet Henri, he won’t bite”

Henri bent down and solemnly shook the small boy’s hand “Pleased to meet you Tim, where do you live”

“We live next door to Isla and my Mum thinks she’s great”

“She supports the cause too, has she been writing to the council?”

“Dunno about that, but she walks around with no clothes on”

“What!”

Timmy looked desperately at Isla, “Really. I’ve seen her” he said trying to convince her, “when she thinks nobody is looking she walks around the house and round the garden, and” he dropped his voice to a whisper “even down the lane”

Henri was astonished, this looked so much like an ordinary street, the sort of place you found everywhere with normal people doing all the same normal boring things; shopping, visiting the cinema, watching the same detective stories. Cereal for breakfast, salad for lunch, the occasional curry for a taste of the exotic. Not the place where women ran around naked in public.

Isla, who knew Linda well, was wondering if her mother had got to her.

“You won’t tell anybody, will you?” pleaded Timmy. Isla promised him his secret was safe with her. “Thanks” he called as he ran up the path, the front door closed with a bang. Henri stared at the house with its flowered garden and well trimmed hedges and a line form a half forgotten song came drifted into his head.

‘There’s an ol’ piano, and they play it hot. Behind the green door. Wish they'd let me in. So I could find out what's behind the green door’

**Nineteen**

Henri knew that first impressions are important, and he was very aware that he wasn’t making one. They had taken the coastal route up to Nelson, stopping off at some friends overnight. By the time they got there they were both covered with the dust and the sweat of their journey. Isla’s parents were prepared to forgive this of their daughter but were not so understanding of the dishevelled boyfriend who stood for the first time in front of them. Henri was surprised to find he actually cared what they thought.

“Please call me Marion” Henri shook her hand, a middle aged suburban hausfrau right down to her pink toenails poking out of her unfashionable sandals. She wore a large summer dress which bore the pattern of inter crossing fern fronds.

Isla’s father shook his hand, a serious dark haired man with a pleasant face that wore a fixed smile that didn’t match his eyes. “Good to meet you at last, exactly how long have you two been going out together?”

“Dad, please” interjected Isla

‘Call me Mr Shaw’ thought Henri glumly.

Isla’s mother broke in to stop her overprotective father with the suggestion that everyone could do with a long cool drink. As they walked out into the garden with its potted blood red geraniums, Henri stared carefully at the hedge separating this garden from the one next door. He desperately searched for a chink through which he might glimpse that rarest of flowers, a naked neighbour. But Marion’s shrubbery shield was thorough and there was no chink in her armour. She waited until they were all comfortable before breaching the topic that had been hanging in the sultry air since Isla and Henri had arrived.

“Tell me about your protest”

Isla took a deep breath and began.

“Well, I have to say it was the most nerve racking and exciting thing I have ever done at the same time. We went down to the mall and walked straight to the middle and … I was so nervous I can tell you, but there was no going back. Susie gave the signal and we whipped off our dresses. You could have heard a pin drop, then some woman gasped, so we started our chant. ‘Air con con, air con non, no clothes on before air con on’

Isla caught a glimpse of her mother’s face “It’s cheesy I know, but we couldn’t think of anything else. Anyway it was so good; being naked in the shopping mall you should try it some time”

Henri thought that this was an odd thing for Isla to say to her parents. He looked at them both, her mother serene and her father ready to gnaw his own head off.

“And then the security guards came, and Cat just stood in front of them hands on hips with her breasts jutting out and just dared them, ‘touch me and that’s indecent assault’ They backed off and decided it was more important to control the crowd. Most were really supportive, there was the odd pervert, and of course some young guys who had never seen a naked woman in the flesh before. You could tell by the way their tongue was hanging out.”

Henri also remembered the day well; there was utter chaos as the four young women strolled, with no shame, through the shopping mall. Some people tired not to notice, most sneaked glances while a few honest souls openly stared. Then there young men with their phones, snapping away sending them to their mates. “Come on darling, spread ‘em for me” That was unpleasant but they cheered up the security guards who could vent their pent up frustration by forcibly ejecting them. Susie was the magnet, but she didn’t care because the cause meant more to her than her exposed body. After all it was exposure they craved, as they strolled through the cool marble halls, breasts bouncing, firm buttocks quivering with each footstep. The bonanza they were waiting for, a TV crew, never came, the police beat them to it. Cat and Susie came to a sudden halt before two burly policemen, accompanied by two petite policewomen. By the look on their faces the policewomen would have no qualms with physically arresting some naked female students.

The policeman asked them why they were naked. He winced as Susie stood before him, hands on hips, legs apart and gave him the green broadside.

“If you don’t get dressed now” he told them all firmly, “you will be arrested”

They had discussed this and were all agreed the cause would serve little if they were taken into custody. So all four girls capitulated politely, took their dresses from the accompanying boys and allowed themselves to be escorted form the mall to the impatiently waiting press pack outside.

After half an hour of interviews they caught a bus to the other side of the city, and following a leisurely lunch in the park, went out and did it all over again.

“So you never got in trouble with the police” commented Brian offering grateful thanks to whatever gods may be.

“Henri nearly did” giggled Isla

“I thought it was a girls only protest?” asked her mother with a little concern.

“It was, but in the Freeglade Mall there was this pervy guy, he kept calling to me. ‘Jus' rub your tits darling, go on spread them' and ugh, some really disgusting stuff, so Henri grabbed his camera off him and smashed it into his face”

“Well done” said Brian, turning to Henri for the first time since he greeted him at the door, “did you do any damage”

“Not really, those cameras are quite robust” Henri replied with some regret.

“I wasn’t referring to the camera” Brian replied through gritted teeth

“Oh I see,” Henri grinned, “just a broken nose and a split lip that needed six stitches”

Brian smiled, “Care for another beer Henri”

“Oh yes please Mr Shaw”

“Call me Brian,”

**Twenty**

The scorching afternoon dissolved into a warm evening as Isla related her stories of notoriety. Finally Marion interrupted “I think it is time to start cooking dinner, you weren’t planning on going out?”

“Oh no” replied Isla who was a little concerned about visiting her old haunts now everyone she had ever known had seen her naked. She thought she would just die if she met her old headmistress in the street.

“It’ll be about half an hour, I’m sure you need to freshen up.”

This was Marion’s way of telling them both they smelt. Isla took the hint. Henri who had been smelling his stale sweat for a some time now was grateful of the opportunity for a shower.

“Right ho” replied Henri, “I’m afraid I haven’t brought anything smart.”

“Oh, no need to dress, we’re quite casual here.” Before Isla could comment her mother turned to her “Henri’s in the attic room”

“Dad!” complained Isla turning towards her father. She knew very well who to blame.

“I’m sorry about this” Isla told Henri as she led him up the stairs to the attic.

“Oh that’s alright, it’s their house. My parents were the same when my sister’s boyfriend came to stay.”

“Yes, but I’ll never be able to sneak up here without them hearing” complained Isla.

Henry grabbed her by the waist and kissed her. “We don’t have to restrict ourselves to night time manoeuvres” he whispered into her ear.

“Or indoors either” she told him, her breath felt hot his neck, “I know a spot in the wood that’s just perfect”

“Won’t that be hard on your back?” Henri suggested.

“Yes, but not on yours” She gave him a playful slap on the backside as crossed the room to the window. He looked dawn on the garden. It was like a medieval maze with bushes all over the place. Next door a woman in shorts and a skimpy pink top was watering some plants with a hose. She was tall and thin, wide at the hips, with long blonde hair. ‘The naked woman behind the green door’ thought Henri ‘maybe tomorrow when the sun is out..’ he’d keep an eye open.

“Who’d have thought it?” Isla muttered looking over his shoulder, “Linda wandering around naked?”

“You set the trend babe” he told her

“And I’m the best” she said as she removed her top.

“What are you doing, we’re expected downstairs in ten minutes” exclaimed Henri

“I’m taking a shower” replied Isla

“What if your parents come in?”

She laughed, they won’t it’s you room. They’ll hear the shower and think it’s you” she replied as she removed the rest of her clothes.

“Please Isla, I’ve only just got your dad onside”

She put her hand on her bare hip, and wiggled her waist, “Well if you don’t want to have a shower with me…”

“Oh come on babe, you know there is nothing I would like better, but this is not the place nor the time.”

She smiled, picked up her clothes and walked naked from the room, “I’ll just have to shower downstairs then.”

Henri cleaned himself up as quickly as he could, chose the cleanest clothes he could find and tiptoed downstairs. He was relieved to hear Isla singing in the shower as this enabled him to get downstairs without being dragged into her bedroom.

Isla had showered and was drying her hair when she remembered her mother’s comment.

“Oh, no need to dress, we’re quite casual here.”

As quickly as she could she dashed upstairs to warn Henri of what her mother meant went she had said dress was casual. But Henri had already gone. Isla sprinted down the stairs in the vein hope of catching him before he went into the kitchen and got the shock of his life.

Too late. Isla burst into the kitchen and there was Henri drinking beer with her father as her mother plated up the starter of prawns and smoked salmon. What ever Isla had been about to say died on her lips. Henri, Brain and Marion stood frozen in time and speechless. They were also, more to the point, fully dressed.

“Ah” said Isla backing towards the door, “Sorry, er slight misunderstanding of the word casual”

“There’s no air conditioning here” Marion told her. “Well there’s no point scurrying off now, after all, the entire world’s seen you naked. Sit down and eat your meal”

To Henri’s utter amazement Isla did just that. Having dinner with your girlfriend’s parents is always a difficult experience but to sit at the table making polite conversation while your girlfriend sits next to you stark naked made the experience a whole lot worse. Throughout the meal Brain and Marion kept asking him questions.

“What are you reading at University?”

“What do your parents do?”

“What was it like growing up in Milton?”

“Have you any brothers and sisters?”

And Henri would drag his thoughts away from Isla’s breast with its pert pink nipple and the small brown moles either side, not quite in a line. And when he could drag his eyes away from her breasts they treacherously dropped to her alabaster thighs that were firmly crossed. He gazed speechless at the small tufts of jet black pubic hair that poked up, like young seedlings desperately seeking the sunlight.

He tried to answer the questions lucidly but he could hear himself fumbling, his answers rambling and incoherent. It would be understandable had he never seen Isla naked, but of course he had, everyone’s eyes had roamed free over her bare flesh. Nobody had explored her body quite as thoroughly as Henri, who had been over every inch, as well as investigating a few crevasses. Even so her nakedness unsettled him; and it showed.

This nervousness endeared Henri to Marion and Brian. They would have expected most men his age to have sat there with their tongues hanging out. Henri stared, but who could blame him for that. It seemed, however, he gaze was of astonishment where others would have displayed lust. Of course neither of Isla’s parents were thinking rationally either. The mere appearance of their daughter in all her glory had unsettled them. Even Marion, who had threatened to do the same on many occasions herself, was shaken by her daughter’s complete lack of shame.

She needn’t have worried on that score. Isla was certainly feeling the shame; she just tried not to let it show. How could she have been so stupid? What could have possessed her? Looking back over the last few months, it was true, she had hardly ever seen her mother in clothing, but as far as she knew only she and her father were privy to their naked lifestyle. How could she have been so blind, she should have realised her parents would never be naked in front of Henri.

But the moving finger having writ moves on and there was no going back. She had turned up for dinner in her birthday suit. Running away would merely have compounded her guilt. Isla had considered making a pretence of being cold and run upstairs to dress, but it wasn’t cold and, after all, she had one of the most famous bodies in the world now. Everyone had seen it, so why hide.

“It’s so hot” she announced, “I don’t know how you can bare it being dressed”

Her mother looked daggers at her, “perhaps you would help me serve the main course Isla” she demanded, rather than asked, as she rose from the table like a mastodon from the primeval swamp.

“What the hell do you think you’re playing at, Isla? Why are you naked?”

“I didn’t mean to come to dinner in the nude”

“It’s supposed to be a mistake?” asked her incredulous mother nearly dropping the steamed potatoes.

“I just forgot I was starkers that’s all”

“Oh what, so you spend so much time in the nuddy, you can’t remember if you’re wearing clothes or not!”

“Well just like you then” Isla replied, hackles beginning to rise.

“No not just like me, I remember to put some clothes on when we have some company”

“How was I supposed to know?”

“You seriously think I would greet your new boyfriend with just a smile?”

“Well clearly not, but how was I supposed to know?”

“What?”

“You said dress casual for dinner”

Marion waved her hands over her summer dress, “Yes, this is casual, for me”

“No it’s not” shouted Isla, “this is casual for you” waving her hands over her naked form.

Marion took her point. “Well you could have checked before you came barging in in your birthday suit”

“That’s exactly what I was trying to do, I came out of the shower and it suddenly hit me that you set casual, and by God mother when you usually say casual dress that means no dress at all”

A small cough broke into their argument. Brain stood at the doorway. “Er, we can hear you, you know”

That stopped them both, Marion looked at Isla “you better try and explain. Brain help me with his will you”

Henri was sitting bemused; he had heard the argument and witnessed the pain on Brain’s face. Isla slipped in and grabbed him by the hand and led him into the garden.

“I’m sorry about this hun” she told him.

“It’s cool” he replied, “Your family are nudists, it explains quite a lot about you”

“You don’t mind” she asked.

“No it’s fine” a cloud passed over Henri’s sunny face. “You don’t want me to join in to you?”

“Do you have a problem” An accusation rather than a question. Henri pondered for a moment

“No,” he appeared uncertain, then continued more confidently, “no I’ll be fine.” he deliberated again before asking “now?”

“No, not now I think it will take my parents a while to decide what to do”

“Oh right, you’re not planning on getting dressed are you”

Isla smiled and wiggled her hips suggestively. “I don’t know, what would you prefer”

“You know how much I admire your body” he told her with a lascivious smile. She smiled back.

“Nude it is then” she told him as he grinned, “but don’t get any ideas, there’ll be no night manoeuvres. You’ll just have to wait until morning” she told him firmly.

Several months ago Brian had enjoyed a meal due to the presence of his naked wife and also not enjoyed a meal due his bare daughter. Henri enjoyed the rest of the meal, who wouldn’t as he was sitting next to his girlfriend who was wearing a watch and a green wristband that identified her as a warrior of the environment. What preyed on his mind however was the looming presence of his girlfriend’s mother, who now she was outed as a nudist, may just join her daughter at the drop of a hat. Or in her case the drop of a summer dress.

“I’ve explained the situation to Henri and he understands” Isla told her parents.

“And what dear” began Marion as her husband looked on with all the futility of peasant charged with teaching a horse to sing, “have you told Henri”

“That we are nudists”

“Ah” replied Marion as Brian contemplated stabbing himself with his fork to test if this was a nightmare.

“Better out than in” she sighed. This was not a sentiment shared by her husband.

Henri felt he should say something “I did rather suspect, what with Isla’s penchant for strolling around naked.” The look on Brain’s face told him that his was probably not his finest contribution to the dinner table conversation. He’d already put his foot well and truly in it so Henri thought he might as well carry on. “So are you guys members of a club”

“Oh no” replied Marion “we’re not that type of nudist”

Brian winced at the sound of the N word.

“We’re just a trifle casual with our dress at home” Isla explained.

“And some of us outside as well!” put in Brian

“That’s a legitimate protest, dad” protested his daughter. But that was not what Brian was referring to.

“So what’s you position on nudity Henri” asked Marion in an attempt to steer the conversation away form her night time excursions.

“I’m easy” replied Henri, hoping this was vague enough. It was, so Isla decided to clear away any lasting confusion.

“Don’t worry, I’ve converted him, he’s fine with nudity now”

‘Please don’t say it’ Brian prayed fervently to himself.

“Well, in that case” said Marion, “maybe later in the week we can have that casual dinner, what do you say Isla”

Isla blushed all the way from her face to her pink puffy nipples

Henri just stared at Marion in her floral summer dress topped off with her best necklace. Would she be wearing just the pearls this time tomorrow he wondered, or would she be the complete nudist. His money was on the pearls.

**Twenty one**

The following morning Henri woke alone. Isla had been as good as her word and had not suddenly begun to sleepwalk. He read a book and listened to the sound of the house, the doors opening and closing, muffled conversations, the humming of hair driers. Finally the goodbyes of first Brian, and then Marion as they left for work. Henri laid down his book and waited for Isla. After a full fantasy laden quarter of an hour where Henri imaged all sorts of wild sex, he began to think that she wasn’t going to come. Perhaps she was waiting for him. Mindful that this was not his house Henri dressed in an old shirt and a pair of frankly disgusting shorts, and as quietly as he could descended the stairs to Isla’s room. It was empty. That was an exaggeration, it was actually stuffed full of cuddly toys, there were clothes everywhere, the dressing table was invisible under a pile of make up, hair starighteners, hair drier. What it lacked was the architect of this mess: Henri decided to widen his search.

He finally tracked Isla down to the kitchen where she lounged in a comfortable chair with the morning paper covering her modesty. She looked critically at her lover, “Why are you wearing those clothes”

“I didn’t know if your parents would still be here.”

“Well they’re not so you can get them off” Henri dutifully did as he was told. Isla sniffed the air. “And you haven’t had a shower”

“Well, I was only wondering if you were up, now I know, I’ll….” He wasn’t allowed to go any further.

“Oh you’re here now, what do you want for breakfast?”

“You” replied Henri with a big grin.

“You can have me later” Isla gave him a sly look, “first something to eat, you need to keep your strength up!”

He smiled as he sat down on the chair and settled back to watch the show. His eyes wandered freely over her bare flesh. The curve of her calves, the tiny tufts of hair that poked through the back of her thighs. She caught him staring and smiled as she sat opposite him, her small breasts brushing the table.

“Did you enjoy last night?” she asked licking her lips suggestively.

“Yes, I was a bit worried, but your parents seemed very nice”

“That’s not what I meant” she said firmly. “Did you enjoy looking at me, in all my glory”

“You know I love to watch your body” he replied watching her rounded buttocks as she bent over to put the dirty plates in the dishwasher, “did you enjoy it, being the only one naked?”

Isla smiled as she stood; hand on one hip, the bright light from the window sparking in her eyes. “I wouldn’t be the only one in the buff now……. if my mother got back early.”

Henri panicked, and then caught himself. It’s not often a young man could give a plausible explanation for being found naked in his host’s kitchen, with the host’s naked daughter. If Marion walked in now he could brazenly shake her hand with no more said, provided he remained seated. Should he stand there would be than his right hand outstretched.

Isla drifted around the kitchen like a dream, clearing the rest of the dishes. Then with a flourish she pulled away the white line table cloth that Henri had been using as a hide. Isla grinned mischievously, placed her finger in her mouth and started to suck on it. She looked over the edge of the table to observe the result.

“I think it’s playtime” she said with a grin.

Henri got up and grabbed hand, pulling her towards the door. Isla pulled back.

“No here” she told him pushing herself up onto the table, legs open. She shivered briefly as she lay back on the smooth polished wood.

One minute later following a series of groans and high pitched squeaks, both Henri and Isla got the message. The table wasn’t up for it. They however were, so with all their bits bouncing, and giggling manically in anticipation they raced each other up the stairs to the more receptive bed in the attic room.

Two hours later they were woken by the sound of the telephone. Isla dashed down to her bedroom. She returned in animated conversation.

“Yes of course I’ll sponsor you”

“What’s it for?”

To Henri’s ears the voice in Isla’s earphone sounded like an angry hornet.

“What do you have to do?”

Or perhaps a bee, flitting from flower, to summer flower.

“You’re going to do what? This I have to see”

The bee buzzed and buzzed for at least a minute.

“Is that all?” Isla replied condescendingly before ending the call with “One thirty, Marlborough Arms, see you there Alice”

“Who was that?” asked Henri

“My old school friend”

“I take it we’re going out”

“Indeed we are; mind if I use the shower here?”

“Be my guest, mind if I join you?”

They were nearly late for the old school reunion.

There was no naked dinner with Isla and her parents that evening. It was well past one in the morning when the two of them staggered drunkenly into the house. With theatrical whispers they staggered up the stairs. Isla bade Henri a cheery goodnight and closed her bedroom door from the outside. Barely surpassing her laughter she followed Henri as quietly as she could in her inebriated state up the stairs to the attic room.

It was a poor deception which only half worked. It fooled Brain for the simple reason he was fast asleep. Unfortunately for Isla her mother was wide awake and knew precisely what was going on. On the plus side Marion didn’t really care. When she was Isla’s age, she was already pregnant, so there was no point in trying to take the moral high ground. In fact Marion was pleased her daughter was otherwise engaged as she had a little excursion of her own planned. As the sounds of muffled passion leaked down the stairwell, Marion slipped as silently as Isla had thought she was from the bed and tiptoed downstairs and out into the silent midsummer night.

Henri woke at some ungodly hour with a pain in his bladder. He knew it was early as it was not yet dawn. He fumbled his way towards the bathroom and relieved himself. Still half drunk he fell back into the bed which complained at this rough handling.

“Ouch,” moaned Isla, “did you have to dig me in the ribs” she pushed him away and, completely disorientated he fell onto the floor, where he sat awkwardly rubbing his head. “Quiet will you, do you want to wake my parents?”

“You pushed me out” he whispered, his voice rich with injustice.

“I’d better be going” she whispered giving him a mojito flavoured kiss, “where are my clothes?”

“You took them off before we got here”

“Oh right,” she said, stopping suddenly. “Henri, come here a minute”

Ever eager, he was by her side, fondling her bare behind. “Stop that” she demanded as she pointed out of the window “look there”

“Where?”

“There, in the lane behind the fence”

“There’s someone out there” Henri gulped “I swear they haven’t got any clothes on”

The bare form flitted into the shadows and was gone. Moments later a flash of flesh crossed a patch of moonlit ground. It was only a glimpse, but that was enough to confirm to both of them that the naked form was female.

“Did you recognize her” asked Henri

“Too far away.”

But their minds were as one. They’d been told two days ago and they hadn’t forgotten.

“That kid was telling the truth”

“So Linda’s the naked angel” whispered Isla

“The what?”

Isla told Henri the story of the cook, his stroke, and his mythical rescuer.

“Wow” was all he could say

“The question now is what shall we do? Julie Lewis has been hunting this story since it broke, she’d love to know who it was. Should we tell her?”

Before Henri could reply the click of a bedroom door echoed through the house.

“Damn” whispered Isla who shot out of the room.

Henri listened intently but nothing further disturbed the quiet of the very early morning in Belvoir Avenue. He returned to the window, but the lane now was empty. Presently he went back to bed and fell asleep. As usual he dreamt of naked women.

**Twenty two**

The catch, when it came, was sudden and unexpected, leaving poor Henri no time to react. He and Isla were enjoying a leisurely late morning drink on the sun drenched patio. Henri was as observant as a bird, attentive to every sound from the other side of the hedge where the mysterious naked neighbour, Linda, lived. He stared constantly at the thick privet, desperately wishing he was a superhero and could see through it. The slightest sound that might indicate a presence of someone in the adjoining garden drove him to his feet, pacing the patio looking for the smallest sliver of bare flesh through the thick green leaved branches. It was during one of these excursions with all his senses concentrated in the wrong direction that he was taken by surprise, like a harvest mouse caught in the open hearing the sudden screech of the tawny owl.

“It’s nice out isn’t it?” said Marion in a cheerful voice. Henri was stunned into silence, trapped by obsession with Linda’s naked body with no concern for his own. He had no reply to Marion’s jaunty comment for his trousers were still up in his bedroom so Henri was not able to put it back in again. Fortunately neither Isla nor her mother seemed to notice, let alone care.

“You’re back early, Mum”

Henri gulped, all he wanted was to be reunited with his clothes, but Marion was blocking the door, and now she seemed happy to chat. “I’m soaked with sweat,” she complained, that advertising agency had the air con off”

“Well that’s good” commented Isla at her most saintly.

“Well yes, if you’re dressed for it. The place was colder than an Alaskan dog kennel yesterday. I’m going to slip into something more casual” As she disappeared into the cool dark interior Henri came out of the blocks faster than an Olympic sprinter who had sat on a porcupine.

“Whoa, big boy, where do you think you’re going?” asked Isla.

“I’m going to get my clothes before your mother gets back.”

“Why?”

“Because I can’t sit here in the buff talking to her, it’s bad enough she caught me in the nude”

“And where do you think she has gone?”

“She’s diplomatically got out of the way so I can go and get dressed.”

“Exactly the opposite” said Isla.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Hi brain whirred for a moment until it reached a logical and awful conclusion. “Oh, er, right”

And suddenly his fear became flesh, and with the words “Well that’s better” Marion was there. Henri realised he had never seen anyone Marion’s age naked before. He had once had a close call when he walked into the bathroom at home while his mother was in the shower. Fortunately he managed to beat a hasty retreat before he could catch a glimpse of any flesh. Bizarrely he had been more worried than his mother. In fact she had found it quite amusing and teased him remorselessly in front of his sisters who found the whole affair hilarious until one of them had a thought. In Henri’s experience thought and his sisters’ minds occupied separate universes, but somehow an idea managed to bridge the gap and settle momentarily in Annie’s cerebrum.

“Oh my God,” she squealed, “what if it had been me, I’d have just died”

“No you wouldn’t Annie.” Replied their mother “Do you think you’ve got anything different under those clothes? We’re all the same. Tell you what why don’t we all compare private bits?” She suggested as she began to unbutton her blouse. This brought a storm of protest from both his sisters while Henri looked resolutely at the pattern on the hearth rug. Highly amused at the chaos she had wrought their mother stopped and broke into a big grin “There’s nothing wrong with nudity, as you’ll find out one day”

Well this was Henri’s day alright. Despite the teasing he had seen nothing of his mother’s body that day. The mere outline of her flesh though the translucent shower curtain had been enough to send him flying to his room. He would have the done the same now but for Isla. So here he sat, trapped with his naked girlfriend and her equally naked mother. Slowly his heart began to beat a little slower and he sneaked a peek. She may be old, but a naked woman is like watching your local team. No matter how bad you think they may be, you just have to watch. He had expected Marion’s body to wrinkled, like an old dry leaf with only the memory of the summer that had gone. He was pleasantly surprised to find quite the opposite. Her skin was as smooth as her daughter’s; although it had to be said there was somewhat more of Marion than Isla. What would his mother and sisters say now he wondered? This was more than an a passing what if, they all knew he was dating one of the most famous nudes on the planet. He had told his mother just before the protests began, as he had expected countrywide television coverage to show him standing on the sidelines. His family had followed Isla’s progress with interest. To his twin sister Amelie she was a green heroine, someone to be looked up to, but perhaps not followed. His elder sister Annie thought it all disgusting. His parents position was ambiguous, the only comment had come from his mother, who after seeing Isla parading stark naked around the Sapphire Shopping Mall said “She looks nice dear”

What they would make of her in the flesh? He’d find out soon, as in a week’s time they were going north to meet his folks. He just hoped that meeting Isla in the flesh didn’t mean just that. Could she keep her clothes on for a week? He fervently hoped she would, but deep down he knew there would an unveiling at some point. Then what would happen, would Amelie emulate her heroine, would their mother carry out the threat she had dangled before them all those years ago. One thing was certain, Annie would walk out.

“So how was work?” Isla broke into his reverie

“Like I said hot” replied her mother “and it’s all your fault”

“How’s it my fault?”

“Well there’s an advertising campaign up for tender for the “Air con con” at the mall and they’re making a bid”

“So”

“So they have switched the air con off to impress the clients”

“Oh well” said Isla haughtily from her vantage point on the moral high ground “they could always go naked, like our slogan says”

**Twenty three**

Emaline Mirabelle Conway was known as Merri to her parents. Her school friends had called her Bella, but at the PDQ Agency she was called E-M (pronounced Em). Her job was to do the sensible things. All the creative things were done by the erudite copywriters and the flamboyant art directors who flounced and strutted, argued and enthused. Merri kept the business running. It she who filled the coffee makers, ensured the printers and photocopier were tonered and filled with the right type of glossy paper. There were always staplers and glue and paint and pencils handy to replace the ones they lost or destroyed in a fit of petulant anger. While she may not have won any contracts or awards one thing was absolutely certain there would never been any campaigns without her.

The morning of the day that would change her life forever was warm. There was every probability that the rest of day would be warmer still. Even so Merri packed her cardigan, one with a simple plaid pattern today, the purple and white, she thought as she folded it neatly and placed it in her wicker shopping bag. Merri always needed an extra layer in the summer at PDQ as the air con was invariably set on alpine peak. Checking herself in the mirror that hung in the shadowy hall, Merri sighed, a long, heartfelt sigh for the life that might have been. An involuntary expression of sadness for the lost lives of both her parents, and the inextricable link to the loss of her own future. Still, she thought to herself briskly, no use crying over spilt milk. Wiping a tear from her eye she stepped out into the golden morning, brushing her bare legs against the warm fur of her only companion, Eric, her tabby cat who was hurrying in after a long night prowling the neighbourhood. She often wondered what strange sights he saw in the wee small hours. Were the streets and back alleyways populated by a different set of inhabitants while the rest of the world slept?

‘How wrong can you be?’ thought Merri as she opened the door to PDQ’s office and a wall of warm air hit her like a foolish motorist opening his car window in the middle of Death Valley. The temperature seemed to rise by one degree per stair as she climbed to the first floor suite where she, manager Dave or D-Z (pronounced Dizzy) worked with a small group of creatives in a suite of seven rooms.

“Is the air con broken?” she asked a slender, petite blonde called P-W (Penny Wilson, aka Pow) who was monopolising the water cooler. She grunted before replying “It’s Dizzy’s latest ploy to get the Misthaze shopping centre account.” Merri knew all about this, the local mall was promoting itself as a green venue by turning off their climate control, hence Dave’s decision to switch of theirs. She moved through the open plan office cheerily greeting the other staff members who seemed to be boiling already. She dreaded to think how they would all feel by the afternoon. Little did she know that they would all feel cool and refreshed, but at that time Merry had no inkling how the day would progress.

“Wow, I know I always thought the air con was too high, but there was no need for this” Merri turned and smiled. “Morning Marion” Their part time accountant was always welcome. Merri viewed her as a kindred spirit, level headed and sensible. A veritable pillar of the community, although she had a nagging doubt about her daughter’s actions.

“Hello Marion,” said Dave, “I hope you’re pleased with our concern for the environment”

“I would have appreciated a little warning, Dave.” Marion ignored the latest office fad for initials “I’d have worn a little less”

“It’s your daughter’s fault” he retorted, “She started this…by wearing a lot less!”

“You don’t have to follow all that rubbish” Marion complained, “She’s hardly likely to march around here demanding you turn off the air con”

“It’s a little more complicated” H-S, (Harry Smith, pronounced Hiss) a pleasant looking, long haired lad, explained “You see we’re up for the Mall’s contract and they are following the air con bad message” he gulped on some coffee before adding “Saves them money, they’ve no real scruples”

Merri left them to their discussion to check the answer phone. The first call was from Miles Jones the director of the Misthaze centre. He confirmed his appointment for three that afternoon. Merry hoped they would be ready, but she doubted this.

Her suspicions were confirmed later in the morning by a very sweaty M-S (Melainie Smith or Mess).

“We’re nowhere Em” she told her as she inspected two large wet patches on her pale pink silk blouse, “Do you think these will come out?”

“Oh yes, a bit of biological will sort that”

“It won’t ruin the material?”

“Not if you use a very low temperature, Mess”

The whole office consulted Merri on just about everything except for affairs of the heart. They saw her as an old spinster left on the shelf, a shrivelled virgin who had never felt the sting of Cupid’s darts. On that account they were wrong, for she had had her day once, many years ago when she was a fresh faced, eighteen year old. Back then, she had a boy friend called Chris whom she loved deeply. She had even made up her mind to have sex with him. Merri had planned it all, a secluded picnic in the woods after which she would allow the unsuspecting Chris to seduce her. She had even chosen the date, a day late in her monthly cycle when pregnancy would be highly unlikely. Merri had always been pragmatic. Sadly it was never to be; her poor father put paid to that. The very Sunday before, what was in her mind, the biggest event in her life so far, he contrived to upstage her passage from maiden to woman. Merri remembered the day well, how could she ever forget? They had just left church, and she and her mother were admiring the rose bushes that were in full flower, Merri could still remember their heady smell hanging in the fresh summer air. Her father, who stood as a rock around which the family was anchored, was talking to the vicar. She could still remember the warm rhythm of his words, his deep voice sounding across the crunch yard. Then there was a cry,followed by a quiet crunch of the gravel in the curchyard. In sudden panic Merri turned to see her father slumped on the ground; his left arm quivering as the priest kneeled, muttering quiet words of prayer. Inside Merri boiled; she felt like shouting, “he needs cardiac massage. Don’t just kneel there, help him” She had run across the churchyard, scattering small stones that flew through the still air. All the while her mother was a full yard behind her screaming. As she bent over the prone body of her father Merri could hear their friend and neighbour Jack Filey speaking desperately in hushed tones to his phone. But the heart attack was too big, the ambulance too slow. Merri’s life also ended in a way on that summer’s day, as her mother, who was never strong, went spiralling into a decline and Merri was slowly sucked into her whirlpool of illness and despair, and so she was gradually pulled her away from all she knew. It was twelve years before her mother finally shuffled off her mortal coil leaving Merry a lone survivor, blinking on a sunlit beach with an ocean of experience before her yet to be explored.

Rebuilding had been slow, it had taken her months to build a small circle of friends, first flower arranging at church, then the swimming club, and finally the biggest hurdle of all, this job at PDQ. Mess broke into Merri’s reverie, “I could certainly use a lower temperature myself. Any chance Dizzy’s going to turn the ac back on?”

“I doubt it; he’s keen on this contract”

It was a slow day for the creatives, sometimes they whizzed, ideas tumbling from them faster than storm waves on a winter shore. Today the ideas were lake water lapping on an idling rowing boat. At eleven o’clock a meeting was called. Dizzy ran the whole gamut of despair, his team had deserted him, the contract was as unattainable as a desert mirage. Fortunately for Merri a caller at the door necessitated her to leave at this point.

“Hello Marion, you’re back, I see you’ve changed into something more suitable” said Merri noticing Marion’s thin summer dress.

“Not for much longer I fear” replied Marion rather mysteriously, “Bella, let me introduce to my daughter, Isla and this is her boyfriend Henri”

Merri had, of course, recognised Isla from the newspapers, “how do you do” she greeted them both shaking hands, “come to offer some advice?”

“Oh yes” replied Isla confidently

“Well they are all in a meeting, come on through” Merri said warmly as she ushered them towards the conference room. She led them in and stayed while Marion introduced her daughter and Henri to the small workforce.

Merri enquired if anyone needed a cold drink. This was like asking the pope if he wanted a service on a Sunday, as the room was hotter than a volcano. When she returned a few moments later it was instantly clear little progress had been made.

“Well no” Henri was telling them animatedly “we weren’t able to come up with any better slogans, that was one of our problems. Even ‘I’d rather have nothing on than have air con on’ was pinched from someone else” The whole room looked dejected, they were getting nowhere fast.

“Look,” said Isla, “I’m not in advertising, but even I can see you’re not going to get anywhere in this atmosphere, it’s far too hot”

“Well I could switch the air con back on” began D-Z. Merri and the rest of the staff looked longingly at him, tongues hanging out like puppy dogs waiting for their master to throw the ball. Isla on the other hand gave him to look of death, “That would rather defeat the object, don’t you think”

Isla looked around the room at the worn out faces and beamed, Merri started to become very worried indeed. Not as worried as she was a moment later when Isla told them they should follow her slogan.

“My slogan” Henri reminded her as fear gripped Merri warmly by the throat.

“I suppose we could” muttered D-Z “it would show how serious we were.”

Merri’s heart stopped beating at this point, surely he didn’t mean, he couldn’t. She was aware the others were talking, but her brain wasn’t processing the words. It was like a sporting match where the vision was fine but the sound had been lost. The conference room was the field of play and her colleagues the players in the game. She watched in a detached way as they ran around the in fury, arms gesticulating in silent animation, but the sense of occasion was lost on her. By the time normal service had been resumed it was all over, the final whistle had been blown. The naked office was on.

Marion turned to Merri “you haven’t said anything, Bella.”

“You don’t have to join us Em” Dave told her gently, before quickly adding “Don’t take that the wrong way, we would love you to join us, but…..”

There was a general low hum that indicated that agreement of her colleagues

Merri knew what they were thinking, dry wizened old spinster, old fashioned and prim, only naked for a shower.

“Tell you what” Marion told her “I will if you will” Like the watcher of the skies the whole attention of the room moved away from Merri and focussed on the new planet in their ken, Marion, who in their minds marched to the same drummer’s beat as Merri.

Someone said “In that case count me in” The whole room’s attention swung back to Merri, upon whom the awful realisation was beginning to dawn. It had been her voice that spoke those words.

The silence was broken by Isla who was clearly becoming exasperated by the whole affair.

“Right, we’ll stay in here and you men can go somewhere else?” she looked enquiringly at Dave “The gents” he said. This drew a drone of distaste, “alright my office”

“I’ll come and get you when we are ready” Isla informed them as they trooped out contemplating the size of their midriffs. They had barely closed the door before Isla was naked, but then considering her the amount of practice she had this should have surprised nobody. What was a shock to Merri and the two other girls, Mess and Pow, was the speed at which her mother joined her in the altogether. The sight of her all over tan was both an answer and a wake up call.

“Tanlines” Pow spat out, removing her low cut top, to reveal a pink push up bra. Mess had other worries, “If only it known I’d have had a trim down there” she confided as she slipped out of her grey pencil skirt.

These were the least of Merri’s worries. She had no tan to speak of and her weekly outings to the ladies only swimming days at the Waterloo centre had taught her the benefit of ensuring no stray hairs peeked out from the lycra. Her worries were more in the line of stripping. Suddenly, with no warning her mind slipped back to the time before her father died, when she had aspirations of a normal life. She remembered quiet days in the summer, when the house was empty, no sound beyond the ticking of the clock in the silent hallway. Those were the days when she had planned for her liaison with Chris. She had it all worked out, the meal, the seduction and the strip before the final act of union. For days, alone in her bedroom, curtains closed against the peaking sun, Merri had rehearsed her routine. First the plain white blouse, slowly, one button at a time, starting from the bottom. Then she paused, her flat white stomach bare, the outlines of her lacy bra just visible. Merri stood still for a brief moment, chin down, looking up. More of her diaphanous bra was exposed as she reached to let down her long brown hair. Free from its band, she shook it loose, giving her audience a brief glimpse of protruding nipples pushing out from the fabric of her underwear. Then, reaching behind her she unzipped her thin red skirt. This bought her slim shoulders back, emphasising her full breasts. With a flick of her hips she allowed the skirt to fall to the ground. Then, she stepped forward, out of her fallen skirt leaving it and her sandals behind. The part opened blouse hung well below her waist, hiding her hips, but the outline of her dark patch of pubic hair was plainly visible through the lace in her clean, white, high cut knickers. Slowly she let the blouse fall from her shoulders to join the rest of her clothing. With no pause, just a seductive smile, Merri reached behind her back to unclasp her bra, this done she dropped her shoulders to emphasise her cleavage. Quickly she let it fall releasing her full, firm breasts with their small cherry nipples. Turning away, she looked back at the mirror and, with a lascivious smile she leant forward, pushing her rounded buttocks towards her audience. Then with both hands she slipped her thumbs inside either side of her knickers and slowly rolled them down her firm thighs. Standing suddenly with her last item of clothing held at arms length between her thumb and forefinger she turned to face the mirror. Dropping the last of her underwear Merri stepped forward to the imagined seduction that was destined never to take place.

“Are you alright Em?” asked Pow. Merri snapped out of her reverie. Unconsciously she had already begun the long forgotten act, standing before her colleagues with her blouse open.

“Sorry just a bit much to take in” she said apologetically.

“For you and us all,” said Mess, “except of course young Isla” Although neither Mess or Pow were too sure about Marion any more. Merri switched quickly to her swimming pool routine, folding her clothes neatly as she undressed. When she was naked she reached automatically for her costume, but of course it wasn’t there, and it was never going to be. Standing awkwardly, arms by her side she looked at her two colleagues. They were alike, pencil thin with sharp breasts pointing accusingly at her. Their faces held a look that Merri could only translate as astonishment.

“What’s wrong?” she asked shyly. She felt intimidated by their nudity, their bodies part tanned, with long legs and small patches of pubic hair.

“Merri” said Mess quietly, “let down your hair”

Merri did as she was told, suddenly realising that everyone was looking at her.

Mess spoke for the room. “Talk about hiding yourself away, you sure are one hell of a swan Merri”

“What me?”

“Oh yes, you, I don’t know why I was worried about trimming the lawn, ‘cos one thing’s for certain, nobody’s going to be looking at me!”

“I’m sorry, but I don’t know what you mean”

“Bella,” said Marion kindly, “you’re gorgeous,” she pointed to a mirror in the corner “look at yourself”

Merri didn’t need to look at herself, she already knew what she looked like. It was the sight of the rest of the flesh that was new. With no reference points beyond the old shrunken women at her swimming classes she had rather assumed she had an average body, but looking at the two skinny girls standing shyly before her Merri swiftly revised her opinions. She had previously seen Mess and Pow as sirens, pulling unsuspecting men into their, what was now revealed to be not so ample bosoms. Once stripped bare of their camouflage, they were diminished, two stick insects next to Merri’s queen bee.

Isla interrupted tersely. Merri’s body was nothing to her, she had Suzie Blackwell for competition. “Enough of this preening ladies, I’ll go get the chaps”

Merri swallowed hard, here she was naked at work, being gawped at by her equally bare colleagues and now her first naked males were about to be delivered. Within seconds the first penis she had ever seen hove into view. What an odd little appendage she thought. She knew they could get bigger, but the mechanism by which such a floppy flaccid object could become large enough, and stiff enough to fit inside her vagina was unfathomable.

For a few moments the employees of the PDQ agency stared as silently as stout Cortez gazing on the Pacific. They took it all in, and would probably have done so for an age if Marion hadn’t intervened and set them all to work.

Merri busied herself with the photocopier which had run out of toner. She was the only one in the office who could replace the cartridge without getting toner all over her clothes. Today she was all fingers and thumbs, dropping the cartridge and nearly getting covered in ink. ‘Oh well she thought, at least it would have wiped off. One bonus to working in the nude’ She wondered if there were others, she certainly no longer felt hot under the collar.

She took lunch as usual at her desk; except it wasn’t usual at all she thought, brushing breadcrumbs from her breasts. The leather of her office chair felt smooth and cool on her back, contrasting with the roughness of the small hand towel she had found in the store room to sit on. Her phone buzzed just as she was scolding herself for spilling orange juice on herself. Dizzy was calling a meeting in the conference room. Merri grabbed her towel and unconsciously brushed away some breadcrumbs that had nestled in her pubic hair. She headed quickly through the door, almost bumping into Hiss in her hurry. “After you, Em” he said politely. As she walked along the narrow corridor that led to the conference room she suddenly realised that Hiss had an excellent view of her bare behind. Still, she preferred him scrutinising her bottom to the alternative.

Shorn of their clothes the ideas had flowed from the creative team. Hours ago they were nowhere, now they had a firm outline for a campaign. Unsurprising it was firmly founded on nudity. Merri had to admit it was slick and fizzed with ideas.

“Ok” Dizzy told them, “tidy it up and get it ready for Mr Jones” He paused looking sheepishly around his small company, “I’d like Pow and Mess to do the presentation” Utter silence filled the room like the gulfs between the stars “Er I know it’s sexist but, you know….” He would have looked at his shoes if he was wearing any “You have to play to your strengths”

“Yes, you’re right” Mess told him, “I’ll need to pop out to get some stuff first” she told him

“What sort of stuff” asked a puzzled Hiss

“Girlie stuff” Pow and Mess answered in unison.

Dizzy cleared his throat, a gentle polite, noise much like a well brought up toad. “I don’t suppose you could join us Em?” he croaked

Merri beamed, “Of course” she replied. Mess and Pow nodded. No point in leaving your star centre forward on the bench for the big match.

Miles Jones had never looked forward to a meeting so much in his life. Usually he kept people waiting. Being punctual meant you weren’t busy enough. Time was money and unless he was paying for somebody’s time he wasted it. But the opportunity to cast an eye over naked totty changed everything, if the staff of PDQ were desperate enough to prance around stark bullock naked to get his attention; he would give them all the time they wanted. Not that he was interested in the bollocks bit, Dizzy and his similarly named arty farty boys could prance around in the nuddy till their hairy balls froze off for all he cared, but there were a couple of foxy girls working there, and he wouldn’t mind seeing what was inside their knickers. He remembered them well, long legs and stilettos, short skirts so you could almost see their bums. Tight cut low blouses with plenty of cleavage on display. He rubbed his hands together with glee at the thought of those puppies let loose. Oh yes, today was going to be a good day he thought to himself as he rang the door bell.

The door was answered by a stunning brunette who was wearing the attire he liked best. Absolutely sweet FA. Where did that fatuous moron Dizzy find this babe Miles thought to himself? The last time he was here he was greeted by that frumpy secretary of his, all plaid pleated skirt and ribbed blouse buttoned up to the neck, hair tied back in a Mary Poppins bun, and shoes too sensible for a nun. This was a great improvement he thought as his eyes darted up and down her firm flesh. She stood with her long legs slightly apart, one hand on her perfect hip while the other idly rubbed her back. He drooled as her full, firm pert breasts rose and fell in time with her breathing, His throat was dry and he almost swooned, eyes roaming up her firm legs as sturdy and perfectly formed as an alabaster statue. She had kept her pubic hair, he liked that in a woman, and this specimen before him was undoubtedly a woman. He stood and admired her perfect curls, purring like a tom cat as he gazed at the thicker darker hair that nearly, but not quite, covered the twin swellings that led to her vagina. It seemed like an age to him, although in reality it was only a few seconds that he stood in the doorway grinning inanely at her body. Finally he met this heavenly creature’s smiling brown eyes. Then he really got a shock, a foot on the live rail jolt, for the Aphrodite standing naked before him was that frumpy secretary. In that instant, as their eyes met, Merri knew the contract was won.

That evening Merri floated home on a tide of champagne. After the deal had been signed, Dizzy had insisted that they all went out for a celebratory meal. Merri didn’t usually mix socially with the others, preferring to retreat to the solitude of her quiet house with its calm, familiar rhythms. But how often do you spend time naked with people? It had changed her perspective, engendering a deep trust. With these new bonds she felt she could venture a little further from the safety of the shore.

Their discussion was all on their day and the adventure they had faced. Pow and Miss felt they had taken most of the blows, standing naked at the screen, both as thin as rakes, with long legs accentuated by the high heels they hastily purchased that afternoon. Their cosmetic worries were also solved. Both now sported all over tans as even as Marion Shaw’s, but with a slight tinge of orange. Fortunately Marion had gone home, preventing any opportunity for comparison. Their concern’s over having a few hairs out of place had been dealt with too, although to Merri’s eyes they had used a combine harvester in place of a pair of garden secateurs, and both their vulvas had stood out like twin scars on their flat featureless torsos.

Poor Mr Jones didn’t know where to look, his eyes were flitting everywhere, he appeared to be desperately trying to concentrate on the screen, but the presence of all that naked flesh made it so hard for him. Mess and Pow laughed heartily when Merri told them this.

“Listen, Em the only thing he was concentrating on was the swelling in his pants” Pow told her bluntly.

“And frankly” continued Mess, “you were the main distraction”

Merri could feel the heat in her face, she had never considered herself as an object of attraction, but here she was sitting with her two co workers, both of whom again oozed a sensuality that had already acquired much attention from a few fellow diners. And they were telling her she was the sex symbol.

Before she could pursue this line of thought further Merri’s bus had arrived at her stop. Thanking the driver as was her wont; she alighted and walked along the familiar summer streets to her comfortable home. Her cat, Eric greeted her with all the haughty disdain of his species. Merri filled his bowl with milk before getting herself a cool glass of water. The champagne, coupled with the intense heat that hung sullenly in the air of the closed house induced a great weariness. Shedding her clothes for the second time that day Merri indulged herself in a long cool shower. Suitably refreshed she reached for the robe that usually hung behind the door. Uncharacteristically she had forgotten to put it there, so she wrapped her towel around her body before heading towards her bedroom. Suddenly she stopped in her tracks. What was she doing? She had spent the whole afternoon stark naked in front of her colleagues and now she was covering herself to walk from her bathroom to her bedroom in an empty house. Removing the towel she folded it carefully and hung it on the towel rail. Then gingerly, and bizarrely, for the first time in her life, she stepped onto the landing of her house with no clothes on. She tiptoed towards her bedroom, as if in fear of being caught. She caught herself again, what was she thinking, tomorrow she was going to spend the whole day naked at work, what was the point of getting dressed now. The house was swelteringly warm, and completely empty. Pulling herself together she walked down the stairs and along the hallway Just before she reached the lounge she caught a glimpse of herself in the full length mirror by the front door, and finally, she allowed herself to see what Miles Jones, Mess and Pow and all the others had seen.

“Oh my, Merri look at you” she told herself. After an hour watching television Merri felt extremely comfortable, for a few moments she had even forgot she was naked.

‘Perhaps I’m a nudist’ she thought, and then laughed at the notion. She had no idea what that really meant. There was only one way to find out. Switching on her computer she typed it into her search engine. She was very surprised to find there was a nudist, or naturist facility within three miles, and amazingly her bus home had passed by the gates. Merri had always assumed the Sandydunes Sun Club was a health farm. Now she knew otherwise it was so obvious, the high hedges, the gate set well back from the road with its entrance guarded by a security code.

Its website. by contrast, was more than welcoming, having detailed pages for current members as well as those who may just be thinking of giving it a go. There was even a quiz to see if you might just be a naturist. Merri giggled to herself as she looked at the questions.

The only time I’m naked is in the bath with the door firmly locked. That would have been a yes this morning, but now, she dropped her gaze and smiled.

Next question, nobody would want to stare at that ugly carcass of mine. Well she had pretty good evidence for ticking the box marked no.

The rest of the questions were about the feel of the sun and the breeze on your bare body, and the pleasure of skinny dipping. Nothing, however, about working in the buff. Well, she could do nothing about skinny dipping, but the feel of the sun and the breeze was a definite possibility. Before she could change her mind and back out, Merri opened the patio doors and stepped out into her garden. There was no danger of others seeing her bare body, but what if they did? That cat was well and truly out of the bag anyway. ‘That’s settled,’ she thought, ‘I can tick another two yes boxes’

“Oh what the hell” she muttered as she sat back down in front of the computer, “What are you doing Merri?”

But there it was in big letters, nagging at her, ‘Give it a go, we want you to join us’ Merri read on, and realised that they didn’t want you if you were single and male, but if you were female there wasn’t even a waiting list. She looked down at her body, that until today she had hidden away in unflattering clothing. Now here she was, a butterfly shorn of its cocoon, sitting naked in her empty house, with a full day of naked work ahead, where new clients’ eyes would be free to roam over her bare skin.

She smiled again as she turned back to the keyboard. Quickly now, before she could recant she typed her email address into the contact box. And so, with a few clicks of a computer mouse Emaline Mirabelle Conway left that lonely life behind.

Brian sat at his desk miserably watching silver drops of rain roll down the office window. The hot weather had finally broken a week ago and after two grey days filled with a silent drizzle summer seemed like a dream now. Isla had gone to the North to stay with Henri’s family. He hoped she had kept her clothes on, but he had his doubts. At least she was off his hands and if she was wreaking naked havoc, then it was Henri’s problem now. Isla’s mother was as naked as ever at home, but now the nights were turning chilly Brian felt could legitimately claim it was too cold to join her inflagrante. Fortunately she didn’t seem to mind and pottered around quite happily in the nude while her fully clothed husband admired the view.

The last few weeks had been a stormy, metaphorically speaking, and rough seas had battered the good ship Brian Shaw, firstly the force ten that was Isla and her reluctantly naked boyfriend, followed by the scend of nude working in the offices of PDQ. Brian’s timbers shivered at the memory but at least now he was back on an even keel and sailing happily through much calmer waters with smiling waves smacking against the prow. And so it was until about half past eleven when the kraken awoke.

“Ho-ho” called John to nobody in particular, “they’ve caught the naked angel”

The monster Brain always feared lay in wait for him rose up from the depths and wrapped its tentacles around his chest like iron bands.

“Oh really” replied Jan casually, “I thought she was a myth”

“Absolutely not, she was reported to the police this morning by somebody called Bob Standing who had seen her in the street”

The waters around Brian were boiling and frothing as he felt himself drawn down into cold depths of despair. Bob Standing lived across the road from him!

“How do they know it was the Naked Angel?” asked Jan with as much contempt as she could muster.

“Same street as before, Belvoir Avenue, where Brian lives” Jan’s distain drained away as both of Brian’s colleagues looked pointedly towards him. Not hat he noticed as he was too busy sucking in oxygen to feed his beating heart.

“You must know her Brian, Linda Frost?”

Brian gulped, a goldfish breaching the putrid surfacein a stagnant bowl. The pressure eased on his chest, and just as a drowning sailor suddenly finding a life vest he popped up to the surface. Gratefully he sucked in oxygen.

“Yes” he squeaked weakly, as if he had been fed helium instaed, “she lives next door”

John laughed, “Would you believe it? All that time and you never knew”

This brief interlude was all Brain needed to recover, the waters had subsided now and he was able to answer calmly.

“I thought that chef said he couldn’t remember”

“True,” replied John thoughtfully, “but that doesn’t mean it didn’t happen”

Brian, who up until now had been certain it did happen, and that his wife was the naked angel reconsidered. “How did they find out it was Linda”

“Look here” said Jon turning his screen around, “he was looking out the window, saw her and got a few pictures.”

Brian looked at the photographs. Linda’s naked body glowed a whiter shade of pale in the harsh light of the camera flash. The first snap, however, could have been anyone, but the second was a close up of her face, twisted in a look of shock at the sudden starburst of light. Brian was filled with an immense sense of relief. He was instantly ashamed, but that could have been Marion, or worst of all himself. John was reading on.

“Linda Frost, thirty seven…..she looks good for her age, don’t you think?” Brain looked at his neighbour while Jan looked to the heavens, “you’re as big a pervert as that Dick Standing” she told him.

“Bob Standing, Jan, pay attention will you” He corrected her before continuing. “Mrs Frost was interviewed by the police, but as nobody had complained about her bizarre night time habits they decided not to bring charges.”

“Mr Frost claimed he had no idea of his wife’s nudist ramblings. He told reporters their neighbour’s naked habits had led her astray”

The kraken rose like a lioness from the dry savannah grass once more, tentacles dripping cold seawater as it reached to drag him down into the cold dark depths.

“That was a principled protest” Jan told John firmly. With a sudden release and surge of elation Brian broke free from his malaise, shaking off the monster completely.

“I don’t think Isla had anything to do with this” he said defensively.

John changed tack. “She must have walked past your house” he said to Brian.

“Who?” Brian was genuinely confused now, even so he felt the trap, sensing the beast that lurked below his little boat, circling, waiting for its chance.

“The naked neighbour”

“Well I suppose so”

“So you must have seen her”

Brian became indignant “I don’t spend all night looking out of the window, unlike my neighbour” he added, feeling the undercurrent dragging him down. For lurking in his mind was the dreadful fact that on another night that Dick Standing’s evil little camera could have caught him and Marion, tripping across the road together in the altogether.

“You’re not telling me that you have lived next door to the naked angel for sixth months and had no idea.”

Brian shook his head, of course he hadn’t thought the mythical naked angel had been living next door, he’d been damn certain she’d sleeping next him, for some of the night at least. This revelation of Linda the divine was something to digest, a large big piece of gristle that lay heavy on his stomach.

Jan, however, had other matters on her agenda and turned on John.

“You seem remarkably interested in all of this. You’re not thinking of trying it yourself are you?”

“Certainly not” replied John quickly, far too quickly for Jan, who turned and with a raised eyebrow struck deep “the lady doth protest too much, methinks”

“What’s that supposed to mean” snapped John suddenly on the defernsive.

“You’re not a closet nudist are you?” Jan asked him with a wicked smile.

“Absolutely not! You wouldn’t catch me doing something as sordid as that”

” For somebody so disgusted with nudity you seem to take a great deal of interest in it”

They bickered on and on for some time, like two evenly matched armies fighting over the same blasted piece of heath. First one advanced, only to be stopped by a determined rearguard, which was followed by a sharp offensive that railed futilely at a sternly held redoubt. Safely to one side of battle with the crisis over Brian got back to some work, as he fell into the familiar rhythm of his fingers tippy tappy typing on his keyboard he felt the kraken drop back into the abyss, leaving him at peace, for now. But he knew it was there, deep down, waiting and watching.

That evening after a stressful drive home Brian approached Belvoir Avenue with a heavy heart. He was determined once and for all to have it out with Marion. These midnight walks had to stop, after all what if Dick had photographed her, in her glory clothes. As he tuned right he peered along the road bathed in a coppery sun that brushed the street with loving sepia tones. Brian had expected to be greeted by a press pack hounding Linda’s gate, baying for blood,but all was quiet and still. The world having looked once, now turned away, the beam of its relentless desire for scandal focused on some new indiscretion.

Brian entered the kitchen full of strident purpose, intent on righting his wayward wife who as usual, was as naked as a jaybird. What was unusual, and put him completely off his stride, was her naked companion. They both looked at him completely unabashed. The new nude was small with large pendulous breasts. Clearly these were too heavy for her slender frame as she was resting them on the kitchen table. She smiled at Brian invoking a small flicker of recognition. Has he met her before? He would surely remember those mammaries, unless of course they were in their holsters when he had seen them last.

“Brian, this is Julie, a friend of Isla’s”

That would explain the nudity, but he felt sure Isla hadn’t introduced them. Julie rose to her feet exposing a freshly shaven haven. Her breasts swayed like Galilieo’s chandelier as she held out her hand.

“We’ve met before” she told him, “I came here to look into the naked angel story”

“Ah right” he replied as panic rose in his throat. His autonomic response to any mention of the naked angel.

He shook her hand, setting up divine oscillations in those breasts. She smiled as she sat down.” Perhaps you didn’t recognise me without my clothes on?”. The oldest joke in the world, and she knew it.

“Well it does beg the question as to why you are in the altogether”

Marion interrupted, “I told you Brian. You never listen, do you. Julie has been with Isla on her protests; she spent a day working nude with us at PDQ”

Brian winced at the thought of Marion naked at work. He was always astonished that that bare fact had escaped the public’s attention. Now he was looking at the reason in all her glory.

“Well don’t just stand there Brian, we have guest and you are not following the dress code”

Brian gulped and then as he was about to slope sadly off, like an admonished dog, tail between his legs he was saved by the bell.

Ding dong, “I’ll get that” he said and before anyone could move he was gone.

He opened the door to find his neighbour, Linda, the erstwhile naked angel standing on the step. On one hand she looked awful. Her face was pale and drawn, her eyes red and puffy from crying and her hair greasy and lifeless. On the other hand Brain had never seen her looking so good, mainly because up until this moment he had never seen her without clothing.

He allowed his eyes to fall from hers. Today was the day for new breasts, first the large and now the small. His eyes paused in their divine descant as he admired Linda’s puffy little nipples. Having drunk his fill at that particular table he continued his exploration down through a flat freckle specked stomach with its deep navel, and onwards forever south towards the triangular patch of deep black pubic hair that thickened towards the hidden entrance to her vagina. Again he paused at this base camp before setting out onward down her long thin legs until he reached her painted toenails. With no more flesh to view his astonished eyes bounced back up like a perverted rubber ball taking in a second glorious view before stopping at the sight of her husband Kev at the end of his red brick drive.

Linda cleared her throat and in a small voice said “I am standing her naked because I want to know I am a slut who does not deserve to wear any clothing. I have no modesty and I want everyone to look at my bare flesh and……”

At this point the astonished Brain was roughly pushed to one side, and Marion, who thankfully had found a baggy dress, grabbed Linda’s hand and dragged into the hall. Kev made a move, but he was too late, Marion slammed the door in his face. The doorbell ding donged maniacally to no effect “Sod off Kevin” shouted Marion through the letter box.

Meanwhile Julie Lewis was caught on the horns of a dilemma. Clearly something important was going down and her journalistic instinct told her to find out what it was and to do that right away. Holding her back was the very human instinct that insisted she put some clothes on first. Not for the first time the journalist won and with only her trusty pen and wire wound notebook to cover her modesty Julie stepped into the hall to find the naked angel sobbing on Marion’s shoulder.

“It’s ok, there, there” said Marion soothingly as if Linda was a two year old who had lost her favourite doll. Marion reached for a coat, “put this on” Julie was so busy scribbling on her pad she never thought that in a brief moment she would have been the only one naked in the hallway.

“No, no” screamed Linda pushing the coat away, “I must never wear clothes again”

“What?” exclaimed Marion over the noise of the ringing doorbell. She turned to her husband, “Go outside and talk to that moron Brian, and find out what this is all about”

“I can’t open the door, he’ll burst in”

“Then go out the back way”

“Ah, yes” he muttered “Excuse me” he said apologetically to the naked woman blocking the entrance to the kitchen. Suddenly Linda was aware of Julie’s presence.

“Who’s she?” she demanded

“Friend of Isla’s”

“Why’s she writing everything down?”

“She’s a journalist”

“What, I’m not having anything in the paper I’m in enough trouble as it is”

Marion couldn’t see how Linda could possibly in any deeper than she was at the moment. She was up to her neck in a riptide that was still on the flood

“It’s OK” said Julie soothingly; “I’m on your side”

“How do I know that” Marion couldn’t blame Linda for being suspicious.

”I’m naked for a start” Julie replied quickly. That stopped Linda like a mouse in the path of a raging bull elephant. “I’m a friend of Isla, I’ve been on protests with her, naked. I wrote the sympathetic articles that appeared in the Mercury”

“So why are you here naked Linda?” asked Marion

“I am a slut and a whore who does not does not deserve to wear clothing. I have exposed my naked body…..”

”Yes yes, I got that bit. But why are you doing this? Is Kev forcing you”

This brought Linda back to tears again. Marion offered her a handkerchief from her pocket.

“Oh I’m forgetting my manners” Marion said as Linda sniffed. “If you won’t get dressed than I must join you” and without further ado Marion shucked her dress. “There, that’s better. Now, let’s sit down and talk this through”

Haltingly with many pauses for sniffs and choking sobs Linda related her story to the sympathetic Marion and Julie who had finally found her recorder and its tiny little solid state notebook took on the daunting task of saving the whole tragedy of Shakespearian proportions for posterity.

Naturally her husband had not been over the moon to find out that his wife went for midnight walks through the locality in her birthday suit. Neither was the manner of his discovery of this little known fact to his liking. So when the world weary police had finished with Linda he had started. Firstly he shredded all her clothes with a wicked knife. This act was founded upon the simple logic that if she walked around naked she didn’t need any clothes. Then as he rubbed his fingers along the knife blade he ordered her to strip. Silently in dumb shock Linda had complied watching numbly as her husband tore each discarded item into little strips before her tear filled eyes.

“This is how you will stay, bitch” he had screamed “unless you want a divorce, and then you will never see my son again” The threat sliced through Linda like the knife in his hand and she fell to the floor begging, pleading with her husband. She’d do anything she told him, but please don’t cut her off from her child. He’d lifted her up by her hair, and literally spat the words in her face “Just remember you’re an unfit mother, no judge in the land would allow you to come within a mile of my son” He’d left her then to shout obscenities at the press pack gathered outside the door. It was after an hour of sobbing that she finally ventured out of the bedroom. Despite the many hours she had spent naked alone, or in the company of Marion she now felt very nervous and very conscious of her nudity. She found Kevin pacing the kitchen. Linda ventured a timid smile, “Fix my dinner slut” he shouted at her. “Bring it to me when it is ready” he told her as he pushed roughly past her. She winced as the table edge dug into her bare buttocks.

He had forced her to stand naked in the corner while he eat, ordering her to fetch drinks and extra food. She had obeyed humbly, waiting for the mood to subside. But it didn’t, her husband paced the room like a caged animal, occasionally stopping so scream in her face, spittle splashing her eyes and mixing with her tears. She wanted to run but feared his anger would grow.

“What do you want from me Kevin?” she pleaded falling to her knees pawing at his legs. He kicked roughly in the chest. Linda lay there on the carpet sobbing while he ranted on and on. She was an unfit mother no less than a whore, and that was how he was going to treat her. From now on, she would live naked. Should they have visitors she would stay naked and wait on them, fulfilling their every desire. She would clean the house, cook the meals wash his clothes in the nude. “You should be grateful to me cow” he screamed “I’m saving you from the work involved in washing by keeping you bare arsed” Of course she was free to leave anytime she wanted, but without her clothes. At the end of this tirade Kevin sent his wife stitchless to the kitchen to wait his further bidding.

At half past five her husband kicked open the kitchen door. Linda stood quivering like a leaf in a downpour. He was red in the face and stood stock still fists clenched.

“Do you know what I have just watched. Well do you bitch” Linda shook her head wearily. “The local news; and do you know whose picture they showed” She swallowed hard and nodded slowly

“Some naked whore walking along our street, and you know what, she looked just like the harlot in front of me.”

Linda clasped her hand to her forehead “I’m sorry Kevin, I’m so sorry, I never thought”

He cut her off “Do you think they all saw, the neighbours I mean. Do you think all of them know what you look like with no clothes on?”

She didn’t know what to say, “I’m so sorry”

“Sorry” he screamed his voice almost unrecognisable, “not as sorry as you will be” He grabbed her roughly by the hand and dragged her towards the front door.

“No Kevin, please” she pleaded.

“Just in case any of the neighbours missed the news let us show them what they missed” he growled through gritted teeth as he pushed her into the street.

Linda was in a blind panic now as she stood on her front path exposed for all to see. She leaded forward, head down, one hand covering her breasts and the other clasped tightly over her vagina. “Don’t act all coy you brazen hussy, you were letting it all hang out last night” He dropped his voice and in a menacing tone told her hold her arms by her side.

“Now let’s go and visit Brain and Marion” he told her with a smile, “let them see you for what you really are. Kevin held open the gate and Linda stepped out, her bare feet very conscious of the cold pavement. The windows of the houses stared down on her. Was anyone there, looking out at her? She dared not look to see. Thankfully there was the street was as bare as she was for the short journey to her friend and neighbour’s door.

“Ring the bell bitch, and when they open let them have a good look before you tell the type of woman you really are”

Linda stood in front of the green door shaking in fear and shock, hoping with all her heart that it would be Marion who answered.

Kevin’s rage had receded by the time Brian found him sitting in his front garden idly dead heading his roses.

“Hi mate” Kevin looked up at Brian, his face expressionless.

“Why did she do it Brian?” he asked without preamble “What is the point of walking around the streets o the nude”

Brian scratched his head “Dunno” Even though ne had done so himself, he wasn’t exactly sure why he allowed Marion to drag him off through that warm summer’s night.

“I feel so betrayed, all these months she’s being doing this and I didn’t know. People must think I’m a mug”

“Oh come on Kevin” cajoled Brian “once you are asleep how are you expected to find out” That set them both thinking. How often did their respective wives take the midnight air in their birthday suits?

”What I’d like to know, Brian continued “is what the hell Dick Standing was doing staring out of his window at three o’clock in the morning , camera in hand”

Kevin paused; he looked at his hand which contained geranium seed that he plucked from the plants growing on the verge. It was as fine as dust. With one finger he pushed them into one of the folds of his palm, one of his lifelines. He sighed, a sudden exhalation that spread the seeds into the welcoming earth

“Good point Brian, perhaps we should have a word” Brian was inclined to agree, was Dick peering through the cracks in the curtains with his telephoto lens, what sort of pictures were squirreled away on his hard drive. He was a certain as the fate of a Christmas turkey that there were many, many picture of his daughter in the nude saved on Dick’s computer. But as they were freely available all over the internet he could hardly complain

“Later Kev, let’s sort this out first”

“There’s nothing to sort out Brian, the bitch got what was coming to her. What they doing in there anyway”

“Having powwow”

“They can chat all they like, she’s got to take her punishment”

“Don’t you think you’re being a trifle harsh Kev”

“Easy for you to say, what if it was you whose wife was running around the streets in the buff. What would you do?”

“I said nothing to her” Brian winced, he’d let the secret he had held for so long slip. It didn’t go unnoticed, Kevin looked at him, a deep piercing look that turned to understanding and sympathy.

“Oh yeah Isla” Brian hadn’t realised he’d been holding his breath. He sighed, able to breathe again “Yes, that wasn’t easy I can tell you”

“But did you feel betrayed, that’s the worst thing for me. Linda betrayed me. Why? Why would she do a thing like that?”

Brian knew why, the feeling of the air all over your skin, the thrill of the dare, the certain knowledge of the shame that capture would bring, the extremes of the fear of being seen and recognised and the elation of safe return. Oh yes he had felt all that, so knew well Linda’s reasons.

“No idea mate” he told Kevin

“We need to sort your husband out” said Marion in a very business like way. Linda had just admitted to Julie that she was the Naked Angel. Julie was so pleased that she had finally got the woman she had hunted for so long that she ignored he glaring holes in Linda’s story. One thing was sure as rain on a bank holiday, Marion was not going to point them out.

“We have him by the balls” Julie told the clearly puzzled Linda

“How? It’s me that was walking the streets in the nude”

“True” Marion told her, “but in forcing you to knock on the door and say the things you did he has revealed himself as cruel, and most certainly not fit to be a father.”

”Oh no, he’s a good father, it really is all my fault” Linda broke into tears again.

“Look Linda” Julie began “this how we have to play it if we are going to get Kevin to back down”

“Oh I see” she said with a sniff fumbling for a handkerchief in the pockets of the clothes she wasn’t wearing. Marion went and found her a box of tissues. Privately she was quite pleased that Linda had been caught as she was now off the hook. There would be no suspicion of her being the Naked Angel, and she could carry on with her midnight airings for if somebody caught a fleeting glimpse of a bare body on a clear starry night, well they would think it was Linda. Marion had no sympathy, if Linda had been careless enough to be caught that was her problem. When you took a midnight stroll in the buff you took a risk and lived with the consequences if you were seen.

“You look all out Linda, why don’t have a quick shower and I’ll find something for you to put on. Then we’ll get Kevin in”

“Okay…… but I’m not too sure about getting dressed. That may be a red rag to a bull.”

“That’s fine by me” said Marion who had plans for Kevin. Julie, however, gulped and floundered like a fish on the deck of a rusty trawler. “It’s okay” Marion said kindly, “you don’t need to be here”

The woman in Julie agreed, nothing looked better to her in that moment than the clothes hanging on the back of the door. The journalist in her was not so sure, being naked was a small price to pay for being in on the kill. Once again the acid smell of the newsprint won..

“That’s fine, I’ll stay and keep you company”

“What’s happening “ asked Brian who had just reappeared through the back door.

“Kevin has behaved abominably towards Linda, he plans on keeping her nude” his bare naked wife explained primly.

“Well he is more than just a trifle annoyed” Brian replied “And with some reason”

Marion placed her hands firmly on her ample hips. “Oh and there’s something wrong with walking around as our maker intended”

Julie Lewis couldn’t help but think that, although Marion might have a point, it didn’t necessarily extend to her present state of exposure. At least she was in the majority, an advantage that increased with the return of a refreshed Linda. Brian thought she looked much better now, the lank hair was still wet but had a body to it, her face had lost some of the care lines and her bare body glowed in the subdued light in the kitchen.

“I’m ready now” she said “please bring in my husband”

Left alone to mooch once more in the front garden staring at the green door of chez Shaw, Kevin’s mood blackened. What were the two witches up to in there? His contempt spread out from his perfidious wife to all of her sex. Had they not all been responsible for the fall? And should they all not be forced to pay? Wanton daughters of Eve! He’d speak to Brain, he should force his wife to be naked at all times too, that’s what women needed, the slap of firm discipline. The creak of the opening door broke into his angry manifesto.

“Come in” Brian told him, “I think you should be prepared for a bit of a shock”

“I’ve had more than a bit of a shock Brian, I don’t think anything could surprise me now”

But it did, as soon as he entered the kitchen his jaw dropped towards the patterned tiles and his legs froze as still as a bird stained statue. He had read about the medical phenomenon of lucid dreams, where realty was mixed with fantasy. That was the only explanation for there, flanking his naked wife, were two bare bookends. One he recognised, well he knew the face, the sturdy breasts with their long pink nipples were something new, as was the hairy vagina above the heavy thighs that had been last seen forcing their way out of a very unfashionable pair of shorts. Now here they were again freed from their shackles taking on a different perspective. Kevin had to admit that on the whole Marion looked much better out her clothes than in, and pretty good for her age too, he thought charitably.

If Marion opened the debate for universal female nudity then the little hottie at the end closed it, won the vote before moving onto the valedictory vote of thanks. Huge plump melon shaped mammaries jutted firmly from her chest, casting a shadow on a nice flat stomach and a smooth hairless vagina. Had he looked Kevin would have appreciated her pretty face and long curly black hair, but his eyes never strayed higher than her neck.

Marion waited while Kevin drank his fill, then she smiled, not a nice smile, it was a vicious smile, tipped with contempt and menace. But then Kevin wasn’t looking at Marion’s face either.

“I think you’ve had a good enough look, Kev” she said evenly, “Now let’s all sit down.”

Kevin and Brian sat one side of the table while three pairs of breasts lined up opposite them, six pert nipples pointing accusingly at Linda’s husband. Brian sat passively wringing his hands beneath the table out of sight of the women. He was afraid, very afraid. Kevin, however, still not sure if he was awake or not, drooled like a pubescent boy in a nudist camp.

“Kevin, your behaviour today has been disgraceful” Marion told him bluntly. “This stops now” She sounded like a strict headmistress dressing down a small boy, except Kevin was a grown man and it was Marion who was dressed down. “It has got to stop”

“Wait a minute” he said, realising that this was no dream, and wasn’t he was the one wronged against “I didn’t start this, Linda did. You wouldn’t catch me wandering the streets naked in the middle of the night”

“Nor me” replied Julie, as Marion looked at Brain and Brian looked straight back at his wife. Neither of them daring to breathe, “but that doesn’t excuse the way you have treated your wife”

Kevin finally managed to drag his eyes away from Julie’s magnificent pair of breasts and their flat pale brown nipples. “Who the hell are you anyway and why are you here?”

“This is Julie, she’s a friend of Isla’s. She just stopped by for a chat”

“That figures”

“How?”

“That explains why you are all sitting here in the buff. This is all your daughter’s fault” he said looking firmly at Marion, “running around in the nicy naky noo”

‘No it’s not’ thought Brian, staring fixedly at his wife too. Calm under fire Marion continued.

“We’re not here to talk about Isla, Kevin; we are discussing you and Linda”

“It’s none of your business” he said bluntly

“But you made it our business by forcing her to turn up naked at our front door”

“I was just visiting,” he replied trying to sound nonchalant “and Linda was wearing her normal attire for strolling around the street.” He spat out the last part of the sentence with such venom that Linda winced.

Marion continued as if he had not spoken “and then she announced herself as a slut…..her words or yours?”

“So what” Kevin decided to brazen it out, after all Marion was just another shameless, naked whorebitch.

“I think you should know that any divorce lawyer worth his salt would have you out of that house and give custody of your son to your wife with no access”

Kevin stared at Julie, this time he looked deep into her eyes. He saw no fear there at all. Cautious now he asked “What are you, some kind of naked lawyer?”

“No” she told him, “I’m a naked reporter”

That, thought Kevin, was much worse. Like an Antarctic glacier sliding inexorably towards the deep blue sea he began to realise he was in serious trouble, and had been for some time.

“And I’ve just listened to Linda’s story. I believe her and I’m sure all my readers will too”

It was over, too late now Kevin realised he was past the tipping point. An ocean of cold fear flushed all the anger from Kevin in less than a second. What would people think of him, what would he have though, reading such an article about another man? He looked at Julie in the certain knowledge that anyone who would sit there stark naked in support of Linda would not present his side of the case. The article would have more spin than a fairground carousel.

“It would make a good series, several articles over a month I think” Julie told him, smiling sweetly.

Broken now, Kevin held his head in his hands in defeat “Oh my God,” he muttered quietly, “what have I done.” He looked at his naked wife. “Can you ever forgive me?”

Reaching across the table he gently took her hand. “I’m so sorry” he told her.

Close to tears Linda replied “I’m sorry too Kev, I shouldn’t have”

“But why, love, why did you do it? What could possess you to walk around in the nude?”

“I don’t know, it’s like a drug I just can’t stop”

“You need help” he told her.

Marion who had been listening to this with a mixture of pleasure and contempt interrupted. It was time to put an end to such talk. There was one fact she knew above all others and that was that she, Marion, the true naked angel didn’t need any help to stop walking the neighbourhood in just her shoes. She had no intention of giving up her night time actives which were in her view were entirely wholesome and frankly nobody else’s business. In fact, she considered herself to be a pillar of the community for if she hadn’t been taking an air bath that chilly spring night Tomas O’Sullivan would be singing with real angels in the heavenly chorus.

She stamped on Kevin’s opinion as a small boy on an ant.“There’s nothing wrong with nudity, we’re all quite happy this side of the table” she told her neighbour haughtily

Kevin looked at her, and asked the question that had been gnawing away at his brain for some time.” Why exactly are you naked Marion?”

Julie answered for her “We’re dressed like this because Linda had no clothes and was too scared face you unless she was in the nude”

“We’re showing solidarity, Kev” Marion told him, steering away from that sticky patch. She pressed on with her attack and smiled as she drew the knife. “Perhaps you should too?”

He looked at her with a face as blank as a leaden winter sky. Then a stiff wind blew away the fog and a wintery ray of realisation spread itself all over Kevin’s face like a twisted shaft of sun.

“You mean me, take all my clothes off” he laughed, “I don’t think so”

As cool as the winter weather Marion slipped the blade between his ribs. “It will make a good story Kev, maybe a series.”

“There’s no need for that, look I’m really sorry, but you have to admit it was a shock” he sounded contrite as he continued “I’ll buy you a whole new wardrobe Linda” He crossed the floor and kneeled in front of her, a repentant child begging for forgiveness. He took her hand “Please Linda”

She ran her fingers through his hair before replying soothingly “It’s Ok Kev, we’ll be Ok now” She looked at Marion, “thanks for everything”

Marion twisted the knife “He has to do it Linda, you know it’s the only way”

Linda held her husband’s head in her hands. “You have to do this Kevin; it was Marion’s only condition for helping me. Believe me, she will do as she says”

Slowly Kevin rose to his feet, knees knocking, he was a defeated man and he knew it. He sighed “Ok, but I’m not getting undressed here”

“Take him into the hall Brain” Marion commanded.

“Come on mate,” Brian said a friendly hand on his shoulder, “tell you what” he continued magnanimously, “I can’t let you do it alone, I’ll join you”

Kevin almost swooned, “Brian, you are a true friend, but you don’t have to”

Brian held up a hand, “No, I insist, it’s the least I can do” he said with all the sincerity he could muster. He smiled at Marion, “you don’t object do you dear?”

His wife gave him a stern look, “no dear, it’s very magnanimous of you” she replied with more than a hint of sarcasm. Linda was clearly taken in by Brian’s unashamed flannel and smiled gratefully at him; Julie Lewis who was more aware of the dress code in the Shaw household was clearly having a hard time suppressing a fit of giggles. She had her face more or less under control, but a very appealing rhythmic vibration in her pendulous breasts betrayed her.

Clearly happy with himself and beaming from ear to ear Brian led Kevin out of the room to begin a new chapter of his life.

Marion was late home from PDQ. She was extremely satisfied with herself. It had been a warm sunny autumnal day and the office had been hot enough for a fully nude afternoon.

“Hi Brian” she called as she closed the door. She’d only had them on for the half hour journey home, but Marion felt no attachment to her clothes so off they came. Brian was reading the evening paper in the lounge. “There are two letters for you in the hall” ha called.

Not strictly true as one was addressed to both of them. She sauntered into the lounge. “Look Brian a wedding invitation”

He looked puzzled, “Who do we know who is getting married?”

“Merri, the secretary at PDQ”

“I suppose that will need a new outfit” he complained grumpily

“I don’t think so, this one will do” she replied

“I don’t understand”

“It’s a clothing optional wedding” she paused before driving in another nail “at a nudist club”

“What, you’re joking, give that here” he snatched the invitation.

Marion smirked at his discomfort as she opened the second letter. It too was an invitation. Her blood ran cold as she read it. Fortunately Brian was too wrapped up in his own dilemma with Merri’s wedding to notice.

“I’ll just make a start on cooking dinner shall I?” she said and retired to the kitchen.

An unseasonably warm autumn night, hot and sweaty, undoubtedly summer’s last throw of the dice. Brian thrashed about under the duvet as once again he roamed naked through his work. For his wife, who had actually done this, it was a dream come true. Fro Brain it was nightmare. “So you’re the naked angel are you” John poured scorn on him as Jan sat lasciviously on his lap stroking his hair. “Don’t be ridiculous that was my neighbour”

“So why have you come to work in the nude?” he asked with a pitying glance at Brian’s nether regions.

“I’m going to a wedding after work” the dreaming Brian replied desperately.

“Where’s your suit” asked John as Jan started to blow seductively on his neck.

“I’m wearing it”

“That’s not a wedding suit, that’s a birthday suit, you’re not going to a birthday are you” Jan giggled as she licked John’s ear.

“It’s at a nudist resort” Brian said in a small voice as Jan and Jon leered at him.

“So you’re a nudist are you? Running around in the woods in the rudey nudey”

“No, no, it’s not me it’s a friend of my wife, no, no”

Brian woke with a start, drenched in sweat. He reached to Marion for comfort but she wasn’t there. He had fallen straight from a bad dream into a waking nightmare. Leaping out of bed he raced to the window and looked out. The trees at the bottom of the garden had lost some of their leaves leaving a clear view of part of the lane. Two figures, much barer than the tree branches slipped past. Brain raced for the stairs, and then stopped at a sudden thought. Dick Standing what if….. He dashed into Isla’s empty bedroom at the front of the house, cursing as he stubbed his bare toe on a discarded hairdryer. Carefully parting the curtains he peeked out at the Standing residence. All seem quiet, he breathed a heartfelt sigh of relief and was about to hunt down the elusive Marion when he caught a movement from the corner of his eye. Dick Standing had become bolder and had relocated to the cover of a bush in his front garden for a better shot. He lay there as still as a sniper waiting for a careless victim to stray into his sights.

Brain hurtled from the room faster than a cartoon character with a bomb and dashed down the stairs. The sudden light hurt his eyes as he burst through the kitchen door en route to the garden. The sight of Marion sitting calmly at the table brought him to a sudden halt.

Marion was just as surprised as Brian. Fortunately his elephantine descent of the stairs had given her time to hide the invitation card before her husband arrived. It was clear however that Brian had other things on his mind.

“Thank God, Marion, I thought you were outside”

“And why should I be outside”

“I just saw two nudes walking along the lane”

“And you thought”

“Well yes after all we have…..”

Her mood brightened “You fancy another trip, I see you’re dressed for it”

In his hurry Brain had forgotten to put any clothes on.

“Didn’t you hear me Marion. There are two naked people in the lane”

She smiled, how things can change. “Linda and Kevin. She told me about it. I think we should stay inside tonight, they’ll want their privacy”

“Well they won’t get it. Dick standing is in his front garden, flash charged and camera ready”

“What” exclaimed Marion “Show me”

Brain admired the expanse of his wife’s bottom as she peered out of the curtains in his daughter’s empty bedroom.

“Get the camera Brian, we’ll give him a spoonful of his own medicine”

Five minutes later he was back “Sorry” he whispered “I couldn’t find it” He shoved a robe at his naked wife “put this on, we don’t want him taking photos back do we”

“Good point” she said wrapping it around her ample bosom on carefully opening the window. “Just stay still a moment” she whispered. The camera flash lit up the street like lightning, which was quickly followed by thunder from Dick’s garden as he threw himself to into a laurel bush. Marion hid behind the curtains and checked the camera memory. “Got him, poised and ready to shoot, wait till Julie Lewis gets this”

But Julie Lewis never got to see the photos of Dick Standing skulking in the bushes like a twitcher waiting for a rare bird. This was due to Linda, who got to see the picture first, and she had other ideas.

“We have him now” she said as she clapped her hands with glee. They were sitting in her kitchen basking in the glow of the central heating, which wasn’t really required if you were prepared to wear some clothes.

“We need to confront him, if Gemma sees this he will be done for. Come on”

“What right now” Marion complained, “I’ll have to go back and get some clothes on”

“Oh just put your coat on, you’ll be fine” Linda told her firmly, “that’s all I’m planning on wearing. We’ll only be a tick”

And so clad only in shoes and a coat Marion trotted across the road after a strident Linda who was already rapping earnestly on Dick Standing’s door.

When he answered, Bob’s flabby face broke into an evil grin. “O ho, my naked neighbour”

“Can we come in, Bob, we’ve something to show you”

“No thanks, I’ve already seen all you’ve got to offer, Linda” he replied chirpily.

“You haven’t seen what I’ve got” Marion told him.

Bob bit his lip to stop himself advising her that her bare form was no mystery to him and that she needed to be more careful when closing her curtains a night.

“It’s about flashing, in a way”

“I, er, I’m sorry, I don’t understand.” He replied, understanding very well why these two harpies were at his door.

“Of course you do Bob” Linda said curtly as she pushed past him, “we’ve a photo to show you”

Dick raced after Linda, “Now come back here Linda Frost, you can’t barge in here just like that”

Marion followed them into the Standing’s finely decorated living room to find Linda standing in front of the ornate fire place, one arm stretched languidly across the wooden mantel, while her left hand fingered the buttons on her coat. “Gemma in Bob?” she asked peremptorily. Dick shook his head.

“Pity; never mind we can show her the picture later. Show Bob the snap you took last night Marion”

Marion held the camera up. Bob took it from her and squinted at the small screen.

“I can’t see anything here, what’s it supposed to be?”

“Really, Bob. Your eyesight must be going. You know what they say, it makes you go blind” replied Linda with heavy sarcasm. “Surely you recognise your front garden and that portly figure of a man trying to cover himself with a bush? Ah well; perhaps we’ll wait for Gemma to come back, maybe she’ll see someone she knows poised with his camera ready to shoot”

“Oh dear” Dick said “I appear to have just deleted the picture. I’m so sorry” He handed the camera back to Marion, who began to laugh.

“Oh dear” mimicked Linda “I’ve just pressed send on my email to Gemma. How stupid do you think we are Bob”

“Stupid enough to go wandering the streets in the nude at night” he snapped back.

“Now, now Bob. Careful what you say” Marion told him, “Isla has a journalist friend who would be very interested in this picture” she paused, “in fact you may have met her, she printed the picture of Linda, you know the one you took when you just happened to wake up, and just happened to have looked out of the window, and just happened to have your camera ready. I’m sure she’d love to know more about your dirty little night time habits”

Dick Standing stood silent, his round face expressionless. “I think we need some more pictures don’t you, Bob?” she told him as she walked over to him, “Just you and me together” Linda said putting her arm around his shoulder, “come on Bob smile for the camera” Dick Standing scowld as he pushed her away. “Ah” she said “I forgot, you only take pictures of me in my birthday suit. Silly me” And with that she dropped her coat. When they viewed the picture later, Dick’s rotund face bore exactly the same look of utter shock it showed that previous night.

“Oh come on Bob, why are you so shocked, after all you’ve seen it all before” Linda told him as she stood there, hands on hips, pointy breasts jutting out. Marion moved carefully so she could picture her stark naked friend’s full frontal body, and include a reflection of Bob’s gawping face in the mirror above the fireplace.

“How about some pictures with you Marion?” said Linda quickly.

“Oh, I don’t know” she began.

“Bet he’s got pictures of you in the nude too, squirreled away on his little hard drive. Peek-a-boo at Marion through the curtains, did you Bob, bet you got Isla too”

“No” he replied indignantly, but Marion could see the truth in his puffy, tired eyes.

“Liar” Marion told him. Even so, there was no way she was going to give him the pleasure of perusing her bare body. But Marion’s bare body had other ideas and before her sensible brain had any inkling of what was happening she was stepping out of her coat leaving it puddled at her feet on the pale green carpet. Bob nearly choked on his tongue as he tried to speak. Linda giggled, and, grabbing the camera from Marion proceeded to snap way. The depth of the water beneath him began to seep into Bob Standing’s consciousness.He made a grab for Linda, and more importantly the camera. She skipped from his grasp and ran for the stairs. Up she bounded, laughing raucously with bare buttocks quivering as Bob raced after her. Marion followed at a more sedate pace. At the top of the stairs, Linda paused and turned, presenting Dick with an eyeful her newly trimmed jet black pubic hair. He lunged for the camera but Linda was too quick, she tossed it to Marion and she was gone. Dick turned and began to descend towards Marion only to freeze at the sound of Linda’s voice raised in triumph. “You’ve left your computer on Bob, let’s see what you’ve got saved!”

Turning again he scampered up the stairs into a small bedroom at the front of the house. As she reached the top of the stairs Marion saw Bob desperately trying to switch the machine off.

“In here Marion” hissed Linda. Naked as the day she was born Marion stepped into her neighbours’, Bob and Gemma Standing’s, bedroom to find Linda lying on the bed, legs wide apart revealing the inner secrets of her vagina for all to see. “Quick, take a snap” she told her friend. Marion took the picture just in time, as an instant later Dick came rushing through the door, “Nooooo” he shouted as her reached for the camera.

But he was off balance and fell right on top of Linda. It was too good an opportunity to miss and Marion took the incriminating photo. Bob shot up and raced for Marion, but she was gone, breasts bouncing as she took the stairs two at a time.

“Come back Bob, we haven’t finished, you can’t just leave me like this, naked and alone in your bed” Linda called as she ran after them. Marion stopped at the foot of the stairs and threw the camera past Bob to Linda who caught it deftly and then stopped. Wheezing from exertion Dick turned towards her. He held his hand out more in hope than expectation. Hope springs eternal, but not for Dick Standing that autumn morning. Linda stood there as bare as a penny half way down his stairs, her jet black pubic mound in line of sight with his eyes. She held the camera at arms length.

“This what you want, Bob, or is there something else that catches your eye?” And with a wicked smile she tossed the camera back to Marion by the door. Suddenly Dick’s mood brightened, he had Linda trapped on the stairs, and although Marion was free to escape with the camera, she would not be able to retrieve her coat in time. He was betting she wasn’t keen on crossing Belvior Avenue in the altogether.

While he was thinking Linda was acting.

“Stand still Bob” she told him “or I’ll drop it” Bob spun around to face Linda who was leaning over the banisters. He had to admire the effect of gravity on her breasts as they swayed in a very appealing manner above the patterned tiles that covered the floor of the hall. Lust, however was shunted into the back seat of his car when he caught site of Gemma’s favourite black and gold porcelain vase that Linda held in her hands. He lunged for the stairs to tackle her, only to be forced into a desperate change of direction as Linda let go of his wife’s treasured possession. There was a deadening crunch as Bob landed heavily on the floor. His squeal of pain turned to a sigh of relief as his outstretched hands clasped the vase.

All of this gave Linda the time to skip past him towards the front door where Marion waited with camera and the vital coats. They slammed the door behind them just as Bob was crawling awkwardly to his feet. There was no damage to the vase, but judging from the creaking of Bob’s kneecaps they were in need some of some repair.

Marion had hid behind the very laurel bush that Bob had used for cover the previous evening.

“I think we may have upset him” she told Linda as she put her coat on.

“I’m damn certain we did, let’s get these photos safely stored on the computer” Linda told Marion as she headed for the street, only to find her friend dragging at her arm.

“Put your coat on Linda”

“No time for that, He’ll be out in a jiffy”

“You can’t go wandering across the street in buff, what will the neighbours think?”

“I’ve already been paraded around the neighbourhood stark naked by my husband, Marion; besides we are the neighbours”

“Do you want anyone seeing you come from Dick Standing’s house in the all together? What might they think?”

Linda's expression took on the appearance of a small child finding out that a Brussels sprout is not the delicious titbit she had been led to believe.

“Excellent point” said Linda putting on her coat. The delay was nearly costly, as Bob came bursting out of his front door at that very moment, only to trip over Marion’s carelessly stretched out foot. There was another sickening crunch as his already damaged knees had a close encounter with the concrete path.

Laughing like two schoolgirls who had just got away with sandbagging the school bully Marion and Linda ran for home. They were just catching their breath in the hallway when the doorbell rang. This was followed by an urgent rapping. The letterbox was poked open and a pair of dark, piggy eyes peered in.

“I want that camera” Dick shouted.

“Stop peeking, you dirty little man” scolded Linda “I might have had no clothes on” And with that she took off her coat, threw back her shoulders, and pushed her pelvis forward in a seductive pose.

“Give me the camera, so I can delete the pictures”

“Too late” called Marion who stood to one side out of Dick’s sight, “I’ve just uploaded them to my websafe”

Dick banged on the door. Linda hooked up the security chain and opened it, making sure that Dick had a good view of her bare body.

“Here’s the deal, Bob” she told him, “I know you have a hard drive full of pictures of me in the nude, and snaps of Marion and Isla, and I know nothing is going to stop you taking more. So you can take as many pictures of us with no clothes on as you want. But” she paused, looked at Marion and smiled, “but, if one photograph of any of us appears in print or on the web, two things are going to happen. One, those pictures of me on your bed are being sent to Gemma, and two, the picture of you in the garden with the camera goes to Marion’s journalist friend”

Now there was silence. Bob Standing had finally met his Waterloo, and slunk quietly away sulk in his own St Helena. Linda watched him all the way to his front door, before closing hers.

“Did you really have time to upload the photos?” she asked.

“No. I lied” replied Marion, “Let’s go and look at them”

“Oh my” said Linda as she viewed herself spread across the Standing’s marital bed, “I’m a trifle overexposed in that picture, and I’m not talking about the lighting” She roared at her own joke.

“Fancy a walk tonight, Marion? Give old Dick a thrill. He’ll be out there with his camera, I bet”

“I’m sure he will. But I think we should leave it for a week, let him shiver in his front garden with nothing to show for it.”

Linda rubbed the palms of her hands together, “Oh yes, I like the sound of that”

They continued to wade their way through the surprisingly large amount of pictures they had taken.

“God, I look like a slut in that one” Linda remarked.

“Well you’re stark naked, leaning over the stairs, and the camera is focused right up your front backside” Marion pointed out, “not much chance of looking anything else really. Oh my” she exclaimed “I don’t look much better myself”

“Tell you what,” Linda pointed out sying a slight swelling in Bob's grubby jeans “Old Dick Standing is living up to his name in that picture”

Marion was none too keen on being the object of Bob Standing’s sexual attractions so she decided to change the subject.

“What about a proper walk?”

“What do you mean?”

“A proper walk, in the country, in the daylight”

“I don’t know” replied Linda with little enthusiasm.

“Nude of course”

Linda brightened “On the other hand.” She stopped and thought. “Do you think the boys would be up for it?”

“Brian wouldn’t be keen” Marion knew this for an understatement.

“Kev would go if Brain was doing it”

“I’ve an idea. If you tell Kevin that Brian is keen.” Marion paused. “No better still tell him it was his idea, and then I’ll tell Brian it was Kev’s brainchild”

“That’ll work” replied Linda with a mischievous grin, “now where shall we go?”

“I know just the place, quiet, with woods to hide in. Have you got a map?”

Marion drove the through the deserted Monday evening streets of Nelson. This was the city’s happy time. All the day time people workers had drained away home, leaving the quiet few enjoying the bars and late night shops in relative solitude. The increasingly loud, aggressively drunken night time revellers had yet to appear. They were still busy pre-loading at home as they preened themselves in front of the bathroom mirror before climbing into their bright, tight short dresses or half opened multicoloured shirts trapped in the illusion they were living in a warm tropical paradise.

Marion’s knowledge of these bright young things, who, in her day would have been called ‘the in crowd` was based on a highly unrepresentative sample of one. To wit Isla, who one evening Marion had found ironing the small dress that had launched a thousand strips. Isla was not quite naked, her modesty was preserved by some low class jewellery and a pair of high heeled sling back shoes that gave her daughter the look aspired to by many a high class Parisian whore. “Hi Mum,” She said without turning around.

“On your way out?” asked Marion, resisiting the urge to say “I hope you are not going out dressed like that young lady?”

“I’m meeting Charlie and Alice at eight. We’re going clubbing”

Isla carefully hung the dress to air before crossing to the fridge and pulling out a bottle of Rose.

“Fancy a starter, Mum” she asked.

Oh what the hell thought Marion, “Why not” she replied with a smile.

Isla poured two glasses, and handed one to her mother. Her shoes clacked as she crossed the tiled floor to the chair next to the table. She sat carefully, crossing her legs. Isla inspected her daughter critically, too much make up she thought to herself, always a fault of the young, it made her look tarty. A small sip of the wine halted the evaluation as Marion spluttered violently, “Good God” she exclaimed “what is in this, meths? It’s certainly the right colour”

Suddenly startled by her mother’s outburst, Isla knocked her own glass over, spilling wine onto her bare midriff. Marion watched the wine dribble down towards her daughter’s fine patch of curly pubic hair. “Lucky I didn’t have the dress on” she told her mother sternly as she wiped herself carefully with some paper towel. She refilled her glass and tasted the rose, “It’s fine mum, you just need to acquire the taste”

“Hmm” muttered Marion as she carefully took another nip. It didn’t get better on a second visit. She diplomatically put the glass on the table resolving not to touch another drop. Student life had hardened Isla’s stomach and she made short work of the rest of the bottle. Marion said nothing, after all she was technically and adult and able to make her own decisions, and downing a whole bottle of wine before going out clubbing was fairly normal when placed next to Isla’s habit of parading naked through a shopping centre.

Isla checked her watch, “must fly” she told her mother as she reached for her dress. The very dress that Marion had bought her for Christmas, the garment to blame for Isla’s current state of undress. Now she was a chlorophyll soaked green warrior Isla seemed to have no scruples wearing it. Marion watched as she carefully pulled it over her head and then carefully smoothed out the creases that had gathered around her hips.

“Wait a minute young lady” she exclaimed, “you are not planning to go out without any underwear?”

“Mum” she said firmly, “if I wear anything beneath this dress it shows. I bet you didn’t think of that that before you bought it. Anyway I’ll wager there will not be a soul there that hasn’t seen a photo of me nude, so what’s the point of wearing any knickers”

And with that she was gone in a fog of perfume leaving Marion to reflect that as you sow so shall you reap. Isla found the truth in this homily herself later in the evening, as the oh so carefully pressed pink dress turned up in the washing bag the following morning covered in vomit.

A salutary lesson to all thought Marion as she drove through the deserted town. Autumn was fully in charge of the weather now and she didn’t expect many of those bright young things would be out and about tonight for the incoming tide had sucked an enveloping fog in from the sea and Nelson had vanished into its cold clammy arms. The headlights of her little purple car were worse than useless. Fortunately Brian had invested in one of those irritatingly bossy satellite devices, otherwise Marion may well have become utterly lost just a few miles from home.

“You have arrived at your destination.” the kindly, but firm female voice informed her from its comfortable perch on the windscreen. The voice irritated Marion, and she had told Brian on many an occasion. There were other voices available but Marion could never find a way to change them. She spent ages tinkering with the damn thing, going through indescribably irritating menus to find a better choice. No sooner had she thought she had reset the vocals than the annoyingly irrational piece of electronic trash reset it self. There was nothing more guaranteed to spoil her day that that bossy woman telling her to “turn left here”. She made a mental note to speak firmly to Brain about this when he returned. In fact Marion had mastered of the tiny machine months ago, and every time she selected a new voice she had saved the settings correctly. It was just that as soon as Brian noticed the change he reset the SatNav. He had picked this voice deliberately because it sounded just like the way Marion spoke to him when she was giving him directions. It delighted him that Marion didn’t recognise the similarity and it was a source of immense pleasure to know that the SatNav was bullying his wife in the same authoritative tones she had used on him for years.

Promising herself yet again to change to a different voice for the return Marion parked and turned off the engine. A sudden silence dropped onto the car. She peered out of the windows and checked the rear view mirror. Good, the street appeared to be deserted. A small sigh escaped her lips, as, not for the first time, Marion wondered if this was a step too far. But she was committed now, and knew in her heart of hearts that it was far too late too turn back. She had planned this meticulously, researching her route, the parking place, and most importantly, waiting until Brian was away on business.

Isla, of course, was back at university where she, and her little green troop were once again causing havoc. Marion had assumed that now the weather was turning colder her daughter would stop parading around in her birthday suit and this had been the case until the university turned the heating on. That immediately triggered further protests which initially had involved the Green team turning up to lectures in coats and scarves asking for the heating to be turned off. Needless to say this protest had little effect. So with impeccable logic Isla’s band of merry men started to attend lectures naked. In the whole history of Canterbury University there had never been a one hundred percent attendance at a nine o’clock lecture. Until now. Hangovers from the previous late night were a small price to pay for the sight of Susie Blackmore sitting primly in the front row, legs crossed with a notepad in her bare lap. The lecturer had the greatest of difficulty conveying the finer details of the Plantagenets while Susie’s perfect breasts oscillated in time to her note taking. When he was able to drag his eyes away they fell on the Julie’s cherry nipples pointing straight towards him. The incoherence of his delivery went unnoticed to the rest of the students cramming into the lecture hall. He could have been reading the chemical contents off the back of a pack of chocolate hobnobs for all the attention they gave him. Even the girls in the audience were distracted, as Susie had finally relented and Henri and the rest of the boys, crusties included, were allowed to take part. Fortunately, from Marion’s point of view, although the majority of the undergraduates studying Medieval History may not have agreed, the University quickly caved in and a compromise was reached on the heating.

Isla had been thoroughly pleased with herself as she related her latest triumph to her mother. “Well at lest it’s over, now” Marion told her daughter thankfully.

“Oh no Mum, we’re going back on the streets to get public buildings to reduce their heading”

Marion groaned to herself as she replied through gritted teeth “That’s nice dear”

It was all her fault she thought to herself, all Marion had wanted was the opportunity to go naked at home without censure. A naked family was the acme of her ambition, not a naked society at large.

‘Too late now’ she thought, as she locked the car door, and, shivering despite her long coat, Marion began the short walk towards her real destination. The thick fog swallowed the sharp clicking noise of the heels of the shoes she had taken so long to choose. The street lamps bloomed like large yellow flowers suspended in the foggy sky, leading her towards the milky pool of light spilling from La Caprise. She fingered the embossed card in her coat pocket, resisting the urge to take it out and read it one more time. There was no need, she had read it over and over since it arrived on that fateful day. She knew it by heart.

Mr Tomas O’Sullivan would like to invite Mrs Marion Shaw to dinner at La Caprise where she will be the only guest. Dress code -----none. RSVP

Just when she thought she was home free, with Linda exposed, in all senses of the word, as the Naked Angel, this had to happen. Barely had she arrived at a time where she felt she could breathe again, and this invitation had arrived. Marion cursed her luck, but there was no point, she was a hostage to ill fortune, a Good Samaritan who found that the dog she had saved had just turned around and bit her ankles, hard.

Too late for regrets now Marion Shaw, the true naked angel, thought as she tapped gingerly upon the glass door of the restaurant and waited. She could not see in as the blinds were drawn, some crumb of comfort she thought.

After thirty seconds that seemed like an hour the door opened and there he stood, the man who should be dead, Nelson’s own Lazarus, Thomas O’Sullivan.

“Welcome, welcome dear lady, please to come in” Why a man with an Irish name should speak with an Italian accent in a French restaurant was an incomprehensible puzzle that Marion found to be of complete disinterest at this point in time.

“Thank you. Most kind” she replied slipping through the door.

“May I take your coat” he asked quietly. Marion looked back at the glass door and the plate glass windows.

Tomas smiled, “Have no fears lady, nobody can see in, I have checked. No one will know you were here tonight”

Marion smiled, but said nothing. After a brief hesitation she slid the coat from her shoulders and handed it to Tomas. His eyes popped, “Ah dear lady, you have come just as I remember you”

Embarrassed for a moment she stood as still as a statue while Tomas ran his eyes down her naked form. Suddenly realising what he was doing, and that his guest was very aware of his scrutiny, it was his turn became ill at ease.

“Please” his fully clothed arm pointed towards a table in the centre of the room.

Marion’s discomfort fled as she crossed the floor. In a sudden and surprising conclusion, she realised that this was what she lived for, being completely naked in everyday places. Situations others visit only in their nightmares were Marion’s reason d’etre. As Tomas led her to a large table, covered in crisp white linen, with silver cutlery shining in the light of a single candle Marion felt more alive than she had since, well yesterday evening when she took a midnight stroll along memory lane. As she sailed magnificently across the restaurant floor resplendent in all her glory she felt like a naked Magellan, stoutly heading into a brave new world filled with anticipation of new lands to discover and own, with just the hint of dread that she may fall off the edge of the world. Marion felt the same sense of thrill spiced with fear as she had on that fragrant night when she had first set a bare foot in the garden to be rapidly followed by her equally bare body to bathe in the midnight air.

Tomas held the chair for. “Thank you” she said sitting on the covered chair. She felt the momentary chill of the wooden back as he handed her the menu.

“I’ll leave you some time to choose”

“No. Please sit down” Marion told him firmly, “There’s much I want to ask you”

Tomas tilted his head to one side quizzically.

“Well, really there’s just one thing”

“Oh” he enquired.

“Why?” she said

“That, dear lady is something I could ask of you. Why were you in that alleyway on a very cold night with no clothes on?”

“Oh it’s just something I do” she replied breezily.

“And not just you either”

She shot him a look. “Oh, you mean Linda”

He smiled the unfathomable smile of the sphinx. Worrying. Did he know more?

“So why isn’t Linda here instead of me?” She was fishing now.

That inscrutable smile again. “Because she’s not my naked angel”

Marion thought back to his comment when she had given him her coat. “How do you know that?” The words came slowly, for she feared the reply.

“How could I forget the body of my naked angel, those magnificent breasts hanging before my face as you led me back into the light. I really thought I was dead you know, and but I saw your genitalia…….. Angels aren’t supposed …”

Not liking the way the conversation had turned Marion cut in sharply “yes I know all that, but I thought you couldn’t remember anything”

“Ah” he said, the smile back on his face. “I lied. That pesky journalist. On and on she went. I’m glad your friend has taken the credit, if that’s the right way of putting it. That annoying Miss Lewis will leave me alone now”

“So you knew all along that Linda wasn’t the Naked Angel, but decided to keep quiet about it”

Tomas nodded and smiled warmly.

Marion let out her breath slowly. “You should have invited her if you wanted to maintain the pretence” Marion told him “she’d have come.” She paused, “Naked” Hell she thought, if Julie Lewis could sniff a story she’d have come too, even if it meant dressing for the shower.

Tomas paused before replying “If I invited Linda, what excuse would I have for asking you to come with her”

“Good point” she told him.

“Besides I am seeing her next week”

Marion sat up quickly. Tomas’ attention shifted to her chest which was performing some interesting vibrations. Before she could press him further Tomas asked for her order.

“Oh, er” a flustered Marion clutched the menu. “I’ll have the warm chicken salad and the sea bass with the sauce” she told him finally.

“Would madam like some wine”

“Er no, I’ll stick to water” Marion said firmly, not wanting to take anything away from the experience. She was savouring this, and besides, she did have the car. Tomas smiled his enigmatic smile and vanished to the kitchen. Marion looked around, the restaurant was small, seating at most thirty people. Tomorrow it would be full of life and the idle chatter of carefree young lovers, coupled with exuberant parties of work friends. Marion smiled, wondering who would sit where she sat now, in the centre of room looking towards the pale yellow light from the street lamps that leaked through the blinds. She smiled, for never in their wildest dreams would anyone think a middle aged woman, somebody they wouldn’t look at twice in the street, had sat here wearing a sensible pair of shoes.

The door from the kitchen creaked open and Tomas appeared with her salad and a bottle of sparkling water which he opened with a flourish. Marion felt the spray from the escaping fizz across her breasts, her nipples stiffened in an instant reaction to the cool mist of water that hung in the air. Ever solicitous and highly observant of his naked guest Tomas asked if she was cold.

“No” she replied “I’ll be fine, you’d be surprised how your body reacts to the smallest of temperature changes when you are naked” There she’d said it at last; the N word and the spell that hung in the air was broken.

“Not that I mind” Tomas began, “but why did you decide to eat naked?”

Marion looked at him sharply, “you put it in the invitation” she said, all the warmth drained from her voice.

“No I didn’t” he replied in a manner of fact way

“Yes you…” Marion’s voice tailed off into a long groan. She slapped her hand to her forehead. The words of the invitation were burnt onto the back of her eyelids. She had read it over and over again as she sat, nude of course, in the kitchen in the wee small hours of the morning when only ghosts and the bare naked females of Belvior Avenue stalked the pale streets. She nearly had a seizure of her own when Brian had burst naked into the kitchen overflowing with news of Dick Standing’s night stalking. Fortunately he was so wrapped up in his own righteous indignation he never noticed his own nudity let alone the stiff card in his wife’s fingers.

“Dress code none” Marion muttered as she looked deep into Tomas O’Sullivan’s brown eyes. “You meant I could wear what I wished and I thought……… what a fool am I”

“Perhaps” Tomas said gently “you are wearing what you really want to wear”

Marion stared through him into the distance. Her thoughts churned and set as fast as reinforced concrete. She reluctantly realised he was right, she was nude and very pleased to be so.

“You may be right” she agreed with a rueful smile.

Tomas smiled and with a shout of “Sea Bass” was gone leaving Marion alone once again. Gingerly she stood up and, shyly at first, strolled around the restaurant. This to her was heaven, wandering bare through the closely packed tables, feeling the soft air against her body, the warmth of a wall heater against her thighs. Such freedom she thought, as she stood by the door, just a thin pane of glass between her and the world, a flimsy blind hiding her bare body from passers by in the street. Pulling the curtain slightly she peeked out into the street. It was as naked as she; the fog was still down, blanketing her from the prying eyes of the outside world.

“It’s ready” Thomas said. She turned to see him holding two plates. “Do you mind if I eat with you”

Marion returned to her seat and spread her serviette across her lap. How bizarre she thought as she removed it again. What was the point; she was wearing no clothes to stain. A moment later she understood that the napkin protected more than clothes as a potion of her perfectly cooked fish fell from her fork into the hot cream sauce. Marion winced as it splashed her groin. She carefully wiped it from her skin and placed the cloth once more in her lap.

“How did you track me down?” Marion asked Tomas quietly.

He took a breath and let it slowly, almost a sigh. “After I got out of hospital I was haunted about that night. I could have died in that alleyway. I would have died but for you” A calm silence filled the room. Marion looked at Tomas and smiled. “Perhaps I should have died there” he continued. He smiled at Marion’s frown, “No, no dear lady I am glad to be alive and know how lucky it was that you found me, and was prepared to help me, given your state of undress.” He looked down at Marion’s bare body. For the first time in many months Marion found she was blushing at her exposure.

“What I am trying to say is that perhaps it was my fate.” He paused, his mouth moving as he tried to find the words. “Why did I keep gong back? I don’t know. Perhaps I am like the eels that thrive in the long straight dark waterways of the fenlands. I’ve read about them, you know. At some point in their lives they feel a nagging pull, an ancient call, dragging them down the rivers into the sea where they undertake an enormous journey. They cross the mighty ocean to a small patch of water where they spawn and die. At least I think they die, I’m not too sure of their fate.” He smiled at Marion, “Since my death, and rebirth, I have been like the eel, and that alley next to your house is my Sargasso Sea pulling me across the town. I look into its dark mouth and……”

“What?” asked Marion encouragingly, wondering all the while if Tomas really had recovered from his stroke.

‘I might be stark naked,’ she thought to herself, ‘but at least I’m not stark raving bonkers.’

“I feel the dark alleyway wants me, I’m the one that got away and that’s against its rules. So I stood there in the deep shadows waiting. Waiting to see if I will be allowed to continue in this life” He sighed and smiled, “and then one bible black night it happened, first your neighbour, as naked as the day she was born. I thought for a moment she was you, as she was nude, but I noticed she was not as well endowed.” He gestured towards Marion’s breasts that hung before him in all their majesty. She was sitting forward, one hand on her chin. “Go on” she said quietly. He had all her attention now. “I was about to follow when I heard voices. Firstly a man, I couldn’t make out what he said, but he wasn’t comfortable”

Marion wasn’t comfortable either, she squirmed in her seat as the memory of that awful night in the woods crept into her mind. ‘Say it isn’t so’ she prayed to herself.

“Then you spoke, how could I forget that voice. ‘Yours’ you told your husband just before you strode across the road. I watched you both and followed you down the back alley”

Marion bit her lip as her thoughts ranged through that evening. Linda and Tomas out and about, and she was unaware of either of them. The street with no name was as busy as the Tokyo subway. Of one thing she was completely sure; Brian must never get to know any of this, all hell would break loose if he did.

“And how long ago was this?” she asked, although she knew damn well to the nearest second when he’d caught her.

“Some months now” Thomas admitted “I’ve had a long time to think on what to do”

“And are you still drawn back to the street with no name” she asked quietly.

“No, now I have found you that compulsion has left me”

Marion thanked whatever gods may be for that small mercy.

“But I will be there next week”

A sudden squall blew into Marion’s sunny day.

“I’m going to thank my naked angel.”

“I thought you were thanking me?”

“I am, but Julie Lewis doesn’t know that. I’m going to see your naked neighbour. Make a good spread for the paper”

“But you know, and Linda knows, that she isn’t the naked Angel of Belvoir Avenue”

“Ha!” he announced gleefully “there’s the rub, neither Linda nor Julie know that I know. Besides there never was a naked angel, it was just the ramblings of my oxygen starved brain”

Marion was beginning to get confused. Tomas tapped his head and gave her conspiratorial wink. “I remember nothing” He smiled, “your secret will be safe with me”

Marion sighed with relief, “If you don’t mind, I think I may be out that day”

“Wise move, I’m not really looking forward to it, myself. What possessed your neighbour to admit she was the angel?”

“A tricky situation involving our nosey neighbour, peeping Bob, and his zoom lens” she explained. “Admitting she was the angel put her in a better light”

“But she has stolen your Florence Nightingale image”

“I don’t think Florence Nightingale attended to the wounded and dying of the Crimean War in the buff. Mind you, it might have improved their survival rate. Or at least they would have died happy”

As if someone somewhere had suddenly pressed a switch Tomas changed the subject.

“How did you enjoy the fish?”

“Delightful” she answered truthfully.

“And what would the lady like for desert?” he asked, solicitously passing her the menu.

Marion lent over to pick her handbag to remove her glasses case. Like a dreamer lost in a crazy dream, Tomas watched her breasts swaying. He marvelled at how she could sit in his restaurant, like any other diner, perusing the menu, half moon glasses on her nose and not a stitch covering her fine body.

“I think I’ll have the baked pear” she told him brightly, thrusting the menu towards his hand. She smiled at him as she removed her glasses and returned them to their hard red case which she closed with a sudden snap.

“I’ll be about ten minutes, madam” he replied, suddenly the professional waiter once more.

“Could you direct me to the bathroom” Marion requested rising to her feet. She felt the heat of the candle close to her skin as Tomas pointed to a door at the back of the room. She fervently hoped it was heated.

“Thank you” she said and headed off, leaving him to admire her ample buttocks swaying like a child’s swing in the summer breeze.

It wasn’t the warmest restaurant toilet she had visited, but it would suffice. As Marion checked her makeup in the mirror she wondered why she was bothering.

“Let’s face it Marion,” she told herself, as she caught sight of her nipples on full alert “who’s going to be looking at your face.” She gave herself a wicked grin, winked once and headed out into the restaurant. Just to her left she noticed the kitchen door.

“Is it Ok to come in?” she asked poking her head around the door.

“Sure, sure” Tomas told her, “I’m nearly ready”

The kitchen was pristine, stainless steel everywhere. Marion caught a glimpse of her reflection. It was far kinder than the mirror in the bathroom. Tomas was bent over a large white rectangular plate. She watched as he placed a perfectly cooked pear, upright and slightly offset from centre. With commendable concentration considering the nearby presence of a naked woman he surrounded the pear with an artistic spiral of sauce.

“Not too close” he warned without looking up. “We don’t want any spare hairs”

“Oh sorry” she said running her fingers through her hair. She looked at her hand. Unlike poor Brian none had come loose.

“The long ones are easy to spot” Tomas told her, “it’s the short and curly ones we have to worry about!”

Marion’s blush started at her face and spread down her chest, colouring her breasts as bright as that of a robin on a Christmas card.

“After you” he told her, plate in hand and napkin over his arm. Marion returned to her table.

“I hope you enjoy” he told her.

“Will you not sit with me?”

“I will for coffee. Have to watch what I eat now the doctors ….you know. Shall I make you some?”

“Yes please”

The pear was delicious of course.

“How was your meal?” asked Tomas as he placed a large French press, a small pot of cream, a bowl of brown rocky sugar and two cups onto the not so pristine table cloth.

“Magnificent”

“A small price for my life I assure you” he replied.

“I did what anybody would have done”

“But you weren’t wearing what anyone usually wears” he told her.

“I wasn’t actually wearing anything” she commented with a small laugh. Tomas laughed too, just enough to be polite.

A silence fell as he looked her in the eyes, not the breast, not the groin, but deep into her eyes, as if he was weighing her soul.

“You look tired” he told her

She smiled “Too many late nights…… or early mornings.” She shrugged. Too many midnights”

“Why do you do it, Marion?” he asked.

She paused and looked at him, saw the sadness in his eyes. “The fish was beautiful, fresh, delicately cooked, but why did you add the sauce”

He exhaled briefly, a small snort through his nose. “To add spice”

Marion raised her eyebrows and looked at him. She said nothing, she had made her point.

“But surely there are other ways to make life less dull”

Marion interrupted “My life isn’t dull, being naked makes it exciting. When the story of the naked angel broke, I was the last person on the street’s list. Marion Shaw, staid and conservative; never, ever. Clothed I blend into the crowd. Even you didn’t notice me”

“Not true. I recognised you straight away when you crossed the road.”

”Because I was naked. You didn’t pay me any attention when I was dressed.”

“I’ve never seen you with clothes on” he protested.

“But you have, I sat at this very table last Wednesday lunchtime”

“Surely, I would have”

“I was with friends from work, six of us in all, a couple of tall thin exuberant blondes in the shortest skirts you have ever seen. And you noticed them I can tell you. The blonde is straight from the bottle by the way, believe me, I’ve seen the evidence. I sat next to a nondescript woman with severe hair. Between us were two long thin streaks of manhood, in shiny suits and pink socks. You even took our orders.”

He paused for a moment before continuing “Ah yes, I remember the table now; the girls told me they were celebrating a successful business deal.” He looked mortified as he tried to recall Marion.

“I was wearing a dark blue business suit. I’m not a creative, just a part time accountant. Dull, you see”

Marion smiled, it was a complete lie but it was fun to see him flounder like a beached fish. Could he really believe that the staff of PDQ would ever venture into this restaurant? Not that there was anything wrong with it in her eyes, but advertising executives hunted a different prairie, one full of steel and glass, where modern art stared down from pale pastel walls.

“I’m sorry, we were busy and….”

Marion let out the line and tossed him back into the sea “It’s Ok, but I think I’ve made my point.”

Then she hooked him again, and tugged hard at the rod. “Of course if you had come to the office you would have had no trouble recognising me”

“Of course, I was just busy in the restaurant, believe me it’s manic at lunch, the time is just a blur, Had I been in the office I would definitely recognised the woman who saved my life.” He blustered.

“Of course you would,” Marion smiled indulgently, “after all I would have been wearing my lifesaving outfit”

Tomas’ eyes were on stalks” I don’t understand”

Marion gazed at him and even non committal stare. She watched the truth spread across his face like the dawn “But surely” he began.

She cut him off. “Yes, it’s a naked office” He opened his mouth and gulped, no words would come. “Look, if I was a free fall parachutist would you be saying this? No. If I went scuba diving as a hobby? Again no”

Tomas backed down, and tried to change the subject. “So how did your little group of nudists ….” He was struggling for words now.

Marion interrupted again” Get together? We didn’t, I started out my own, they had no idea about me until…….”

”you rescued me” Tomas completed her sentence.

“Oh no, my family knew about my nakedness by then”

“How did they take that news?

“I didn’t exactly sit them down and tell them”

“Oh?” he said, head to one side, enquiry all over his face like the measles.

Marion squirmed in her seat, not so easy with a bare behind.

“Well, I set my daughter up. I bought her a new dress for Christmas. I knew it would rub against her Eco warrior principles so I pretended to throw a tantrum and stripped off in front of them in a fit of righteous indignation. You should have seen my husband’s face. I had trouble not laughing.” She paused, slowly sucking in her breath before continuing soberly “mind you it backfired because the next time I saw Isla she was stark naked too, and that ultimately led to the air con protests and now the whole world has seen her in the nude”

“And your husband? He had no inkling of what was going on?”

“Mmm, I’m not sure about that, I thought I had been pretty careful, but I’ve a sneaky feeling he knew.”

“And is he happy with your unusual living arrangements?”

“Oh yes and no” Marion continued giving Tomas a dirty look, “He’s happy for me to be naked at home, not so happy elsewhere. He’d blow a thirty amp fuse if he knew where I was now”

“I assumed that as he was as keen as mustard since he was out and about with you that night”

Marion interrupted, “The one and only night….. although I have a plan. I should say we have a plan, as Linda is up for it too”

“And how did you convert her” Tomas asked with a curiosity that burnt brighter than a six year old boy seeing his first dinosaur.

“I didn’t, she converted me…..so she thinks”

Tomas shook his head trying to force out his woolly thoughts. He was truly lost now.

“The story of the Naked Angel spurred her on to try being naked inside, and then outside of the house.” This time Tomas did understand. “I guess she tried and got to like it.” Tomas started to shake his head again.

“Don’t you shake your head at me Tomas O’Sullivan, you should try it yourself”

This suggestion was followed by a coughing fit of monumental proportions.

Marion began again “Once she had tried and got to like it, she suggested to me that I might give it a go. So very reluctantly, and after much persuasion I agreed to try being naked for a short while. I spent a long time prevaricating and expressing non existent misgivings before reluctantly stripping off one warm summer’s day. After a suitable period of embarrassment I grudgingly admitted to Linda that I did quite enjoy it and suggested we tried it again”

Tomas rocked back and fore in his chair at Marion’s irony.

“And working naked?” he asked as this was the most incredulous of all in his mind.

“Oh that was Isla and her protests” She explained how she had manoeuvred the staff of PDQ out of their clothing, “getting advertising execs out of their clothes is a bit like shooting fish in a barrel.” She told him. “Maybe we could have a nude lunch here sometime, I’m sure they would be up for it”

“Er well, I’m not so sure”

Neither was Marion. PDQ would never dine here. Dining naked, however, was a distinct possibility, she’d have to find a way for one of the girls to come up with idea.

“So you are nudists, you and your family?”

Marion considered this suggestion, for it was a matter upon which she had given much thought.

“There are two kinds of nudist. The first kind are people who belong to a club and hang around naked with like minded people. My friend Merry is one of those. The second kind are people who go nude on holiday at the beach.”

“So which type of nudist are you?” Tomas asked not unreasonably.

“I’m the third kind” Marion replied smartly.

“I see” said Tomas in a voice that clearly showed he didn’t see at all. Marion refused to elaborate.

Tomas looked at her intently; she was sitting there wearing shoes and a watch, not forgetting a string of pearls that increased her outfit by fifty percent. She looked as calm and cool as you like. She leant forward and rested her heavy breasts on the edge of the table. For once Tomas looked away from this display to gaze into her eyes, as grey and still as the midwinter sea; they held a far away look. Not for the fist time Tomas thought to himself that, not only was Marion stark naked, she was also stark raving mad.

Marion for her part was wondering what to do next, the meal was over, she didn’t think she would be asked to pay for it, and was damned if she was going to. So they both sat there in a circle of silence waiting for some sign from the other.

Eventually Marion cracked, “Well thank you for a wonderful evening, I have to say the meal was delicious”

Tomas bowed his head in acknowledgement. There was no suggestion of a bill so Marion got up to go. The look on Tomas’ face stopped her. Had she disappointed him? Oblivious to her nudity Marion had misread the look of utter astonishment on his face. Tomas could barely believe the sight before him, for not a foot from his wide eyes, was the sight that had woken him from the dead in that dark alleyway all those months ago. Once again he was looking straight at the definitive proof of Marion’s lack of angelic powers. Eyes wide open; he was staring right at the hidden crack in Marion’s pubic mound. He could barely miss it, nestling crinkly pinkly within its little furry coat.

Oblivious to his scrutiny Marion asked Tomas if the fog had lifted. Suddenly snapping his gaze from his Naked Angel’s proof of her worldliness, Tomas climbed out of his chair and crossed to the door. Pulling the bind slightly to one side he peeked out. “Worse if anything” he told her.

“I fancy a little walk before I go home” she told him, “Care to accompany me”

“Ok” he told her “I’ll get our coats”

Marion looked around the restaurant, the empty tables and chairs, the pastel walls with colourful silk screens of local landmarks. It had certainly been an experience, she thought. When Tomas returned he had already donned a warm winter jacket and scarf. Ever the gentleman he held out Marion’s for her. His eyes bulged when she told him it was quite warm out and she didn’t need it yet.

“Come on” she told him, “You can carry it, just in case I need it”. Marion turned on her heel, and a without a moment’s doubt, strode out of the restaurant door into the foggy street. She gasped as the cold moist air hit her. This was what she lived for, the chill of the evening, the thrill of the exposure.

Behind her Tomas was muttering as he locked the door to La Caprise. “Are you sure about this?” he asked hesitantly as he stood shivering clutching Marion’s coat as if it were the last parachute on a plunging plane.

“Absolutely” she replied, feeling more alive than ever. “Come on, let’s go”

And so, without once looking back, the third kind of nudist strode confidently into the smothering mist, heading towards Trafalgar Square.

The End